

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

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PAGE 4-A, THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1994

No Lifeline For Those Who Aren't Reaching

A recent report from the General Accounting Office would suggest that the country's welfare system is a more urgent place than its health care delivery system to undertake immediate sweeping reforms.

While the statistics are hardly surprising to anyone who pays attention to trends, they are nonetheless disturbing:

■ Low-income families begun by adolescent mothers now receive \$34 billion a year in food stamps and Medicaid; in 1990, that figure was \$25 billion.

■ Single women are the least likely to earn their way out of poverty.

■ More than half of all mothers receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children today had their first child as a teenager.

■ Teenage mothers tend to have more children and less education than other women on welfare; they are also much poorer.

It would be difficult to argue against the notion that the problem is one of the most serious threats to American society and that while welfare may not cause illegitimacy, it is its "economic lifeline."

The Clinton administration's welfare reform plan, due out any day now, reportedly would give young mothers two years of cash benefits and the education, day care and training they need to get a job. Those still unemployed after two years on welfare would be required to enroll in a work program. That plan doesn't sound significantly different from others which have met with only limited success, especially in rural areas such as ours.

Rural communities trying to implement such federal mandates are often stymied by obstacles which are not part of the picture in more urban settings—lack of public transportation, no child care available for mothers who work nights or weekends, economies which are based on small businesses with less scheduling flexibility, lower pay scales and fewer advancement opportunities than large corporations or government entities have.

The problem demands creative solutions for unique communities such as our own, solutions that depend at least as heavily on lifestyle changes as potentially wasted dollars. It's time to stop extending the lifeline to those who refuse to reach for it.

RJR Should Send Old Joe To The Make-Believe Afterlife

If tobacco companies truly are as alarmed as they purport to be about the prospective criminalization of smoking, then why do we still have Smoky Joe?

Only someone on the payroll of R.J. Reynolds could, with a straight face, argue that Old Joe, the hip mascot of Camel cigarettes, is a marketing tool aimed at adults only.

The cool cartoon camel appeared to have dodged a federal death sentence last week. A spokesman for an anti-smoking coalition said the Federal Trade Commission voted 3-2 not to pursue a petition to ban the Camel aid campaign, called by the Washington-based Coalition on Smoking OR Health "one of the most egregious examples...of tobacco advertising aimed at children."

There are legitimate arguments that the war on tobacco is fueled by the fact that tobacco products cannot be advertised in broadcast media, where children are nonetheless routinely pummeled with positive messages about such other unhealthy habits as sugar-coated cereals, violence and promiscuity. There are equally legitimate arguments that the home, and not the government, is the appropriate vehicle for teaching our children about the choices they have no choice but to make. Some self-policing is in order on all fronts.

If RJR wants to quell the wrath of government and a growing number of citizens, it should give up the sham that Smoky Joe—who proved in one study to be as well-known among 6-year-olds as Mickey Mouse—was meant to be something other than a Pied Piper to innocent kids.

Smoky Joe should go the way of Alf—to the make-believe afterlife.

What Proof Exists That You're Really You?

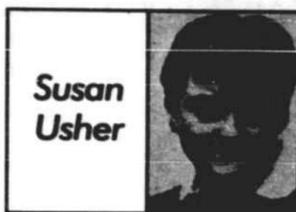
Have you ever tried to prove to a government bureaucracy that you are whom you say you are?

Try doing it without a birth certificate. It can be a dizzying and frustrating process. If no urgency is involved, it may be merely a stimulating challenge, like solving a difficult Sunday crossword puzzle. Add urgency and there's another word that fits.

Anyone who entered the world in the days before hospital births were routine is liable to have had the pleasure of creating a paper trail of proof of their identity.

Look in the files of the Brunswick County Register of Deeds office, for example, and there is no record of my maternal grandfather's birth or his sister's birth, even though "delayed" certificate of birth records exist for all three of his brothers.

Look again and you could find standard birth records for two of my mother's sisters but not for her nor



Susan Usher

the next oldest girl in the family. They were born at home, and their births were never recorded at the courthouse.

Proof of age is needed for a lot of things, such as applying for Social Security benefits. If the state has no record of your birth, it can take time and effort to establish that record, I've learned.

At the Brunswick County Register of Deeds office you're advised that you must prove five facts: your full name at time of birth, date of birth, place of birth, mother's full maiden name, father's full name

(unless child is born out of wedlock).

Who, what, where and when. Sounds easy enough, but to prove those facts the state requires independent verification. You have to submit at least three different records which show the facts to be proven. One may be an affidavit of personal knowledge by someone older than the applicant who has personal knowledge of the facts, an older relative, for example.

Two of the three records must be notarized or certified copies of official records, all established for at least five years if the applicant is age 5 or older.

All three records must show birthdate or age (and it has to be the same birthdate/age). Two of the three records must show birthplace. One of the three records must show the full name of the father and full maiden name of the mother.

So what do you do if you were one of those young wartime brides

with a marriage license that suggests one age and a school record that gives another birthdate? Or when a record that identifies the parents properly but gives the wrong date?

You simply keep searching. If there's no hospital birth record, no attending doctor's or midwife's record, there are still other places to look.

Time allowing, we could send for an official record of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. If the person had a child the birth certificate may indicate the parents' ages. A driver's license also indicates birth date.

After that, immunization records, insurance applications or policies, employment records, passport, court records, hospital admission records, tax records.

Then there's always the affidavit of personal knowledge.

By this time you've either proven you are who you say, or you simply no longer know who you are.



Speaking of welfare reform...

'Teaching' Is Truly A Test Of One's Mettle

"Miz McCowan"—that was my name at the time—"I cannot relate to you."

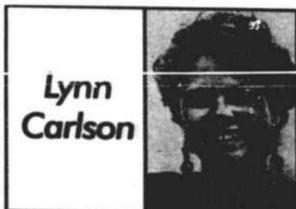
"Like I care," I told the 6-foot-2, 250-pound "student" to whom I was administering the Test of Adult Basic Education. I'd had it with this bozo.

Alpheus, a grown man and a veteran of the Vietnam war being "educated" via the G.I. Bill, had spent the previous three months in my classroom, known in educationese as The Learning Lab.

The learning lab approach was simple. You didn't even need a real teacher to operate one—that's why I was there. You simply provided all the materials someone might need to learn to read better, let them work at their own speed, grade their papers and test their progress every few weeks.

One "teacher" could supervise several dozen reading-deficient students at any given time. When a student's test scores indicated 11th- or 12th-grade reading proficiency, he or she would be ready to enter a curriculum course or take the GED test.

But old Alpheus preferred killing time to making any overt effort to improve his reading skills above fifth-grade level. He came to class at 8 a.m. daily, just an hour off his well-paying third-shift job as a machinist, sometimes smelling of beer, frequently placing his head on the



Lynn Carlson

computer table in front of him and sleeping until time to move on from my remedial reading class to his remedial math lab next door.

I had tried to be patient, encouraging him to take advantage of the many thousands of dollars worth of computers, tapes, tape players, headsets, games and high-tech toys on which he was supposed to glide, "self-paced," into the wonderful world of adult literacy.

At first I interpreted his macho indifference as a cover for terrible insecurity—until I faced the fact that he sincerely cared about nothing except making a D and keeping his benefits. He didn't get that D from me.

And then there was Sally, just three years my senior, sweet and eager to learn. I'd known her for years, had watched her walk across the stage and proudly receive her high school diploma.

I was surprised to find her in my class; I was shocked to discover that

she could not read.

She "tested out," as the teachers put it, at a little below third-grade level. She recognized words, but not well enough to read a classified ad, a newspaper article or the directions on the back of a cake mix box.

When all the other little girls Sally's age were starting first grade, she was at home caring for her gravely ill mother, serving as surrogate mama for her little brothers and sisters. Her mother had died when she was 11 or 12 years old, and Sally had started school for the first time in the fifth or sixth grade.

Determination and pride kept her afloat in school, she said—that and the fact that she was so nice, so well-behaved and so hard-working that teachers just didn't have the heart to flunk her and embarrass her.

She had come to community college to study nursing. It was there that her reading limitation became undeniable and she was sent to the Learning Lab to improve her skills. She'd been there, studying math and reading, for more than a year. Night after night she worked on her studies at home; day after day she did everything she was supposed to do in class, and then some.

Her math skills were improving slowly, but her reading seemed to be going nowhere. And her husband was losing his patience with funding Sally's studies when she'd been

there for a year and wasn't even in the nursing curriculum yet.

I expressed my concerns about it to the more experienced teachers, and they sympathized but offered no solutions. Sally, they said, obviously had a serious learning disability which wasn't diagnosed back in one of those years she missed. At this point, we simply didn't have the resources to help her much.

My teaching career began and ended with that quarter in the Learning Lab. I hadn't set out to be there in the first place. The cooperative education program for which I'd been working as a recruiter/counselor had been de-funded by the feds, so I was offered this Learning Lab job instead. The money was good and the hours were reasonable, but I couldn't reconcile myself to anything else about the work.

It seemed to me a flawed concept, that a majority of adults with poor reading skills could do better if they worked with equipment instead of instructors, at their own pace instead of competing with other students. It certainly wasn't working out for Alpheus, who was wasting a handful of taxpayers' money, or Sally, who deserved a better return on her own investment.

I don't know whether they still use the learning lab approach to remedial reading and math. I'm not sure I want to know.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Defendant's Wife Is Critical Of Judge Jenkins' Comments

To the editor:

I am writing this letter because I feel there is a judge who serves our county of Brunswick that is very unfair. This man is Judge Knox Jenkins.

You see, my husband was on trial last week for (first-degree) murder. His name is David Gilley. The jury had five verdicts to choose from. They were murder 1, murder 2, voluntary manslaughter, involuntary manslaughter and not guilty.

The jury came in with involuntary because they found the shooting to be an accident, but my husband did carry a gun into the bar all of this happened in. By this verdict they found no racism to be involved.

When the judge sentenced my husband he made racism to be an aggravating factor, and he then sentenced him to the maximum term.

At his sentencing, he made a few very uncalled-for statements that were meant to do nothing but humiliate my husband, our family and the jury.

Those comments were, "If I had my way, Mr. Gilley, you would serve every day of those 10 years." When my husband made an apology to the family of the deceased, (the judge) then told him, "That was just one more sorry excuse had had heard for taking a man's life." He then went into a very long speech about D-Day and the killing of Jews because of their race.

My husband had a fair trial and an excellent defense attorney. But I don't understand Judge Jenkins, who was supposed to be impartial and through his comments turned out to be completely biased. There were jury members who came into

our attorney's office the next day and said, "If we had known the judge was going to be that way, (we) would have rendered a not guilty verdict."

Our whole community is outraged by this judge. Can anything be done about this?

Teresa Gilley Supply

Beware Alliances

To the editor:

In days gone by, though not too many, this country had the finest telephone system in the world. Enter the United States Government to break up the "evil" monopoly. Our magnificent telephone system was broken up into what became "regional alliances."

What were the results? Some calls cannot be completed from one area

to another. Trying to cross company lines, i.e. "regional alliances," on a credit card call is an absurdly frustrating experience. Service is often interrupted for inordinate lengths of time. Computerized voices cannot answer questions, and it is often difficult to reach a live human voice.

An example of the resulting cost reduction to the American people is that a collect call from Little River to Calabash, a distance of less than one mile, costs \$5.25.

Now we have the finest quality and delivery of health care in the world. Enter the United States Government. First step? Create "regional alliances." Guess what will happen to the quality and delivery of health care?

John McAleer Calabash

More Philanthropy

To the editor:

In reference to the article on Odell Williamson in the May 26 Island Living section, I would like to call your attention to something you did not mention concerning Mr. Williamson's philanthropy.

Through his generosity the Ocean Isle Museum of Coastal Carolina became a reality with the donation of

land for the building.

The museum is a great asset to this area. It continues to grow. The school children love it, and visitors from other states are impressed with the caliber of the exhibits.

Mr. Williamson, as well as all contributors, are to be commended for their gifts to the public.

Ruth Hood

Sunset Beach

(More Letters, Following Page)

