

Freshman whips 'disabled' label

by Dee Evans

Victoria Ann Douglas is defeating stereotyped notions of disabled people.

The freshman English major from Newark, is stricken with a "minor case" of cerebral palsy which only affects the movement of her legs.

Involvement is her weapon against superstition. She plays sports, sings in the choir and writes poems.

There was a time when Vickie would not admit to her handicap. When someone asked about her legs, she said she was in a car accident. "I was just going through a stage, but I've gotten to the point where it doesn't make a difference anymore. I now realize you have to accept people for what they are," she said.

"I run into people who make the stupid assumption that since there is something wrong with your body; then it affects your mind."

Grammar school for Vickie was no problem because everyone who attended had a handicap. Her only problem, however, was riding the "yellow banana" (school bus). "Other children would throw rocks and snowballs at our bus, and yell rude comments."

But high school became a big challenge because she entered the mainstream program where "you go from a

special school to a normal school." Vickie attended the High School of Performing Arts, concentrating on vocal music.

Fight for Rights

Vickie explained that "we (the handicapped) were excluded from certain school activities when they were planned."

Vickie, along with her peers, learned how to fight against the system in order to gain the rights she deserved. They were encouraged by two influential faculty members, Mrs. Mae Rivers and Mrs. Geraldine Street. "Since I am what I am, I'm a strong person and sympathetic. I fight for things unjust-like," she explained.

They accomplished their task. The results included special school trips such as annual picnics, New York plays, movie trips and once a week visits to the YMCA where they participated in exercise classes and swimming.

Most of all, Vickie's freshman class was the first to have a gym class for the handicapped. This was a big step for them. "I got together with my friends and we made constant visits to the principal's office. It also involved going through red tape and obtaining permission from our parents and the nurse."

"My sophomore year, I was so elated when I noticed a gym class on my schedule." She adds that "it was agony the first couple of weeks, but it was well worth it." Vickie learned a lot from her sessions with the bureaucracy. "We had to make sure they didn't step over us because they would try and get away with it," she said.

"Physical" Therapy

Vickie's routines are as normal as any other teenager's. People are often surprised that her favorite pastime is playing sports.

At Camp Merryheart, which she has attended since she was eight, Vickie became involved in basketball, kickball, swimming, hiking and fishing—"basically the same stuff you do at any other camp," she said.

She has trouble swimming: "I don't swim because I can't kick hard enough. I often find myself either yelling for the lifeguard or just sinking," she said.

She has always liked tumbling even though she is restricted from it, "but everyone is limited from something."

Like any other teenager, she has applied for jobs such as a cashier for a fast-food restaurant and a hospital volunteer, but she hasn't been hired. She said, "I was so anxious to get a job, I never

noticed whether they discriminated against me." If the question of her handicap did come up in an interview, she would simply inform the employer that her handicap does not hinder her mobility: "I get to where I'm going."

Things are not always on the bright side of the rainbow for Vickie. Sometimes her disability gets her down. "It will do it to you every once and a while."

Beating the Blues

She does have remedies to bring her spirit back. She may run or talk to friends on the telephone "like an all-American teenager." She may even write poetry about what is bothering her. "I just do anything to occupy myself. Sometimes I just cry, depending on how bad it is."

Among her remedies is a great sense of humor. "You have to be humorous or the stuff can really get you down. It makes me happy to make other people laugh."

Vickie dreams about what it would be like if medical technology could find a cure for the handicap. "I dream how my life would be different if I didn't have a handicap," she said. "It's funny because I should have accepted it by now, but it's something in the back of my mind about not accepting it."

"I encourage others like myself, not to accept it when

someone says you can't do anything," Vickie says, feeling that no matter what is wrong with you, if you think you can do something, try it anyway. "Don't do a downer on yourself," she added.

Getting Around

Vickie has won various awards in school for achievement and effort which include the Edward I. Pfeiffer Award. When she was younger, she appeared on an Easter Seal Telethon. Her most rewarding experience was her trip to Caesar's Palace in Atlantic City with the upward bound program, in which she took journalism classes. At the casino, she had the chance to interview Muhammad Ali and Larry Holmes. Unfortunately, she only got as far as Veronica Ali, but she had the time of her life.

Aside from her active participation in sports, Vickie sings in the Bennett College Choir. "I also love a good debate," she added.

Her ultimate goal is to be a success with whatever career she chooses. "I just want to be a fulfilled person and enjoy what I do—just be happy," she emphasizes. This leads into her motto: "Set high goals and try to achieve them, but be realistic."

All in all, Vickie is just the "average insane college student."

and the questions were well-rounded. On the whole the evening was an intellectual experience."

Interview do's

by Cynthia Spruill

The national job market is tight, so when you get an interview for any job, you should be prepared to bowl the interviewer over, according to Career Services Director Jacqueline Jeffers.

She pointed out several matters that can help you conquer the interview blues. Jeffers suggests you research the company and its products as well as the annual report, benefits offered and the company's locations. You can obtain this information at the career library and check the college placement directory or annual.

Jeffers says you next concern should be your clothing. You should wear a skirt and never wear jeans even if you will be wearing jeans to the job every day. A suit can also present a professional image. Make sure you are comfortable in whatever you are wearing. Pay close attention to your hairstyle; make-up should be moderately applied.

Preparation is crucial for a successful interview, according to the director. The interviewer will be concerned with your plans for the next ten years. How much money do you plan to earn in ten years and what salary are you looking for? Do you have the skills that an organization seeks? Have these answers in mind.

Your attitude should be sincere, and you should communicate fluently with the interviewer. Always answer questions with more than a 'yes' or 'no.' Note that some interviewers will talk quite a bit, but let them know you are interested in what they are saying. Express yourself very clearly so the interviewer will know you have enthusiasm. Show maturity by expressing your goals in a clear manner and conduct yourself like you're determined to get the job. Market yourself as a prized product.

There are many ways to flub an interview, says Jeffers. At the top of the list are tardiness and an unrealistic conception of starting salaries. The director urges you to remember that new employees do not start at the top; they have to work themselves up the ladder.

Other nemeses to avoid are knowing too little about the company, turning on too much charm and talking too much or too little.

"Prof" combats economic gloom

by Leslie Barr and Evelyn Sims

If a stage version of "Wonder Woman" is ever produced here, a dynamic lady in the home economics department is likely to be tapped for the top part.

Mrs. Queen Hester Bell's contributions to the college are becoming as locally legendary as the feats of the caped crusader. Bell is fortifying Bennett's place on the map.

So far this academic year, she has secured an important grant for the school and community and served as the prime mover behind the North Carolina Home Economics Association (NCHEA) meeting, which succeeded despite the snow storm Feb. 11.

First things first. Recognizing the gravity of the job market and anxious to increase the versatility of wage-earners, Bell wrote a proposal encouraging the development of skills in home economics and related fields, and her program in self-employment received a \$15,000 grant from the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church.

The funding, which covers two years, has been used to design two mini-courses for students and members of the community for enhancing careers in catering, housing, nutrition for the elderly, alteration and renovation of clothing and repairing small appliances.

The program is Bell's attempt to combat the job shortage.

Rights debated

(From Page 1)

bin Rowe, Rosa Singletary, Lvnell Wellington and Dawn Wilson.

The first night of the colloquium, the scholars delivered short papers. The audience asked each writer debatable and sometimes unanswerable questions on her paper. The second night followed the same format with Dr. Blanch Curry, associate professor of philosophy at Shaw University, responding

Students in the mini-courses get one hour credit, in-service training and assignment to small businesses in the city.

According to Bell, the grant helps people to work within the system instead of against it.

In addition, she says, people have a tremendous desire "to secure self-sufficiency through self-employment on a part-time or full-time basis and as a means of securing a job with a larger business."

The self-help theme keyed the NCHEA meeting, and Bell's guiding hand was everywhere present. Mrs. Ann Pfisterer, president of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, gave an address on "The Role of Self-Employment in Our Economy."

Special guests stressed independence and initiative. Shirley J. McFarland, executive secretary of the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, presented step-by-step methods for opening a business. Ida Bracken, project director for Garrett Sullivan Co., CPA, provided contact persons and agencies in specific areas for persons wanting to start a business.

These resource guests were self-starters. Not even the weather could hold them back.

Commented Bell: "Even though there were four inches of snow on the ground, the attendance and the attention of the audience were great."

The spirit of "Wonder Woman" must have been contagious.

Greensboro, was the speaker.

Dawn Wilson, president of the Scholars, said, "A colloquium of the speakers."

The third night was "Guest Speaker Night." Dr. Terrance McConnell, associate professor of philosophy at the University of North Carolina at quium of this nature is enhanced by audience participation, and our main concern was whether or not the audience would ask the panelists questions. I believe that the Bennett Scholars' diligent work and the audiences' active participation all helped in making the 1983 Spring colloquium a success."

Leslie Barr, participant in the program, said, "There was a very attentive audience



"Self Employment:" (left to right) Sherry Salaam and Patricia Walker are embodying this new goal of the home economics department. Professors Queen Hester Bell and Louise G. Streat have been instrumental in creating innovative programs.

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