

The Pendulum

Volume XIII, No. 21
Thursday, April 2, 1987

Stack sees hope for the black family

By Aleta Sinkfield
Staff Writer

"I'm the king, I'm the king," says Timothy, a young black shadowboxing inside the very room of a hospital where Alice, a young black woman, has just given birth to their third child.

Timothy and Alice are not married. Timothy has three other children by three different women.

Timothy says he plans to marry Alice because he loves her. He is employed. Alice receives a welfare check of \$385 a month and \$112 in food stamps.

Alice is always telling Timothy that he needs to get a job, that it could not be hard to find one, that she doesn't want to spend the rest of her life awaiting those monthly

checks from the government.

Cases like this one are not unusual; they provided the topic for a two-day symposium on the black family in America held here last week.

The program began with a Tuesday evening screening of the 1986 CBS documentary, *The Vanishing Family: Crisis in Black America*, in Whitley Auditorium. Program narrator Bill Moyers painted a bleak picture for black Americans, demonstrating how single-parent families, unwed teenage pregnancies and high unemployment have become the rule in most black communities.

However, on Wednesday Dr. Carol Stack, associate professor of anthropology and public policy at Duke University, offered a more positive outlook for the black American family.

Stack said that documentaries can tell people anything and that she wanted to give a different picture than Moyers presented.

Stack asked her Whitley Auditorium audience to recall a scene in the CBS documentary in which Moyers interviewed a 17-year-old unwed black mother named Clardina. Stack noted that Clardina's mother--a strong-looking woman who had herself been a teenage mother--sat near her daughter but was not interviewed. Nor did Moyers interview any of the others in the household who might have been helping Clardina raise her child.

The point of her criticism, Stack said, is that people work out different strategies for survival and that they do not always regard living on welfare as an easy or acceptable means of survival.

Stack also noted that "extensive reverse migration" of blacks may help stop the dissolution of black families that Moyers' documentary identified.

In the early twentieth century, it was common for blacks to move from the South to the North in search of better jobs, Stack said. "Now descendants of those who migrated north are returning home to their relatives in the rural South," she said.

The Moyers program dealt in part with this idea of "reverse migration" in depicting the case of a black woman named Brenda, who with her children attended a family reunion in South Carolina. "But Brenda's family was just visiting," Stack pointed out. "The documentary showed a little hope for the survival of her family, but it took her back to hard times in

Newark, N.J."

Stack was critical of governmental policies such as the welfare system for contributing to the breakup of black families. "The father often has to move out of the home before the family receives any payments," she said. "Furthermore, if the father is paying child support, the family does not receive the money. It goes back to the state to repay welfare benefits."

Stack argued that Moyers' documentary "presented only one reality about the black family" and suggested that its characterization of blacks may have reinforced the frustration of other Americans about the welfare system.

Campus cat gives birth

By Greg Zaiser
Staff Writer

plays an active role in taking care of campus animals.

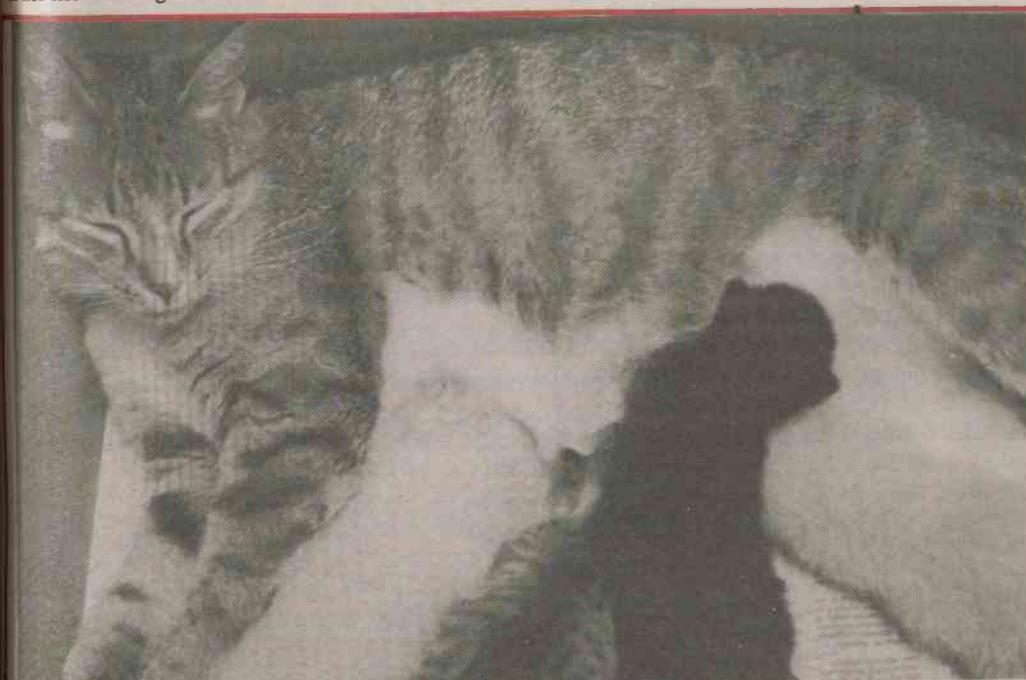
While students and faculty were enjoying a well-deserved spring break, a blessed event occurred here on campus.

Ms. Serif, the latest stray feline to take up residence at Elon, gave birth to four bouncing baby kittens on Wednesday, March 25. They were christened Bodini, Helvetica, Bold and Italica--names derived from printing terms. The kittens are affectionately known as *The Copycats*.

Laura Bennett, director of the print shop in Carlton Building, is playing the role of hostess (and midwife) Ms. Serif and family. She is an avid animal lover who

Bennett's "cat fund" raises money to assist in spaying or neutering stray cats that wander onto campus. Presently, funds are being raised to have Ms. Serif spayed. Donations can be made in the Print Shop.

As for the kittens, they are growing rapidly everyday. Ms. Serif has proven to a wonderful mom and the future looks extremely promising for the new family. All four kittens have safe and happy homes waiting for them as soon as they are old enough. Congratulations, Ms. Serif!



Ms. Serif and her four kittens relax long enough to get a good meal in their bellies. The kittens were born last Wednesday during spring break. Mom and babies are doing fine. Photo by Matt Howell

INSIDE

'Outrageous Fortune'

A review

P. 4

ROTC program successful
Cadets trained in leadership

P. 8