

New Bern Public Library

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We didn't know, until our good friend Imilda Barbour mentioned it to us the other day, that she and Astronaut Gordon Cooper hail from the same town—Shawnee, Oklahoma.

Sightless since birth, she has been a case worker for the North Carolina State Commission For the Blind for the past 18 years. During that length of time she has served in six counties. Since 1948 she has been in New Bern, and her duties embrace three counties—Craven, Carteret and Pamlico.

Happily married to Cliff Barbour, she is a shining example of the way a person can adjust to the challenge that confronts them. Even if we felt so inclined, Imilda wouldn't like it at all if we tried to write a sob story about her.

There isn't much point in trying to boost a gal's morale, when it needs no boosting. Instead, we'll try to boost yours (and ours) as we plod along complaining over things that Imilda is much too big to worry about. The tonic you need is a liberal dose of her optimism and serenity.

Don't get us wrong, she isn't the sort who pretends that the bad things don't exist. Offhand, we can't recall meeting a more realistic mortal in all our born days than this transplanted Oklahoman. It's just that she accepts the facts of life without bitterness or frustration.

"The greatest problem I have, she says, "in reaching a blind person is getting them to admit without bitterness that they have a handicap they must live with. I don't paint too optimistic a picture. Well, you've got this situation I tell them, what are we going to do with it?"

Obviously, it's the right approach. Imilda will probably want to wring our neck for dubbing her an inspiration, but that's what she is. She convinces those she visits that they too can learn to read Braille and write it, that they are capable of doing many things they don't, at the moment, consider possible.

You might ask, as we did, how a blind girl from Oklahoma ended up in North Carolina as an instructor for those who share her handicap. The answer shows how much vision—and we're not trying to make a pun—the Old North State has on occasion.

Suppose we start at the beginning. Imilda received her Elementary and High school education at the Oklahoma School For the Blind. After that, in the midst of The Great Depression, she attended Oklahoma Baptist University on the proverbial shoestring, and graduated with an A. B. degree.

Here in North Carolina, authorities in a position to know had reached the conclusion that no one was better qualified to aid the blind than college graduates who were blind themselves. Imilda was invited to take a year's postgraduate work in social studies at the University of North Carolina, with the understanding that she would become a State employee.

Neither she nor the North Carolina Commission For the Blind has had reason to regret the arrangement. Although Imilda would say we are being corny in making such a state-

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SURF AND SAND—From May through October, residents of our city can pick a seashore that's lively or lonely, according to their preferences, along North Carolina's varied coast. Seaside resorts to suit your

taste are on narrow off-shore islands or "banks" linked to the mainland by bridges, causeways and free automobile ferries. For fun in the sun, the Atlantic is calling, a few miles from your home.



CLOSE AT HAND—New Bernians don't have to travel far to see historic Fort Macon. A brick pentagon surrounded by a moat separating the inner structure from the outer defenses, it guarded Beaufort Inlet on the

central North Carolina during the Civil War. Confederate forces held it from April 1861, until its surrender to Yankee attackers a year later after severe bombardment. How do you like this remarkable aerial photo?