

Eastern Echoes

By Gail Roberson



"Lost. Two-thirds of my life to loneliness. Reward offered if you can salvage the rest."

I was about to place the receiver back in place on the eighth ring when a shakey, barely audible voice answered, "Yes?"

"I'm calling about your ad," I responded. "Are you the one who placed it?" And, from that moment on, my life began to change. The number I had dialed had taken me half across the state and a good portion of my week's salary, but it was probably the most important call I ever made. I found someone who had nothing and nobody, and who was so lonely that the last attempt to reach out had been an open cry of desperation that the whole world could see.

Hard as it is to believe, I was told that not another person had responded to that ad. Not a church group, a public service or private citizen. This wasn't exactly the ordinary classified. I find it amazing that it hadn't swayed some curiosity. I guess folks just fear the worst in people.

I had never seen such an ad. It fascinated me from first glance. Who would place it, and why, and the story behind those words, finally got the best of me. I've always believed I was meant to open that unfamiliar paper and find it there. Through this experience, I learned much about the lonely, and wrote several articles on it.

We've all experienced it at some point... that hollow loneliness that envelopes and consumes, like the person in the ad. For some of us it is just a blue mood once in a while, while for others it's a constant companion. You would think that in a world of telephones, telegraphs and television, it would be hard to get lonely. But the truth is, loneliness is more common than you think.

Surveys show that, as a group, urban girls who are seniors in high school are the most lonely people. Highly intelligent children are also more prone to loneliness, as are both rural adolescents and adults. Surprisingly, the elderly are not.

I think that how lonely you are depends mainly on you... not your surroundings. There is a difference between loneliness and solitude. I am definitely in rural surroundings, yet I am never lonely though I spend most of my time alone. I enjoy the solitude because it offers me a retreat where I can think about things... like what I'm going to write next, and life. When I'm ready to interact with people, I do it, and when I'm not, I don't.

You can't reduce loneliness by working harder to get your mind off it or by watching television. The best way to kick loneliness is to first recognize that loneliness is born inside you, not outside. Admit if you are lonely... and then do something about it. Get involved, but remember that those with a few activities are involved; those with many are apparently still searching.

People who don't often experience loneliness have a higher self-esteem and a more positive attitude towards themselves and everything else. Surround yourself with positive people. Negative folks just pull you down that much further.

Hopefully, you won't ever be as lonely as the person who placed the ad. If you can just realize that loneliness comes from within, maybe your life will never by one of those so often lost to loneliness. Hopefully.

New FmHA Regulations Designed To Give Help

NEW BERN — New Farmers Home Administration regulations designed to help financially trouble farmers have been issued, according to the Craven County FmHA office in New Bern.

"The new regulations give us a whole line of possible actions to help FmHA borrowers who are behind in their payments through no fault of their own," a spokesman said. The regulations took effect Oct. 14.

The major new feature is the debt write-down feature, which is possible after all other options have been tried.

Also, the write-down can be applied only if it would cost the government less than it would cost to foreclose. In that case, FmHA can write-down the amount of debt between what the farmer owes and the value of the farmer's loan collateral. In 10 years, the farmer would have to back some of the collateral. In 10 years, the farmer would have to pay back some of the write-down if the value of the collateral has appreciated.

Before a write down is considered, the county supervisor will

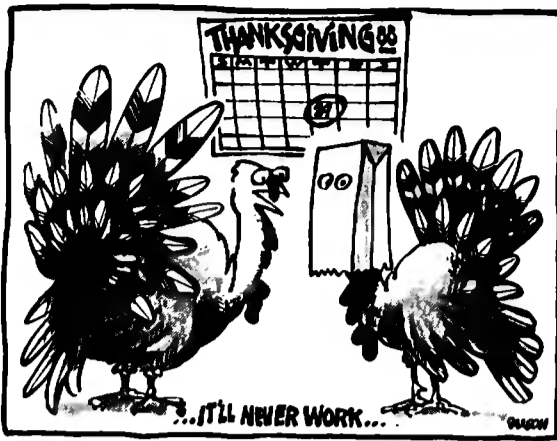
check to be sure other options such as conservation easement or softwood timber programs have been considered. Other alternatives to help the borrower pay back his or her loan include replacing current loans with lower interest loans or stretching out payments over a longer period of time.

Davis said there are 53 FmHA farm loan borrowers in Hyde County. Of these, 11 are at least 180 days delinquent.

"The purpose of the new regulations is to be sure we have done everything possible to help FmHA borrowers stay in business and be sure that foreclosure takes place only after every other alternative has been explored," said the spokesman.

Birth

Godley
Mr. and Mrs. Elwood Thomas Godley Jr., and Thomas Day, of Vanceboro announce the birth of a daughter, and sister, Melissa Ann, on Nov. 12 at Craven Regional Medical Center. She weighed 7 lbs., 13/12 ounces.



Bike Program Offers Selection Guidelines

RALEIGH — A bicycle for Christmas is one of childhood's most memorable presents. If you plan to help Santa Claus select a bicycle for a young child this season, the Bicycle Program of North Carolina wants to help you.

"Correct sizing is the main consideration," said Bicycle Coordinator Curtis B. Yates of the N.C. Department of Transportation. "Don't buy a bicycle that is too large. The child must be able to get on and off and use the brakes without difficulty. Too many children are injured when they cannot control their bicycles."

Yates urged parents to follow these guidelines. Size is very important. From the seat, the child should be able to touch the ground with both feet. Standing over the bicycle straddling the top bar, the child should be at least an inch above the bar. On a BMX-style bicycle, reaching the pedals and brakes is even more critical since the bar is low and a BMX bike is designed to be ridden standing up on the pedals.

If the bicycle is a surprise gift, tell the bicycle shop the child's inseam measurement, age, height and general level of coordination.

On a BMX-style and other children's models, the child must be able to reach hand and foot brakes. Children under 4 or 5 years old who use foot brakes must be able to reach the pedals comfortably while seated.

Older children who use a BMX or 10-speed bicycle equipped with hand brakes must be able to reach the handlebars comfortably. They may also need to develop hand strength. Certain intermediate styles have both hand and foot brakes.

To measure brake reach on a conventional 5- or 10-speed bike, place the child's elbow against the nose of the seat. If the fingers can reach the handlebar stem, the bike is probably the correct size.

A bicycle should be matched to the individual child's riding habits and skills. A larger 8-year-old interested in learning stunts may need a BMX bike with strong wheels. A smaller 8-year-old just starting to ride may need only a "stingray" or "polo" style

bike with a banana seat and high handlebars. Bike shops can advise parents which models to consider.

Training wheels can be used on any bicycle, but they are not a substitute for a tricycle. Training wheels are intended to teach a child to lean, balance and turn a bicycle properly. Wheels should be adjusted about 1/4" above the ground on both sides, rather than flat.

Assembling a bicycle from a box is only half the job; adjusting the bike is also important and is more difficult for an untrained person to do correctly.

The Bicycle Program urges parents to consider a bicycle shop for assembly. The shop fee may range from \$15 to \$20. Do this early in the shopping season since December is such a busy time.

No matter who assembles a bicycle, regular maintenance is an important ingredient in safety.

"When kids first get a bike, the first two or three weeks they treat it rougher than any other time. They really want to get out and see what it can do," said Eric Towne, manager of LifeCycle Sports in Durham.

Bringing the bike to a shop for a check-up is inexpensive and can prevent accidents as well as major repair bills. If the bike was purchased from a bicycle shop, according to Towne, check-ups are normally free for as long as six months.

Finally, according to Bicycle Coordinator Yates, "We strongly urge parents to purchase helmets. For children, manufacturers now offer small sizes that protect this most vulnerable and crucial part of the child's body. Head injuries are involved in three-quarters of serious bicycle accidents."

Children's bicycle helmets are sold at most bicycle shops for as little as \$30. A helmet should meet either the "ANSI Standard" or the "Snell Standard," indicated by a sticker inside the helmet. Children's helmets with replaceable pads come in small, medium or large sizes.

For a free pamphlet, "Bicycle Safety: What Every Parent Should Know," call or write the Bicycle Program, NCDOT, P.O. Box 25201, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.

Bassin' with the pros

Of all types of structure in a lake, few are more obvious than the steep, imposing bluff banks that cradle some waters. Few are more lightly fished, either.

"Actually," says top lady bass pro Freda Lee, a member of the Johnson Outboards Pro Staff, "bluffs can offer surprisingly good fishing, especially in the middle of the day when other structure doesn't produce."

The key to look for when fishing a bluff says the former model-turned bass pro is a gradual stair-stepping bottom below the water. Bass often hold on these steps and willingly hit jigs, worms and crankbaits.

When the bluff continues straight down, explains Lee, the places to fish are at either end of the bluff where the bottom is more likely to be a gentle slope of gravel and smaller rocks.

"Normally, I like to study a bluff with a depthfinder or chart recorder before I start fishing," says Lee. "Often, you can guess at what's below by studying how it looks above water, but a run along the edge with a depthfinder will tell you for certain."

"Another thing I look for are possible points or pockets within the bluff itself, which bass always seem to use. I also look for rock slides, timber that has washed in and anchored, or anything else that breaks up the sheer face of the bluff because that's what bass will be attracted to."

Lee fishes stair-step bluffs several ways. One technique is positioning her boat in 15 to 17 feet of water and casting a jig directly in toward the rocks. She plays out line and gradually drops the jig down the steps.

Another technique she recommends anglers try is parallel casting along the rock face with a deep diving crankbait. When she feels the lure bounce into the rocks, she hesitates the retrieve momentarily, then starts reeling again. The lure acts like a crayfish skittering along the bottom.

"When you cast parallel like this," says Lee, "you can easily work several depths, depending on where you position your boat. Sometimes I have my boat 10 or 12 feet out from the bluff, and other times I'll be right in tight against the rocks."

Where bluffs are standing by themselves in the water seemingly out in the middle of nowhere, the Johnson Outboards pro often concentrates on the upstream side of the bluff where there is likely to be some debris washed in or possibly an eddy where the water breaks around the rocks. In either instance, bass are often present.

"Surprisingly," says Lee, "these isolated bluffs are often better than the regular shoreline bluffs, simply because they offer the only shallow structure around. When I see them in a lake I always check them with a depthfinder."

On some lakes with steep bluffs, bass will also hit a fast-moving spinnerbait, says Lee. The trick is to bring the lure back as close to the rock wall as possible and as fast as possible without breaking the surface.

"I've also noticed bluffs that have darker shades of rock hold bass better than light shades of rock," says Lee. "It's simply a matter of light reflection. The fish feel more comfortable where the rock doesn't reflect as much light."

Guard Against Toy-Related Eye Injuries During Holidays

When shopping for children's holiday gifts, beware of dangerous toys that threaten the eyes warns the North Carolina Society to Prevent Blindness.

An estimated 21,000 eye injuries were linked to toys and sports equipment used by children last year. Three-quarters of these accidents were suffered by kids under the age of 15.

Playthings with pieces that shoot or fly off are particularly dangerous to eyes and should be avoided. A U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission survey of hospital emergency rooms indicates that children under the age of 15 were victims of eye injuries predominantly from sling-shots or sling-propelled toys, toy guns and other toy weapons with projectiles.

BB and pellet guns are particularly hazardous to children's eyes and should not be considered as toys. Not only are the number of children's BB and pellet gun eye injuries high, they are also severe, often resulting in the loss of the eye.

According to the Society, 90 percent of all eye injuries are preventable. Safety-conscious adults can protect children from eye damage, or even the loss of an eye several ways:

— Choose toys and games carefully. In some cases, the child may be too young to use a particular toy safely. Factors such as strength, coordination and ability to follow instructions should be taken into account.

— Teach children how to play safely with toys and supervise their use. It's important that a child understands how to use a

toy and does not take a "harmless" plaything and make it dangerous. An example of this would be a child pulling rubber tips off darts or throwing a toy airplane at another child.

— Insist that children use eye protective eyewear for games that require them. Baseball, basketball, football and racquet sports are the source of a great many eye injuries to children. The right face shield or sports goggles can greatly reduce the risk of eye accidents.

— Be aware of the risks posed by gifts for older children as well. Chemistry and science sets, craft and hobby kits often involve projects requiring safety glasses. Activities such as wood burning, mixing chemicals and use of fast acting glues are a few examples. In addition, these kits must be kept out of reach of younger brothers and sisters.

"Prevent Blindness" has a number of resources to assist adults in protecting children's eyes. For more information about eye health and safety during the holidays or at any time of the year, contact the North Carolina Society to Prevent Blindness, 1033 Wade Ave., Suite 126, Raleigh, N.C. 27605.

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