

# The Way I See It

by Dr. Dean Chavers, President  
Native American Scholarship Fund  
Albuquerque, NM



## A tribute to Michael Dorris

I have not slept a good night's sleep in a long time. Sometimes I wonder why I can't sleep. Then I think it must be hundreds of people I killed in Viet Nam. Or it could be my unfulfilled desire to be a "serious" writer. It could even be my guilt at leaving home at 16. I don't know. It could be demons.

My friend Michael Dorris, with enormous talent, also had demons, the media say. His father committed suicide shortly after coming home from World War II and starting a family. Michael, I suspect, had a lot of sleepless nights over this. He allegedly covered it up for decades, and only admitted it recently.

I met Michael through letters in 1972. I was teaching at California State University at Hayward, and he was teaching at Dartmouth. He was new to the whole business of developing an Indian Studies program, as we all were. But I had been through the ropes at UC Berkeley three years earlier and took part of what I had learned there, and some of the curriculum, to the job at Hayward.

Michael and I only talked on the phone and wrote letters back and forth for almost ten years. We never met. Then, in the 1970's or early 1980's, I don't remember which year, I met Michael. I was expecting a laid-back, tweedy, pipe-smoking, Volvo-driving kind of guy. Instead, I met an angry young man.

It was at one of the national research planning meetings of the National Institute of Education that I met him. I still remember, and can not put it into words, the edge he had about him. He seemed to be mad about something the whole time. He seemed to be irritated about being there. It seemed that he could not calm down.

I had carried around this picture of him for a decade, and my picture and his reality did not match. I have never forgotten the impression, and the dissimilarity. Dr. Henri Whiteman was at the two-day meeting, and I remember asking her if something was wrong with Michael. I thought she would know, because she had spent a year teaching with him at Dartmouth, and knew pretty well.

Her answer, and I can not remember it exactly, was something like, "Oh, that's just how Michael is."

Ten years later, I read his amazing book "The Broken Cord" and gained some insight into the struggle Michael had gone through. He had, shortly after he went to Dartmouth, as a single parent, adopted a Lakota baby boy. He learned several years later that the baby had Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Before he was born, while he was still in the womb, Adam's mother had been a steady, regular, every-day drinker. The baby was almost swimming in alcohol when he was born. The alcohol did permanent brain damage to the baby, damage from which he could never recover.

I read the book from cover to cover, practically without putting it

down. The book was a revelation. It reported on a phenomenon which instantly became a cause of national concern, a big concern for Indians, but a concern for everyone. Women who drink are doing real damage to their unborn children, the message said.

I don't know when the makers of wines, beers, and spirits started putting warning labels on their products for pregnant women. But all of a sudden millions of people became aware of the dangers of pregnant women drinking alcohol. Michael did a real service to them and to untold millions of future babies.

He had gone through hell and confusion with Adam. He did not want other parents to have to do the same things he had to do.

I wrote to Michael the last time in 1990, according to my files. I had asked him to be the keynote speaker at a conference. He wrote back and said "Unfortunately I am already committed to be somewhere else on the dates in question. I appreciate your thinking of me and wish you and your organization a very successful conference."

I have a picture of Michael in my file, from the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, from 1989. I looked at it the other day and imagined I could see the pain in his arched brows, his concerned expression, it is not as severe as the hurt I felt on our first meeting, but it is there.

I wish I knew why Michael committed suicide. I wish I knew why he had committed himself to a rehabilitation program several weeks before he committed suicide. I wish I knew why he had so much pain. We all have pain. I have had little pains all my life, but never nearly enough to make me think about suicide. The pain that would cause that has to be awful.

"Newsweek" thinks his father's suicide, when he was a baby, might have been the cause of his suicide, and cause of his pain in life. Other people think it was the alleged charges of some kind of child abuse which

## McIntyre to Host Forum on Agriculture/Rural Development

Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Mike McIntyre announced that he will be hosting a "Forum on Agriculture/Rural Development" in Fayetteville, NC, on June 16, 1997. The event is to be held at 6:30 p.m. at the Charlie Rose Agri-Expo Center. Joining Congressman McIntyre will be his colleague on the House Agriculture Committee, Congresswoman Eva Clayton from North Carolina's 1st District.

Congressman McIntyre stated, "Agriculture is a vital component of the economy of southeastern North Carolina. Therefore, it is important for me to hear the views and concerns of those who work in this industry. I encourage farmers, agri-businesses, and anyone else affected by agriculture to attend this forum. We will

have full discussion on many of the important issues - the future of the tobacco program, proposed Farm Service Agency closings, and incentives for enhanced rural development."

Joining Congressman McIntyre and Congresswoman Clayton will be Sam Coley, State Director of the Farm Service Agency, Jim Kearney, State Director of Rural Development, and several other key agriculture leaders.

The Charlie Rose Agri-Expo Center is located at 121 East Mountain Drive in Fayetteville. The forum will be held in the Cooperative Extension Service Auditorium. Prior to the forum, a barbecue dinner will be provided by Cape Fear Farm Credit Bank beginning at 5:30 p.m.



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# PEDIATRIC POINTERS

by Dr. Joseph T. Ball  
Pediatrician with Robeson Health Care



It always seem like this time of the year is busy in the pediatric clinics. One reason for the increase number of sick patients, besides the change in weather, is that kids are still in school. Of course any time children are around one another, germs will be spread. This issue we will talk about how germs are spread and some ways to help decrease the spread of infectious diseases. Nose, mouth and eye secretions are the most common sources of respiratory infections, such as the common cold. These secretions are usually spread by contaminated hands of sometimes by kissing. Young children are especially prone to spreading these infections because they handle and mouth everything they can get their hands on.

Droplets that spread through the air by coughing or sneezing are a less common means of transmitting respiratory infections. Droplets can travel up to six feet. Fecal contamination of hands or other objects accounts for the spread of most diarrhea, as well as infectious hepatitis, unlike urine, which is usually sterile. Bowel movements are composed of up to 50% bacteria.

The discharge from sores such as

chickenpox and fever blisters can be contagious. Most red rashes without a discharge do not spread by skin contact.

Contaminated food or water accounted for many epidemics in earlier times. Even today some foods commonly contain bacteria that cause diarrhea. Around 50% of all raw turkey and chicken contains germs that can cause this illness. E. Coli, a germ that can cause bloody diarrhea, can be found in about 20% of ground beef. By contrast, despite all the media hype, less than 1% raw eggs are contaminated with the salmonella germ.

Contaminated utensils such as bottles and dishes can occasionally spread respiratory or intestinal infections. Contaminated objects such as combs, brushes, and hats can spread lice, ringworm of the scalp, or impetigo.

With all these ways to contact infectious agents, it is a wonder we all aren't sick all the time! Next week we will talk about ways to help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Take care and we'll talk again next week!

## Eight Robeson County Volunteers Nominated for 1997 Governor's Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service

Imagine for a moment there were no volunteers in Robeson County. What part of your life would be missing? Recreational activities for you and your family? The hot meal your parents can count on? Sunday school? The basket of food which helped out that Christmas you hit on hard times? Volunteers work everyday, giving selflessly to all of us. All too often, their efforts go unnoticed or appreciated. The Governor's Award for Outstanding Volunteer Service is one small way we can let volunteers know how much they mean to us and Robeson County.

Nominated for the state-wide award is: Larry Johnson, for years of community and youth oriented volunteer activities; Steve Riggio for eleven years of service to Lumberton Christian Care Center both as a board member and as a center volunteer; Dickson McLean, Jr., for his work with the Lumber River Conservancy;

James and Frances Tisdale, for many years of service to the Lumberton Christian Care Center; Wilton Wilkerson, for his personal mission to promote the "Keep Robeson Clean and Green" campaign; Doris Edwards McLean for her many volunteer projects which benefit the St. Pauls community; Young Leaders 4-H Club, for the many ways in which the club helps young people grow and contribute to their community; Ted Caliendo, for volunteer service to Southeastern Industrial Center and their clients.

All eight nominations will be sent to the Governor's office for review and hopefully further recognition. On behalf of the agencies and lives touched by these and other volunteers, thank you.

For more information about nominations or to be put on a mailing list to receive a nomination form next year, please call Margaret Crites at the Rape Crisis Center: 739-6278

## Pembroke Housing Authority Activities

On Monday night, June 2, Ms. Duffrena Locklear from Union Chapel Holiness Methodist Church treated her "Kids Time For Christ" youth to a special night at Pizza Hut in Pembroke. The event was a reward for the youth attending the program and an end of school celebration.

Mrs. Locklear sponsors the "Kids Time For Christ" on Monday nights at Maynor Manor Youth Center, something that she loves doing very much. The youth also enjoy having Ms. Locklear teach them about Christ.

The Pembroke Housing Authority would like to send a big thank you to Ms. Duffrena Locklear for taking an interest in our youth and for giving her time so unselfishly.

**Drug Awareness Day**  
Pembroke Housing Authority Drug Elimination Program will be having its annual Drug Awareness Day on June 13, 1997. The event will take place in the art at Strickland Heights Activities building at 10:30 a.m. with speakers, food, games and more. We hope the public will join with us in sending a strong anti drug awareness message throughout the community.

**March Against Drugs**  
On June 14, 1997 Pembroke Housing Authority along with other organizations and elected officials in the County will be coming together to March Against Drugs. The March will start at 9 a.m. at Pembroke Elementary School and end at UNCP. Activities and food will follow. Come join us in the March Against Drugs in Robeson County. For more information call 521-1030.



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Location: Old Pembroke Senior High  
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