



ON THE AVANT GARDE

BY TANG NIVRI

Two Little Knuckleheads!

They really are two little knuckleheads. Legs barely long enough to touch the floor as they scramble to convince me that they are tall enough to drive the family van. They pretend to be touch guys, unafraid of anything short of King Kong and Godzilla, until of course it gets dark, when they find themselves unable to fall asleep unless I leave the lights on. They insist that they hate girls, having no interest in them whatsoever, yet when I sneak up on them, perhaps overhearing a word or two on the telephone, they are always making plans, scheming and deeming about the opposite sex. When confronted with the truth, they *always* react with incredulity, as if "I have it all wrong," that "it was about homework." They think they are better than I am in basketball and enjoy challenging me in a game of horse, or even two-on-one. Whenever we play, however, I remember always to bring extra alphabets so that I can spell the word h-o-r-s-e-s-h-o-o-e-s or horse and b-u-g-g-y. I have not figured out if they are bad sports or just dreadfully awful spellers. In any case, they have yet to beat me.

Eating Whoppers at Burger King

"What about hamburgers?" I asked. "Yes!" they shouted. I knew the boys would be hungry since they had been playing all afternoon in the YMCA after-school program. There wouldn't be time to go home for dinner since tonight they would be performing in a concert at school. I suggested we try the "two whoppers — two dollar special at Burger King, where the two of them could fill up (hopefully) before I run out of money. They were dressed like most 12-year-olds: one wearing baggy pants and an imitation polo sweatshirt; the other wearing shorts with a signature T-shirt and both with named-brand sneakers much too expensive for my taste. The two little knucklehead boys cracked jokes about the size of each other's head, laughing about things that had happened earlier in the day, giggling about stuff that didn't make any sense.

They Didn't Notice

The two boys probably never noticed those who watched as they climbed out of the van and walked toward the door — but I did. The crowd was mostly older whites who had come for their evening meal. I let the boys go ahead. I didn't need to interfere with their freedom of being together. These were good kids, and I wanted others to see them for who they were. They didn't need me to validate them, but just in case, I would be standing there dressed in a blue, pinstriped suit with a business-red paisley tie — living proof-impri-matur, if needed, to those who wondered if these two boys should pass go, not to jail. I imagined everyone wondered where the boys would sit. "Will they come near us?" perhaps they feared. We sat next to a retired white couple. They didn't seem to mind.

The two hungry boys dove into their hamburgers and french fries while I listened and smiled and thought about their young lives ... and mine.

What It Must Be Like

Watching them made me wonder once again what it must feel like to eat a hamburger in peace, to eat french fries without wondering what others are thinking about you when you march up to the counter and ask for more ketchup or napkins. How do whites feel when they sit down to drink a milk shake, laugh, play, and generally just act up without worrying that their behavior will reflect on anyone other than their family, instead of on every other person who on the outside looks just like you — but who on the inside would be far different! I imagine again that eating hamburgers without such distractions is better for one's digestion, that perhaps you don't eat as fast, that it is more of a pleasure. I remember how as a child I wished I could sit in a restaurant and eat a hamburger like the teen-agers did on the "Dobie Gillis Show." I look at the boys, smiling, and encourage them to enjoy themselves at the expenses of my suit and tie.

I laugh as I correct one of the boys who lapses into slang, incorrect subject-verb tense. I want them to speak properly and not to be judged on the basis of their speech ... knowing that some of their own kind will call them "white." Never mind that.

I Wanted to Tell Them

I wanted so much to tell those who glared silently that these two boys weren't really knuckleheads, that they really were two good boys. That even tonight they would be playing in the 8th-grade band, even though they were only in the seventh grade. That their mom and dad really made sure that they went to church every Sunday! That they were good students in the local middle school. That next week, one of the boys would be traveling to Florida, where he would be studying marine life with other students. That he was going because he and his parents had sacrificed their hard-earned money so that he would have the opportunity to learn more.

That the other boy, although only 12, had taken the SAT exam and scored in the upper 19th percentile for children his age in the whole United States.

That they were just two little boys who wanted to eat hamburgers, then go home and be afraid to turn the lights off at night, scared to watch horror flicks.

I wanted to tell them but I just didn't know how.

Community

Black Cop Says Unpaid Suspension Not Fair

▲ NAACP head seeks meeting with city police chief

By RICHARD L. WILLIAMS
Chronicle Managing Editor

A Winston-Salem police officer, who was attempting to serve a warrant on a suspected law-breaker, has found himself suspended from the department without pay.

R.L. Leathers, a five-year veteran with the department, said it was unfair how the table was turned on him.

According to Leathers, this is how the situation unfolded:

On the afternoon of Feb. 23, he turned into Parkway Texaco at 851 Silas Creek Parkway after noticing a problem with a used 1984 Renault Alliance he had recently bought. A mechanic at the shop told him that it would cost \$14 to replace the radiator hose. After the repairs had been done, Leathers said he was told to pay about \$28, which after some bickering back and forth, he agreed to pay.

"I told him that if cost more than (\$14), I should have been told,"

Leathers said.

Leathers said he then went to University Jeep-Eagle — where the mechanic had purchased the part to repair the car — to find out how much the part had cost. He was told that the part was less than \$10 and Leathers returned to the auto shop with a copy of the invoice. The two exchanged words.

"He jumped up and started shouting, 'Boy, are you calling me a liar?' I told him if the shoe fits, wear it," Leathers said.

When Leathers, 28, arrived at work later that night, he mentioned the incident to his supervisor, Sgt. T.W. Rogers. Rogers, Leathers said, suggested that he contact the Clerk of Court to determine whether he had probable cause to issue a felony arrest warrant charging Steve Grubbs, the owner of the shop, with obtaining property under false pretense.

According to Leathers, he went to the shop, in uniform, during his shift.

"My intention was not to go in and arrest the guy," said Leathers, when contacted by phone at his home. "My intention was to go there, see if he was there, and if he was to have another unit called in and have that officer serve him with the warrant."

Grubbs was not there. "The next day I got a call from my sergeant that Grubbs had filed a complaint against me," Leathers said.

In addition to the four-day suspension, Leathers must undergo remedial training and is on 90-day probation.

"My only grievance was that when the incident occurred, I pursued it to the manner in which I was told," he said.

He said his initial warrant charging Grubbs was dismissed by the District Attorney's Office. District Attorney Tom Keith could not be reached for comment.

"This guy broke the law and received no type of punishment whatsoever," he said. "They believe I broke a policy, I believe I didn't, but I'm getting punished."

Leathers returns to work on Saturday.

"Our investigation revealed that he did violate some of our rules of conduct," said Capt. G.G. Cornhaber of the department's Internal Affairs Division.

The Rev. John Mendez of the Citizens United for Justice said he sees where black officers are being mistreated in the police department.

"It's a pattern that is being used to intimidate and harass black officers once they bring charges and complaint against white citizens," he said. "Blacks cannot get a fair hearing because of the racism that exists."

William Tatum, president of the Winston-Salem branch NAACP, said morale in the police department is low and that several black officers have resigned or have discussed doing so. He said he would attempt to meet with Police Chief George Sweat to discuss some possible remedies.

Grubbs, meanwhile, said he did not overcharge Leathers for the water hose. He said he included in his price the cost of labor and the cost of traveling to pick up the part.

Links: Youths Must Conquer Obstacles

By KAREN M. HANNON
Chronicle Staff Writer

America's youths must conquer the obstacles they face in society in order to build a better future, the national president of the Links Inc. said recently.

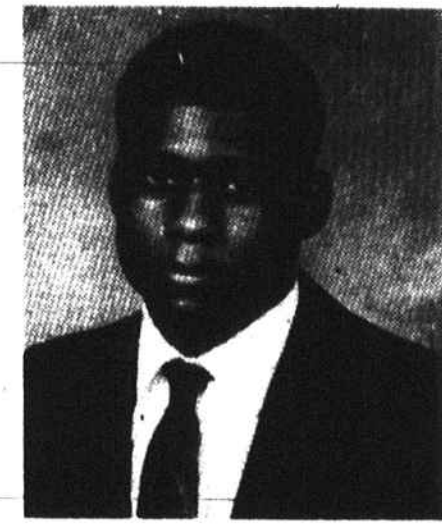
"A dream can be lived despite the stumbling blocks of hopelessness and helplessness, which are the biggest stumbling blocks in our young people," Marion S. Sutherland told over 400 Links members from the Southeast who were in Winston-Salem last week for their 32nd Southern Area Conference.

"Links should act as stepping stones and accept the challenge of raising hopes for dreams to come true," she said. "We should be stepping stones for children of the dream."

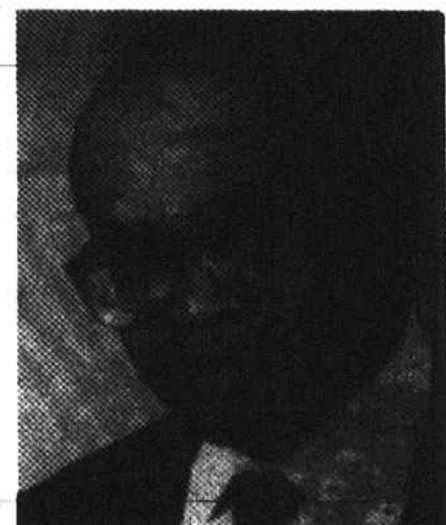
The Winston-Salem chapter hosted the conference from March 31 to April 3 at the Stouffer Winston Plaza Hotel. Members traveled from Florida, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and other cities in North Carolina to attend.

Five Winston-Salem residents were honored for their community service during Saturday's luncheon.

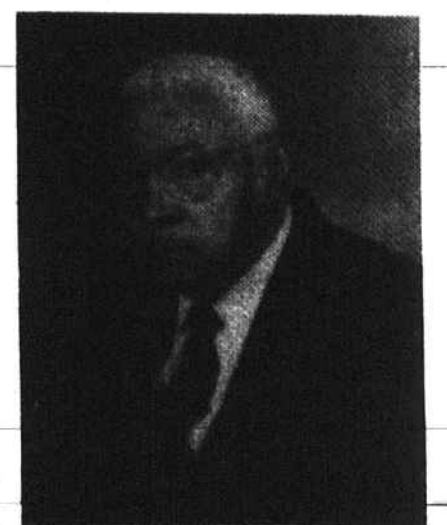
Award recipients were: Dennis Chisholm Jr., Services to Youth Award for his work with disabled children at the Children's Center for the Physically Handicapped; Robert Greer, Services to Youth Award for his work with at-risk teen-agers and as an advocate for children; Dr. H. Rembert Malloy, National Trends and Services Award for his work in the field of medicine; Simona Atkins



Dennis Chisholm Jr.



Robert Greer



Dr. H. Rembert Malloy



Simona Atkins Allen

Allen, Freedom and the Arts Award for her work in establishing Winston-Salem Delta Fine Arts Inc. and the Delta Arts Center; and George McLeod Bryan, International Trends and Services Award for his work as a life-long advocate of human and civil rights.

Saturday's luncheon's theme was



George McLeod Bryan

"Community Servants ... Living the Dream."

Links Inc. was founded in 1946 by Sarah Scott and Margaret Hawkins in Philadelphia. The organization is committed to educational, cultural and civic activities. It has over 8,000 members in over 240 chapters located in 39 states, the Dis-



Marion S. Sutherland

trict of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and Germany. The Winston-Salem chapter was founded in 1950. Katie R. Bell of Montgomery, Ala. is southern area director; Demerice W. Erwin is the Winston-Salem chapter president; and Mary Atkins Bruce of Winston-Salem is the conference chairperson.

Jac's One Stop Barred from Food Stamp Program

RALEIGH — Jac's One Stop Shop on Patterson Avenue has received the maximum penalty for food-stamp program violations.

The store, owned by James Shaw, was permanently disqualified from participating in the food-stamp program because the store workers exchanged cash for food stamps, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service said.

In addition to trafficking, they allowed the purchase of ineligible items including bleach, detergent, cigarettes, T-Shirts, fabric softener and aluminum foil.

"Trafficking is the most severe violation of the food stamp program that a store owner or his employees can commit," said Paula K. Kermon of FNS' Raleigh office. "It is not only a violation of program rules, but it hurts the food-stamp recipient's family and children who depend upon the program for good nutrition and taxpayers who fund the program."

Kermon added that food stamps can be used legally only to buy food or seeds and plants to be used in gardens to grow food. Items that cannot be bought with food stamps include alcoholic beverages and tobacco, automotive products, paper products or pet foods.

"Although many non-food



Jac's One Stop Shop has been permanently banned from the food stamps program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service.

items are necessities, purchasing these items with food stamps or trafficking in food stamps circumvents the intent of the program," Kermon said. "The program is designed to help low-income families buy the food they need for a healthy diet. Any other type of transaction with food stamps is prohibited."

Efforts to reach Shaw were unsuccessful. Before a store owner can participate in the food-stamp

program, he must certify that the store sells food for home preparation and consumption. Staple items, such as meat, bread, cereals, fruits, vegetables and dairy products must make up more than 50 percent of the store's total food sales. Another condition for authorization is that store owners must sign an agreement that they will abide by food-stamp program rules. Violations of the rules in stores being disqualified for periods of time range from six

months to permanently. The penalty for trafficking in food stamps is permanent disqualification from the program. USDA encourages the public to report violations of the food stamp program by calling 1-800-424-9121, the toll-free number for USDA's Inspector General in Washington, D.C. The number is posted at participating grocery stores. Also, violations can be reported to FNS' Raleigh office by calling (919) 790-2927.

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