The Yancey Record

Established July, 1936

TRENA P. FOX, Editor & Publisher

MISS ZOE YOUNG, Associate Editor

THURMAN L. BROWN, Shop Manager

ARCHIE BALLEW, Photographer & Pressman

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY BY

YANCEY PUBLISHING Company

Second Class Postage Paid at Burnsville, N. C.

THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 1966 NUMBER TWENTY-SEVEN

SUBSCRIPTION RATES $2.50 PER YEAR

IT NEVER FAILS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Mrs. Trena P. Fox, Editor
The Yancey Record
Burnsville, N. C. 28714
Dear Mrs. Fox:

May I comment on the editorial in The Yancey Record of February 17 — "The Bureaucrats Move Into Medicare"?

As a field representative (and not a policymaker) of the Social Security Administration, I presume I do not quite qualify as a "bureaucrat."

But as an experienced field representative I am rather familiar with the policies relative to Medicare. Also I am somewhat experienced in actual contacts with the public. So perhaps I can help to clarify matters a bit, and may possibly be able to correct a few erroneous impressions.

In the first place, the Social Security "bureau" does not ask any applicants to furnish birth certificates except in cases where (1) the applicants are stated to be 65-67 years old (which means that they may be in or near the 65-year-old borderline), and (2) birth registration certificates are obtainable. Since births in general were not registerel in North carolina before 1913, no such records are obtainable for Medicare applicants born in this state. Consequently other records of age are requested — which may be family Bible records, insurance policies, discharge certificates. delayed birth certificates, etc. If the records submitted do not disagree with but substantiate the date of birth alleged, then the Social Security Administration will check with the Census Bureau—and under present policy we are doing this at no cost to the applicant — for confirmation and substantiation of the claimant's age. I personally feel that this is a very reasonable policy.

If, however, the Medicare applicants state that they are 68 years old or older, almost any valid records or documents that substantiate the stated age are acceptable evidence thereof. In my judgment this two is a sensible policy.

The purported congressman's statement to the contrary, the "Medicare Bureaucrats" do not insist, or even suggest, that applicants "pay $5.00 to the Census Bureau to run down records, fully knowing that no such records exist." That charge is not only baseless but absurd.

One possible and understandable cause of such mistaken notions (besides maybe a generalized bias against the Federal "bureaucracy") is lack of knowledge of and resultant confusion about the various kinds and sources of evidence of age. For instance, birth records and census records sometimes are confused — as evidently may be the case in this instance.

Another misunderstanding apparently is based on the mistaken notion that all who are applying for Medicare "have their ages with Social Security in Baltimore" and for many years have had their ages so recorded. The fact is that many have, but others (actually totaling millions) have not. Many older people never worked under social security and there has been no record of their ages in our central accounting office. Moreover, even of those who have had social security cards we have found that the ages of a certain percentage were — for one reason or another — given erroneously or inaccurately on their applications for social security cards.

Nevertheless, the policy from the beginning of Medicare has been that in the case of applicants allegedly 68 or over the proof-of-age requirement is quite lenient — almost any type of record or document generally will suffice to establish age for the Medicare purpose. It is not necessary to request a birth certificate or a census record. So evidently the Medicare bureaucrats are not really so "bull-headed" as they have been represented to be.

And finally. a word of caution to those who feel so sure that they can take an "obvious look" at an individual and tell, without needing to see any confirming evidence whatever, that he or she is "well over 65." Such a conclusion can be quite right in many cases, and it can be quite wrong in many others — depending on individual differences including health and other factors. As everyone knows, gray hair is often not a reliable index to age. Besides the deceptive factor of prematurely gray hair, there is the added fact that many older people (not all of them women) have been known to dye their hair.

Neither is teeth necessarily a reliable criterion — even if we could ask the claimants to open their mouths wide so we could examine their teeth carefully! Some people's teeth last longer than other people's — and many folks have dental plates.

If we consider just about every other physical characteristic, experience tells us that there are wide variations among individuals. The game of age-guessing can often be tricky and risky indeed. I am afraid that few federal interviewers — and surely none who are experienced — feel that they have the gift of infallible judgment of people's ages simply by looking at people. But even if we had such truly infallible age-judgers. I doubt that everyone would recognize or accept their infallible judgment by "obvious" perception — and particularly those who were thus adjudged to be under age 65!

So perhaps it is wise after all to have rules of evidence and to take a look at records and documents — and not to rely solely on whatever perceptive powers the particular interviewer may possess. I believe you will agree that this is the best procedure to follow.

Sincerely, and with kindest personal regards,
D. C. Nichols
Field Representative

Comment by Editor: A number of letters such as the one below are received frequently at our office. Since we feel they will be of interest to some of our readers, we cannot refrain from having you share them with us.

March 2, 1966

Dear Editor:

I am sending you five dollars on my paper. I have stopped at the office several times and no one was there. I don't know how much I owe. Please let me know if you get this.

I was 82 years old yesterday, and live a'one. I am not able to do anything — just cook myself something to eat and make my bed.

I think you know my youngest girl. Her name is Mamie. She went to Micaville High School. She is married and lives in Bridgeport, Conn. She has a boy and a girl 10.

Please let me know if you get this and if it is enough. I wish you could put the hospital in the paper. We have taken the Yancey paper for many years — when it was the BLACK MOUNTAIN EAGLE, printed by Oscar Lewis.

So bye now, and thank you
Mrs Bessie E Ballew
Rt. 5, Box 162,
Burnsville, N. C.

OUR TOWN

During recent rains and periods of melting snow our new sewage plant has been overloaded by an excessive volume of water that entered our sewer lines. A large part of this excess water doubtless came from roofs where the downspouts are connected to the sewer lines.

Sewage plants such as ours simply cannot handle large volumes of rain water, and it is therefore essential that all property owners make sure that all downspouts are disconnected from the town's sewer lines.

The town board has prepared an ordinance that will be adopted at our March meeting, prohibiting the discharge of rainwater, melted snow or other surface water into the town's sewer lines.

Actually there are real advantages to the house owner in not having downspouts connected to sewer lines. Bird's nests and other trash washed down from gutters have contributed to blocking sewer lines. Three instances have recently occurred in town where rain water from roofs has been so excessive that partially blocked sewer lines on the property owner's premises could not carry the water. The unhappy result was that sewage backed up through the toilets and other fixtures into the house, making an awful mess

So by disconnecting downspouts, you will (1) comply with the new town ordinance, (2) help our sewage plant to function properly, and (3) give yourself protection against a back-up of sewage into your house.

The cooperation of all property owners will be appreciated.

BOB HELMLE, Mayor

HOW TO MAKE TITLE NINE WORK

Title 9 of the Civil Rights Act is the one that provides equal job opportunities. It is causing some headaches and some laughs, too,, as businessmen try to comply with the complexities of the law, which Washington, now admits was thrown together in a haphazard fashion.

Lawyers are now referring to it as "full employment act for lawyers." It is keeping the barristers busy telling clients how to meet the requirements and stay out of trouble. And the lawyers themselves generally admit they don't know all the answers.

Then there is the stipulation that an employee cannot be discriminated against, not only for race, but also for sex. Everyone, including Washington, has about decided they wished they never seen this one.

It seems this sex angle was thrown in at the last minute as an amendment and it has provided so many conflictions with other sections of the Act that Washington is unable to tell which way to go in enforcing it.

Theoretically, at least, one is not supposed to advertise in the want ads for a worker by sex However, it is permissable to have the ad placed in the male or female classification. Just don't say you want to hire a male stenographer.

A Texas rancher had the answer, perhaps. He wanted to hire a cowboy So he advertised, "Wanted — Cowperson. Must be proficient in profanity. Must sleep in bunkhouse with three wranglers who don't believe in taking baths."

Then, to show again how tricky Title 9 is, a company may not have a rule requiring that when a woman becomes pregnant she must give up her job This, it was held, is discriminary. However, the ruling said, if the company had stated in plain language that any person—male or female — upon becoming pregnant would have to resign it would have been non-discriminary.