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Some excuse is better than none

Remember your school days?

Especially the ones you skipped, then had to forge mom's or dad's name to an excuse the next day.

Some of those notes were pretty wild. Looking back on them I guess we were pretty innocent to think our teachers actually believed the notes.

Bu there are some legitimate notes written by sincere parents that read even wilder than the made up ones by the kids. We recently came into a reprinted list of actual excuses received by a school in Greenville, S. C.

For instance:

"Dear School. Please askuse John for being absent on January 28, 29, 30, 32 and 33.

And this brief note . .

"Chris have an acre in his side."

And wasn't it a shame about Mary?

... Mary could not come to school because she was bothered by very close veins."

And imagine the pain the teacher felt for little Johnny who was . . . "absent because he had two teeth taken out of his face." Here's one written close to Christmas . . .

"I kept Billie home because she had to go Christmas shopping because I didn't know what size she wear."

This next one must have raised an eyebrow or two. .

"Please excuse Gloria. She has been sick education teacher. and under the doctor."



A BOUQUET OF ROSES (c) 1979

There are so many lonely people In this beautiful world of ours, I wish I could take each one of them A big bouquet of flowers.

There are people who are lonely In the sunshine and the rain, The dew drops go unnoticed The song of a bird is in vain.

There is sorrow in the snowfall There is bitterness in the spring, There are so many lonely people Who need the heart tuned up to sing.

There are so many lonely people In this beautiful world of ours, I wish I could take each one of them A big bouquet of flowers . VIVIAN BILTCLIFFE



This one gives the teacher his or her

"My son is under the doctor's care and

And from Lillie's mom "Lillie wee

And from Joey's mom ... "Please excuse

And here's a couple for the physical

"Please excuse Blanch from P. E. for a few days. Yesterday she fell out of a tree and

"Please excuse Joyce from Jim today. She

Patriotism seems to have been behind the

"My daughter was absent yesterday

"Please excuse Dianne from being absent yesterday. She was in bed with gramps."

"Please excuse Jimmy from being. It was

Most excuses are brief and to the point.

"Mary Ann was absent Dec. 11-15 because

But there are some that give full ex-

she had a fever, sore throat, headache and

upset stomache. Her sister was also sick.

fever and sore throat. Her brother had a low

grade temperature and ached all over. I

wasn't feeling the best either, sore throat

and fever. There must be the flue going

around, her father even got hot last night."

think I was a fourth-grader at the time. My

problem was that I didn't go into enough

detail. My note simply stated, "Please ex-

cuse Tommy for being absent yesterday

'The next morning my teacher was

What actually happened was that several

friends and I were roughousing at lunch break and in the excitement one lad stuck

fingers in both my eyes. The thought of being

amazed at my miraculous regaining of my

afternoon as he was struck blind."

I remember one I wrote for myself once. I

because she was tired. She spent the

And the football coach got this one . . . 'Carlos was absent yesterday because he was playing football. He was hurt in his

Joey Monday. He had loose vowels."

should not take P. E. Please executer him."

absent from school yesterday as she had a

chance to be rid of a student . . .

going over."

misplaced her hip."

is administrating."

growing part."

next excuse . . .

his father's fault."

weekend with the Marines." And charity in this one . . .

And pity poor Jimmy . . .

planations, such this last one .

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blind terrified me, but I kept my cool Nobody wants the girls shaking fingers at them and chanting, "Crybaby, cry. Stick a finger in your eye and tell your mama you want some pie." I stayed cool until I groped and stumbled my way off the school ground. Then I let it roll. I was in fine voice. And I imagine people must have thought an ambulance or police car was cruising through the neighborhood.

It seems comical now, but then it wasn't. Imagine the thought running through my fourth grader mind. I had seen a blind beggar on the street before selling pencils. My first question to my folks when they came home from work was, "I won't have to too. sell pencils will I?"

the night. Next morning, except for redness, eye, etc.?"

the 'ol eyeballs were rotating just fine. Now, I wonder why I didn't tell the folks I had left school early. Dumb, I guess. I wrote my "struck blind" note on the way to school. I almost ran away from school that day.

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Well, how would you feel to have your Well, mama got out the eyewash and cold teacher, an old woman in her 20s, chant to cloth and put me in the dark for the rest of you "Crybaby, cry. Stick a finger in your



Human rights panorama bleak

The United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 30 years ago, Dec. 10, 1948. Commemoration of this anniversary ought to be a somber occasion.

During the three decades since the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly endorsed this noble document, the list of nations ignoring its provisions has grown at a depressing rate. Nearly two-thirds of the world's 4.2 billion humans are denied some or all of the basic civil and political rights enunciated in the declaration.

The historic trends are not encouraging. The repressive ideology of Marx and Lenin continues to score ominous gains. The Third World has emerged from colonialism only to embrace home-grown oppression.

The United Nations has long since ceased to be an effective defender or even promoter of human rights. More than half its member states would be embarrassed by a comparison of their human rights records with the standards set forth in the declaration.

Of necessity then. responsibility for the defense of human rights has fallen on the governments of the industrial democracies, on private organizations in the West, and on scattered networks of courageous individuals who resist tyranny in their own countries.

Among governments, the Carter administration's human rights policy - just reaffirmed by the President - is the most striking example of official action in support of an

international standard of personal and political rights. Inevitably, the administration's sometimes clumsy activism has achieved mixed results. It may even have proved counterproductive in some cases, the Soviet Union for example.

Still, for all its imperfections, the U.S. policy represents a net gain for the cause of human rights. Significantly, political dissidents in virtually every 1 Communist country favor a strong American stand on behalf of human rights. Indeed, many view this as their only hope.

If nothing else, the Carter administration has focused international attention on these issues. This in turn has brought pressure on offending governments to ease repression, if only to improve their standing in the international community.

Newborn babies do recognize mother's voice

Until recent times, researchers didn't give newborn babies much credit in terms of their development at birth. But research by a UNC-G developmental psychologist shows that such infants both recognize and prefer their mother's voice within three days after birth.

sight.

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By STEVE GILLIAM Special To Mirror-Herald

Do newborn babies really recognize their mothers' voices? The question is one that has been around

for years, lodged in the old wives' tales that surround the sweet mystery of mother and child looking upon each other for the first time.

Fresh from the womb and new to the world, infants have long been thought to lack the capacity to exist as anything more than little bundles of joy who function on reflexes and instincts and who have limited, if any, active mental processes.

Not so, according to data being compiled by a developmental psychologist at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Among the things he has documented is the fact that newborns both recognize and prefer their own mothers' voices to those of other women within three days after birth.

Even more surprising, infants appear to be able to learn and perform a simple task in order to hear tape recordings of their mothers reading stories and they also show indications of having functional memories all within three days of birth.

"Until recently, researchers didn't give newborn bables credit for much at all in terms of coming into the world as competent little beings," said Dr. Anthony J. DeCasper, an assistant professor in UNC-G's Department of Psychology. "They give the impression of being totally helpless.

'To look at them, most people would believe that - they can't talk and their motor activity is such that they can't do anything besides lie there. But the things they can do, they do very well; they're quite competent little creatures."

One of the things that babies do best in their earliest days is nurse, DeCasper said, noting that "the sucking reflex is something that all newborns have intact when they come into the world."

That reflex. DeCasper decided, would be the easiest mechanism to harness in order to ask the newborns some "questions" about their capabilities and what they perceived in their environments.

The "questions" centered on whether the baby would recognize and prefer the mother's voice, whether it would learn to nurse a "blind nipple" in a certain manner in order to hear that voice and whether it could remember the nursing pattern from one day to the next.

DeCasper's work on infants' perception has been going on for three years at the Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital in Greensboro. All of the subjects - between 150 and 200 of them - have been healthy, normal babies weighing between six and-ahalf pounds and eight-and-a-half pounds who experienced normal births and who had monstrated no physical problems.

The infants were placed in hospital bassinets and small headsets were positioned loosely around their ears. In order to hear a tape recording of their mothers reading the Dr. Seuss book, "To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street," they had to maintain their sucking speed either at fast or slow levels. If they did not keep to the prescribed level, they heard another woman's voice reading the story.

As the tiny infants nursed, their sucking patterns were monitored by a computer that controlled which voice would come through the headphones. The patterns also were recorded on a graph for further study.

"The great majority of the infants - at least 85 percent - not only preferred their mothers' voices, but they were able to retain the sucking pattern (during interval testing) for an entire day," said DeCasper.

"Right now we know that newborn babies appear to recognize their mothers' voices but we really don't know why or how. Our future work is being directed toward the source of that recognition."

Among the implications that can be drawn from the research, Casper says, are that:

+ Newborn babies have the ability to make distinctions between voices and speech patterns to decide which they prefer. In the vast majority of cases, the preferred voice is the mother's which indicates recognition.

+ Although their physical capabilities are very limited, the infants are able to control their sucking reflex (either fast or slow) in order to hear the voice they prefer. This activity indicates that they are able to learn a task, even at the age of only 24 to 36 hours.

+ Newborns appear to be able to remember the speed at which they must suck on the nipple, an indication that memory is in operation, although limited. The memory appears to last at least a day, since most babies are tested twice for the three day's they're in the hospital.

But why should an infant be able to distinguish between his mother's voice and that of another woman since most babies, under normal hospital conditions, generally don't spend a lot of time in their mothers' rooms?

The answer, DeCasper believes, lies in two hypotheses, both of which he is currently exploring in research with William P. Fifer, a doctoral student in psychology at UNC-G from North Hampton, N. H.

One is that newborn babies have welldeveloped perceptual and auditory

capabilities intact at birth that allow them to distinguish between voices and sound patterns. Such abilities, however, would have to allow infants to learn about their mothers very quickly — within three days after birth.

The other, and perhaps the most appealing, is that babies learn the sound of their mothers' voices while still in the womb. Since the human ear is well-developed and functional around the seventh month of gestation, DeCasper says it's possible that the developing fetus "listens" to the mother's voice as it reverberates through the amniotic fluid.

"It's possible that it's a combination of both of these ways but we really haven't gotten into it far enough to be able to tell anything." he said

Although scientists can't tell if an infant really knows what he is hearing. DeCasper believes that the technique he has developed for his research might be useful in developing procedures to test for congenital hearing problems, which occur in approximately three births out of 1,000 in the United States.

"Right now there is no completely satisfactory way to assess the hearing capabilities of newborn babies," said DeCasper. "This procedure might be useful in determining whether infants are capable of using the sounds they hear something that other tests don't do right now.'

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What's your opinion?

We want to hear your opinion on things of interest to you. Address all correspondence for this page to Reader Dialogue, Mirror-Herald, P. O. Drawer 752, Kings Mountain, N. C., 28086. Be sure and sign proper name and include your address. Unsigned letters will not be published.