

PERSPECTIVES

By Professor McKinley Burt



Little People Can Cast a Big Shadow

We'll get into the "shadow" thing toward the end of this article when I talk about expanding the comprehension of your child at an early age. In the meantime let us see if this little person can cast a bigger shadow. For now I seem to have been programmed by readers into

a communication and you-can-do-it mode. It's all about education, really. The most interesting phone call received in connection with the "Good Faith" series was from a woman in Washington, D.C. whose daughter in Portland faxed her copies. A "Christian Fundamentalist" on the staff of a major national black organization, she has been

"on the case of the black male executives" of the association, pointing out the type of modern, effective communication and interaction she experiences as a member of the "Billy Graham Crusade". Good luck, dear, and don't get fired. This prompts me to a commentary on "sisters" as I see more and more African American women moving into successful interfaces with the world of commerce. I was mildly castigated during my "Minorities in Business" series for not citing more black females. My excuse is that at the very same time the Portland Observer newspaper was highlighting the successes of a number of black female enterprises in Oregon.

Jackie Winters and her chain of prospering restaurants; Viance Easter, owner of "Mr. V's Bar-B-que On Wheels"; Valerie B. Currie, operator of "One on One Tax Service"; Jeanne Hartzog, director/owner "Sylvan Learning Center"; Veronica and Clarice Banks, "Waves Hair Salon"; Peggy C. Ross, owner of "Express Graphics Printing" (winner of 1990 S.B.A award).

I welcome the opportunity to cite these accomplishments because I, like many, realize how much our race will need the participation of the African American woman if we are to survive this traumatic period (given that she already has a heavy burden in maintaining a reeling family structure). Pending some unforeseen change in the percep-

tion of urgency and need for more structured commitment on the part of black males, the more women we can motivate, inspire and assist, the better.

I cannot help but reflect upon the early careers and magnificent accomplishments of black women sixty years ago--"Madame C.J. Walker" and "Madam Malone". These women built multi-million dollar, nationwide business empires when there was no electronic media for marketing and communication. They built their structures through the effective use of the print media and personal appearances, establishing solid bases of real estate to house manufacturing, training and service

taining contacts was very difficult, but over the years at least a third have acquired personal computers and have everyone else on a floppy disk--basic information from careers, training and avocations to business interests; all quickly generate address labels and mailers or FAX transmissions (by the way, my FAX number is 284-0484, dedicated line, 24 hours). One benefit is that I now have over a hundred people who routinely add to and upgrade my data base of "Black Inventors and Scientists", yesterday and today. I, of course, reciprocate when I encounter information relating to the particular interests of others in the network. You can do these things with your own group.

Another thing that has developed is that I have here the nucleus of a marketing network for the curriculum and lesson plans I have developed--and the new books I have written. A group of us are looking very hard at developing an "Avon Calling" type sales force composed of persons already involved and thoroughly experienced in the education field

who would operate evenings and weekends in the black community, establishing rapport and trust for the delivery of "relevant" materials--including educational toys. A trial run begins during Black History Month. If it flies, we'll try four major cities next fall; projecting eventual franchising.

I return now to that "Shadow" I alluded to at the beginning of this article. The poems in Robert Louis Stevenson's "A Child's Garden of Verse" have been embraced by children ever since the book's first appearance more than a hundred years ago, and none more so than "My Shadow", a traditional favorite for READING OUT LOUD TO CHILDREN.

I'm sure that many of you are familiar now with the thoroughly documented statistics that early on black youngsters demonstrate an extremely high intelligence and receptivity...and, then, many lose this before getting past the early grades. Though we will have to examine this phenomenon more fully at a later date, please, for child's future, work at developing a love for the fascinating world of story and verse as early as you can. Developing a person literate enough to survive in the information age may depend upon it. If not available at your favorite bookstore, order from David R. Godine, Publishers Inc. 300 Massachusetts Ave., Boston, Mass. 02115, \$14.95 plus \$3.00 U.P.S.

*I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.  
The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow--  
Not at all like proper children, which is always rather slow;  
For he sometimes shoots up taller, like an india-rubber ball,  
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.  
He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nurse as that shadow sticks to me!  
One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.*

facilities in the 20 major urban centers of black population in the United States.

One such center was the "Poro Beauty College Complex", a square block facility in my home town of St. Louis, Mo. Here, you found beauty salons and schods, a movie theatre, restaurants, meeting halls, and retail stores. There was LAW AND ORDER on the premises, and a great deal of pride and much respect from the citizenry. Surely, we black males with all the modern advantages in marketing, from electronic advertising and communications to automated mailings, from electronic advertising and communications to automated mailings, can do a much better job than we are doing in economic development. I thought that "Reverend Sullivan" pointed the way with his Opportunities Industrial programs.

Now, the accomplishments of these black women emphasizes the kind of interaction I had in mind when writing the series, "Family Reunions" (what they need to be/could be). Not to fear, we have a lot of competent, energetic and committed young people coming to the fore (the ones who don't get the publicity and media coverage". For instance at a 1980 family reunion of my clan in St. Louis of over 300 adults alone, I met scores of teachers and people in technology among the "shirt-tail" relations.

At first, networking and main-

Budget Fight Had Some Positives

By John E. Jacob



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The long federal budget battle left a lot of people feeling disgruntled about the way government operates, and angry about the lack of accountability and responsibility in governing. In the end, the budget that passed Congress--while not nearly good enough to effectively solve our national problems--had some important positives.

One was the simple fact of finally putting a deficit reduction program in place, something that has not been done in over a decade.

To do that, the silly "no new Taxes" pledge had to be broken. It finally dawned on the Administration and most Congressmen that the tax cuts of the 1980s went much too far in slashing tax rates for the affluent.

Those cuts led to deep deficits, forcing cuts in essential programs. That was, of course, the hidden agenda behind the Reagan tax cuts.

The new budget's tax hikes are very small--there's good reason to support high rates than the new 31 percent top on the wealthy.

Less positive were the array of sin taxes and nuisance taxes that hit moderate income families who will now have to pay more for gas, beer and other items.

But those excise tax hikes led to a

real positive--expansion of the earned income tax credits available to the working poor.

That's a wage subsidy for working families with below-poverty incomes, and such families will stand to gain at least as much as they'll have to pay out in excise taxes.

But Congress doesn't treat all poor people alike, and the non-working poor won't benefit from the tax credit program.

The earned income tax credit was also the vehicle for helping poor children. It will be available for below-poverty working families that by private health insurance for their children, and for child care costs.

And after years of trying to get a strong child care bill through the Congress, it passed a block grant program for states to distribute to parents and day-care providers.

While considerably short of the broader federal program needed to ensure that all children have adequate care in these days of working parents, the program does lay the groundwork for future improvements in child care policy.

Another step forward was Congress' action to gradually extend Medicaid health insurance so that all poor children will ultimately be covered by subsidized health care.

Funding for Head Start was also raised. About 40 percent of all eligible children will be able to attend Head Start classes next year, and Congress authorized future increases to allow enrollment of virtually all eligible children by 1994.

Even in a time of deficit reduction--inspired austerity, lawmakers decided to initiate or expand those programs because they know that the nation has to invest in its future.

We've neglected the education and health of our young people, and the small steps taken by Congress in its closing days should be seen as a barely adequate down payment on the future.

Funding for the child care program, for example, will allow only a small fraction of America's 12 million working women with preschool-age children to be served.

So more must be done, and it can be done without busting a budget that still contains lots of wasteful expenditures and still leaves the military budget at astronomical levels.

It's time to stop financing multi-billion dollar Cold War programs that have long outlived their usefulness and use those resources for an Urban Marshall Plan that prepares disadvantaged people to compete in a modern economy.

That's the key to national prosperity, and its the route the next Congress should travel with the next budget.

...And Justice For All  
The "Justice System": The Role of Rank

Recently, I made a mental evaluation of our so-called justice system here in America: my conclusion was that it should be called neither "justice" nor "system" (this is not to infer that any other system is better than ours here in the U.S., but assuredly that there is room for improvement). In my mind, "justice" connotes an idea of equality and balance; reward or punishment based on performance. This means to me that everyone who comes into conflict with our courts should receive a fair and suitable punishment for the wrongdoing they have committed (I shall soon explain why I don't see this happening, although I imagine several of your own ideas have already popped into mind). Additionally, "system" seems to infer that something is regulated in a consistent manner.

However, like everything else in our society, our "justice system" is apparently greatly affected by one's rank within society, which in turn unfairly alters the objective view judges and jurors should have. The first thing that comes to mind is, of course, the matter

of race. I don't suspect I need to elaborate; we're all aware of the warped likelihood of an African American or Hispanic going to jail over a white, even if each committed the same crime. ("Your Honor, I find the defendant quite guilty, on the basis that his skin pigment annoys me.")

Secondly, I think that the matter of race appears to be weighed heavily with societal rank. Take, for instance, the example of Marion Barry. Charge: taking illegal drugs. Punishment for average human being: Big Bad Punishment. We want to set an example for others doing drugs. Punishment for human being in public office, with Big Important Friends in Big Important Places: Ah, we'll take it easy on him, even though millions of children (as well as adults) will hear about it via the media...well, shoot there's no reason why he can't still hold his public office, right? Drugs only affect a person's BRAIN and apparently a clear head is not a stipulation of holding office.

My third example is, put yourself in Bush's position and imagine being

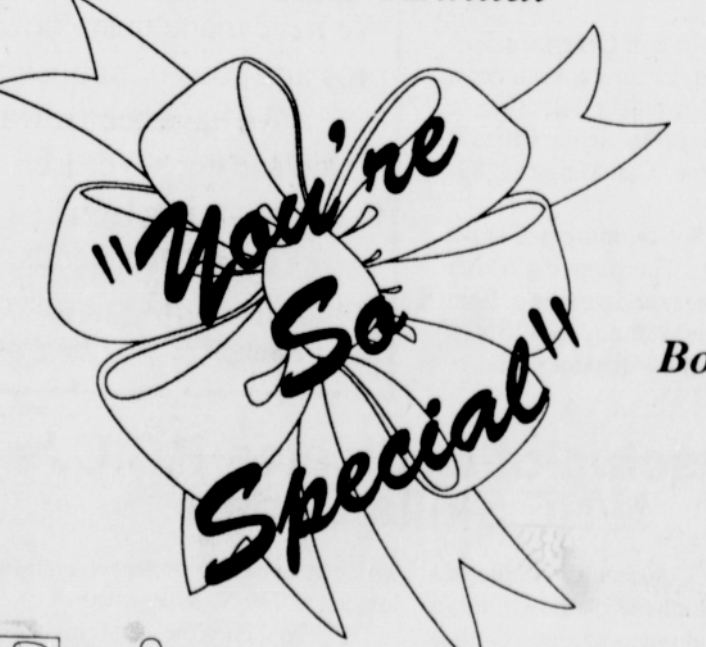
taken to court on the charge of persuading America's youth to run over and kill thousands of people because their leader "stole" some oil that wasn't yours in the first place, while you idly sit around fishing. Punishment for average human being: something much more heinous than life imprisonment, perhaps something cruel and unusual. Punishment for person who designates salaries of people in justice system: charges dropped.

My heart goes out to any parents or friends of someone in fighting in the Middle East, as well as the soldiers themselves: I'm sure this war NEVER leaves your thoughts, and I'm sure it won't leave your head for years afterward (with the exception of those who die for this). This is more compassion than I see coming from many so-called "uninvolved" persons: some can't wait for the media hype to go away, for fear it might puncture their bubble of oblivion with guilt or remorse.

Another thought: I'd rather pay the high price of oil than the high price of war and death.

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