

If The Mule Ain't Going Blind, What Took Him So Long?

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

You know how it goes by now. About once or twice a year I write on of those "different" articles like the one here last week: "The Caravan Rolls On". Am I trying to see who's awake, who's paying attention or if the editor read my column that particular week?

As a rule I am prompted by some unusual event, or the sudden recall of a mental gem (in my opinion) that I wish to pass on to the reader. It was a combination of just such events that set off my little excursion in mathematics. For one thing, there was a report on CNN stating that "Head Start" and another early-childhood program were suffering because of an inadequate pay scale for staff; the inference being that the situation prevented the hiring of qualified teachers -- and increased turnover.

These exhortations about pending gloom and doom are often to be taken with a grain of salt for they may simply presage a new grant request. Hysteria is not warranted, though, in these times of "Republican Contracts", reasonable vigilance is indicated. In any case I got out a number of faxes to former students of mine around the coun-

try who work in the educational components of such programs. I wish to conduct a thorough evaluation of the replies before reaching any conclusions.

The other unusual event was that I got a phone call from the director of a Montessori school, a person I had not heard from in years: "(Designing curriculum for teaching mathematics in preschools and early grades)? 'We heard you were doing some interesting things over in southwest.'" Some of you may remember that years ago The Oregonian newspaper described the computerized algorithms I had designed for teaching children -- and another piece describing a 'curriculum set' for the Lake Oswego Montessori School (a scientist 'on-the-hill' had read the article and directed me to his wife who was the director of the school) (Photo at back of my book).

Unfortunately, there is not the same type and scope of response from the African American community. Make an exception for the "Black Education Center" from which I get requests to make presentations. This is where, over a decade ago, I began the development of my idea of familiarizing small children with the real nature of numbers -- taking away the mystery and fear by

substituting any kind of object or concept whether a hat, coat, or shoe (1,2,3) or pencil, cup or tie (4,5,6). A parent or teacher should read "Number Words and Number Symbols: A Cultural History of Numbers" by Karl Menninger, The MIT Press, 1977 (Numbers are not real!).

Having sort of 'renewed my faith in myself' as if it were I've found it easy to get around the detractors, blockers and the hopelessly incompetent or uncomprehending. Whereas I never get calls from the Portland School district anymore, I stayed busy last year tutoring the small grandchildren of fellow members of the Association of Oregon Industries as well as groups of 'homeschoolers'.

This year I will be making presentations in Bend, Seattle (7 year-olds learn algebra/geometry with African Golden Section).

To others who are developing concepts, I can only say that as usual everything seems to take too long a time. A Washington State software developer sent down a representative to bargain about a computerized curriculum. My lawyer wants to bring in a copyright and licensing specialist. But I started this in 1966. What took so long?

Children's Services Director To Discuss Community Issues

Ms. Kay Toran, Director of Children's Services Division of Oregon, will address how the faith community and Children's Division can work together to prevent alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse. Neighborhood violence and corrections (adult & juvenile) are issues of concern as well. Also, what direction does Ms. Toran see CSD going in light of our new state administration? There are

a multitude of questions to be asked so please come and enjoy a time of stimulating exchange.

This event is being hosted by the Regional Drug Initiative's SPIRIT committee. The SPIRIT Committee works with the faith community to create and promote an environment for health and spiritual wholeness through awareness, prevention, and planned change.

Police News Cocaine And Heroin Seized

Portland police recently seized almost two kilograms of cocaine and one half pound of heroin worth an estimated \$65,000. Two people were also arrested.

The drugs were recovered after a person was arrested for drug possession in the area of Northwest 26th Avenue and Thurman Street.

More arrests were made at an apartment in southeast Portland found empty of furniture and used simply to store drugs, cash and weapons.

Two handguns and about \$7,000 in cash was also confiscated.

The Portland Observer celebrates its 25th Anniversary beginning Jan. 11, 1995 with our Martin Luther King Jr. edition.

A.J. Congress Urges Supreme Court To Strike Down Two-Tier Welfare Benefit System In California

Claiming that it penalized the right of Americans to travel freely, the American Jewish Congress urged the Supreme Court to strike down a California law limiting welfare benefits received by new residents during the first year to the amount they would have received in the states they left.

The AJCongress noted that in some cases benefits to migrant families are 80 percent lower than to California residents, even though the cost of living for those individuals is no less than for other Californians.

In a friend of the court brief filed December 13, AJCongress joined Catholic Charities USA and the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA in support of three California mothers and their chil-

dren who challenged the state because they were adversely affected by the lower benefit rate.

In response to attempts by California officials to justify the lower benefits by saying that private groups could make up the difference, the three organizations declared that "resources of private charitable and religious organizations are already stretched thin and would be overwhelmed as a result of unfair and unconstitutional reductions in public assistance benefits to the indigent."

In explaining its particular role in the case, AJCongress noted that efforts to restrict movement of citizens have special meaning for Jews. The organization underscored its long-standing commitment to the proposition that "all Americans, in-

cluding the poorest members of our society, must be free to live where they will. The right to travel has special resonance for Jews, most of whose ancestors fled countries which restricted or discouraged their free movement and choice of residence."

The three religious organizations declared that "although California claims that the sole purpose behind the two-tier benefit statute is to save money, the record amply demonstrates that California's real purpose is to deter migration into the state."

The brief was prepared by Daniel Marcus and Allison C. Giles of the Washington law firm Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering, counsel for the three religious organizations.



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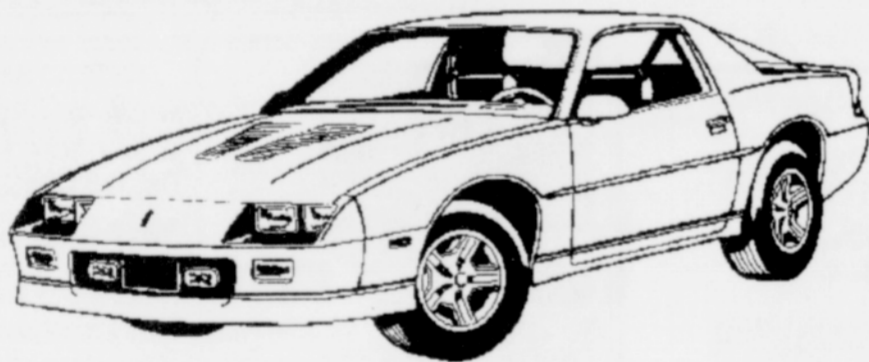
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