All Pianos Have Keys & Other Stories

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Chapter 1: All Pianos Have Keys

For many years my one and only claim to fame, notoriety, and achievement centered around a peculiar circumstance in my early life which seems to impress other people. This distinguishing characteristic was not that President Lyndon B. Johnson once invited me to dinner at the White House, nor that a school was named for me, nor that I was the first Mexican American Superintendent of Schools in Bexar County. My sole claim to fame appears to be that I was a student at the University of Texas at the age of 15!

For years I have heard myself introduced by admiring and sometimes envious acquaintances, as “This is José A. Cárdenas. He enrolled at the University of Texas at the age of 15.” Very frequently I hear the rebuttal, “I enrolled in college when I was sixteen,” but in all honesty, in my entire lifetime I have never heard one of these unimpressed pretenders who wish to undermine the significance of my accomplishment say, “So did I.” Therefore, I must conclude that my having enrolled in college at the age of 15 continues to be the tremendous achievement, seldom equaled by modern man.

The story behind the story of this unusual accomplishment is that, although I started school at the age of six and went through a 12- year program, I skipped the first, the sixth, and the 11th grades.

I really didn’t skip the first grade, I finished it in six weeks. This accomplishment has never received the notoriety of college at 15, mostly because at an early age I really didn’t understand it, and when I finally reached the age of wisdom, I felt it prudent to keep my mouth shut. It isn’t until now, as society is moving into the age of wisdom, and bilingual and multicultural education are becoming generally accepted, that I can tell my story.

As I stated previously, I enrolled in school like so many other children at the age of 6 without any inkling that I was to peak only nine years later. I wouldn’t have differed from so many other children if it weren’t for an inconsequential fact that was to change my whole life, namely, that all pianos have keys, or the converse, that all pianos don’t have keys. Little did I dream on that first day of school of the potential impact of this reality.

I still remember the preparation for the first day of school. I had been preparing for it for weeks, or rather I had been prepared for it for weeks. My father spoke to me about it with increasing frequency as the fateful day approached. Recent state legislation now prohibited instruction in any language other than English so that the fact that I didn’t speak or understand that language became of paramount importance. My older

brothers and sisters had attended school before the new law, so they had attended some of the many bilingual classes commonly taught along the Mexican border.

“Remember, your performance in school is indicative of your family background.”

“The performance of your brothers and sisters has always been exemplary; your performance must be exemplary, too.”

Polonius’ farewell lecture to his son Laertes seems pale in comparison to the weeks of indoctrination which I received.

As the first day of school approached, even my mother who seldom interfered in the manly subject of education joined in with some bits of advice.

The day of entrance came and went without making much of an impression of me. The teacher and many of the other students spoke only in English by state law, and since I didn’t understand much English, I withdrew into very satisfactory, self-directed and individualized activities such as drawing cats on my Big Chief tablet or conversing in Spanish about relatively non-academic topics with other children who shared my ignorance of the English language. If it weren’t for pianos, no significant trauma would have been induced by my cold turkey immersion into the English language.

Sometimes the affairs of the teacher and the English speakers proved to be interesting. I sometimes peeked at the instructional activities going on around me, although I must admit that my attention-span was limited, and I would again concentrate for hours on my cat drawings.

Lest the reader develop a false level of expectancy concerning my cat pictures and expect me demonstrate my artistic ability in depicting felines, let me hasten to clarify that the cats I drew were Mexican cats, or *gatos*, which consist of two parallel lines intersecting two other parallel lines at approximately ninety degree angles, or what the Americans call “Tic-Tac-Toe.” These drawings had value because you could either use them at the time or save them for recess when time which could be spent playing with cats was too valuable to waste drawing them. If a surplus developed, they could always be traded for *muertos* [hangman] or some other game requiring considerably more artistic ability than that which the good Lora made available to me.

One day when I had been at school for almost six weeks, I interrupted my cat drawings to peek at the instructional activity. I wish I could say that I was captivated by what I saw and heard, but this really was not so. The teacher was conducting some exercise in

which a statement was made, and the students repeated it. I didn't find out until much later that this procedure is called "modeling" and is essential to language development or at least essential to English as a second language development. I wasn't impressed then because if I had tried to learn Spanish by repeating everything my parents said I would have been called a *perico* [parrot] or accused of *burlando* [mimicking] and would have never lived long enough to enter the first grade.

What did attract my attention was the use of the word I had never heard before, "keys." Such a beautiful word; little did I suspect the inherent treachery in this beautiful little word.

The teacher had said, "All pianos have keys," and the class repeated it. Again and again.

Every time that I try to tell this story it breaks down at this point when some idiot asks me why the teacher would want to use that phrase. I really don't know, nor do I see what difference it makes; you can write a book about all the phrases teachers use which don't make sense. At the time the word sounded beautiful; even the mouth looked beautiful when the word was pronounced.

"KEES." Just like a smile. Perhaps it was the closest that the teacher had ever come to smiling, I don't know, the word just seemed nice.

Understanding the rest of the sentence was no problem. I guess by then I knew what "all pianos have" meant. Certainly, pianos were no problem. It sounded just like Spanish *pianos* except maybe a little mispronounced.

But I didn't know what the beautiful word meant. I slapped the kid next to me and asked him. He must have been the kid who drew the *muertos* which I exchanged for my cats because he hadn't been listening to the teacher.

"Que?"

"¿Qué es 'keys'? ¿Qué quiere decir 'keys'?"

I guess the market and demand for *muertos* game drawings was good because he only half-listened to me and gave me a curt reply before returning to full production.

"Llaves, pendejo."

Herein lies the treachery of the word. The Anglos, unknown to me at the time, use the word “keys” to refer to two things, die black and white things which you punch down to make a piano play, which we call *teclas*, and the small thin instruments which lock and unlock things, which we call *llaves*.

In his eagerness to stack up on *muerto* drawings before recess, the kid had given me the wrong translation.

As the lesson continued, I mulled the whole thing in my head. The word “keys” lost its beauty forever as I put the whole thing together. “All pianos have keys.” Only a few months before we had run up and down the street as we awaited the arrival of our new second hand piano. Several of my aunts had pianos. One of them even had a “pianola” (player piano) which she let me use. I have always regretted my short legs because it kept me from learning to play the piano. I once saw in a movie George Gershwin learning to play the piano by putting his fingers on the keys of me playing piano as the music role depressed them. I figure that I could have learned by this same method except that my legs were so short that my feet would not reach the pedals, so I had to crawl under the pianola and pump it with my hands. That kept my hands occupied. While I played “Under the Double Eagle” more than a thousand times or until the paper wore out, I never learned to play the piano.

This goes to show you that I had no mean background in pianos; yet the ones I had seen could not compare with the glorious instrument made available at considerable expense to complement my sister’s music lessons. It wasn’t that we were getting fed up with her one year of *solfeo* [solfeggio], but the piano was really in itself a source of pride and joy. After a few weeks, I finally got my turn at the daily ritual of dusting and polishing the piano. How well I remember every inch of that instrument, including – no, especially – that little round hole where one should insert the key in order to lock the cover which fitted over the keys. The fact that there were no keys to lock and unlock it really didn’t matter when my father explained how in families with well educated, with well brought up children, locking the piano was a waste of time since he knew that our well brought up hands would never hurt it – Hurt it? We were even scared to touch it!

“All pianos have keys” then became a grievous error. How disappointing to find out after only six weeks of school that the teacher could err. How I wish I had been spared that terrible reality at least until I was old enough to know about the infallibility of books. “It is so because it is in the book,” can become a valuable security blanket for a child who has just learned that “It is so because the teacher says so,” is only a myth.

"*Caballerosidad*" was so much instilled in me even then that, although I didn't relish it, I knew my duty was to enlighten that poor misinformed teacher, especially with my knowledge of pianos.

I can imagine after six weeks of industrious individual study on my part what the teacher must have felt to see me raise my hand. Even having to go to the restroom had not produced such behavior. Like most everyone else in the room, the translation of the Spanish, "*tengo que ir al...*" [I have to go…] was combined with the "be excused" which the teacher taught us, to produce, "I have to go to the beescues." Come to think of it, I must have been in high school when I learned that "Beescues" was not an English word synonym for "restroom."

"Yes, Pepe." (I was also in high school when I learned that my name was not Pepe.)

"No!"

"No, What?"

"No! All pianos do not have keys."

"Yes, they do."

"No."

"Yes. All pianos have keys."

With the help of a whole room full of helpful and extremely interested amateur translators, I compiled my next sentence; my longest one up to that day.

"We have a piano at home. It does not have keys." (Heck, that was a paragraph, not a sentence.)

"Oh, but it doesn't play."

"Que dijo?"

"Que no toca."

"Yes, it plays."

"Look, Pepe. All pianos have keys. If you have a piano at home which does not have keys, then it is not any good, it doesn't play. All good pianos have keys."

Even today I can still remember that horror. Out of a sense of duty, out of a sense of *caballerosidad*, which misinformed Anglo anthropologists sometimes call “machismo,” I had volunteered to help the teacher, and the help was not only rejected, but this was coupled with an insidious attack on the quality of our piano. After this day of infamy, Pearl Harbor several years later didn’t even faze me.

By now kids all over the room were in an uproar. I could hear them screaming, “*Tu mugre de piano*” [your lousy piano] and playing the piano in pantomime, although some of them played it upside-down, or from the bottom up, which in Spanish means something entirely different.

I imagine that during the years I have succeeded in repressing some of the experience because aside from being in the principal’s office I don’t remember much of what happened in school the rest of that day. That is, I don’t remember what happened before I got home. I do remember being home and trying to explain to my mother the difference between suspension and expulsion.

Try to place yourself in my shoes. Picture yourself at the age of six trying to explain to a hysterical mother that in spite of the fact that two brothers and a sister had gone to school for years without a single bad mark on deportment, the fourth offspring, the black sheep, had been suspended after only six weeks of school.

She cried about the effect this would have on the family, she cried about what it would do to my father, and she cried about what my father would do to me.

She cried over the possibility that my education was terminated even before I learned to read. I tried to reassure her by telling her I could already read and didn’t really have to go to school. I hated to say that to her because even if my brother had taught me how to read at home, and I could even read the newspaper, I knew that I could only do it in Spanish and therefore it didn’t count.

My mother finally had to call my father at work and break the news to him. He drove home within 15 minutes and by the end of another 15 minutes both brothers and my older sister had been called home from school. My little sister went to stay with relatives. The family discussion was followed by a trip with my father to the garage, which was followed by the entire family and half of the neighborhood. Several neighborhood *comadres* [extended family] cried over our misfortune and a few even expressed condolences to the family.

Just about the time that my father was about to start hitting me with a two by four, I decided to give it one more try. I looked at Dad straight in the eye and asked him to hear me out. My father's name is Justo and throughout his life he has used it more as an adjective than as a noun, so in fairness to me he decided to let me tell my story.

I told the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Well, almost. I left out all of the stuff about drawing cats since I knew that my father would never accept the idea of one of his sons going to school to draw cats, which any fool could stay home and do.

After I finished my story, my father was undecided. Some instinct told him to whip me anyway; yet another instinct told him that maybe he should look further into the matter.

Two things saved me. One was my blessed mother saying, "A wise guy has always been, but a liar, never." The other thing was somebody suggesting that my father call his older brother, my Uncle Frank. Koehler's monkeys couldn't have demonstrated more insight than that which appeared all around. In the excitement nobody had thought of calling Uncle Frank. He had taken a law course through correspondence during the Depression, and few people in the family ever made an important decision without consulting him. He knew what he talked about. Recently I have had people tell me that they knew my "*tio* Pancho" really well, but I seldom believe them. If they knew him well, they would have known that considering his status in our town they wouldn't have called him "Pancho."

"Francisco" maybe, though usually "Don Francisco." "Pancho," never.

My father called "*tio* Francisco" who listened to the entire story, lit a store-bought cigarette, and sat down to smoke it and think. Nobody said a word. Nobody dared speak while my uncle thought. He knew all there was to know about bullfighting and had made many trips to the interior of Mexico to see bullfighters who seldom came to the little border town across the river. He also knew the batting average for everyone with the New York Yankees.

Finally, he spoke. "*Te voy a decir una cosa, Justo*." He then proceeded to enumerate many observations he had made concerning schools. For one thing, teachers seldom married which was not normal behavior. But the real clincher was the story of the perpetual vests. Some kids that he knew had attended an American school. When looking into this program in school it appeared that about the only thing he had learned was a song about some perpetual vest, or "*Chaleco* forever." The kid's father had consulted my *tio* Francisco about the wisdom of teaching a child about a vest forever.

My uncle had finally figured out that it was part of a song he knew which ended with the words “America’s voice shall echo forever.”

“Such misunderstandings happen,” said my uncle, “perhaps the boy is right. There’s no telling what gringos will do, so I suggest that you go over to the school and talk to the principal before you whip that boy.”

Once my uncle made a decision the decision was final. In those days there was no court of appeals and, having consulted my uncle, one was bound by his decision, and anyway it was inconceivable to insult him by questioning the decision.

So my father and I proceeded to the school to speak with the principal and, if necessary, with the teacher. The principal received us rather coldly, which was odd, considering that my father had once fixed his papers so that he could visit Mexico. He sent for the teacher and the confrontation began. It may have lasted a long time, except that the teacher was so sure of herself that she cut her own throat.

“Pepe says that you have a piano at home, that it does not have keys, and that it plays.”

I wish you could have seen my father’s face. I had already unknowingly torpedoed the teacher by having told the story in Spanish using the troublesome *llave* instead of the elusive *tecla*.

In the excitement my father had carried the two-by-four into the school. Silently, he lifted it to his shoulder, grabbed it with both hands and in a cold, authoritative, and even fear-inspiring voice, he said, “Look, I don’t know what is going on in here. (I almost said, “what the hell is going on in here, but I knew it couldn’t be so. My father never used curse words in front of children. He was too much of a “macho” to do a thing like that.)

“Look, I don’t know what is going on here. I am going to say something, and I’m going to say it just once. We have a piano at home, it does not have keys, and it does play.”

My father just waited for someone to say something but knew that no one would. Any question about what he said would be the same as calling him a liar, and any person who called my father a liar would have to shoot it out with him at twenty paces. Besides, he was still holding the two-by-four.

Finally, the principal, a little pale, said, “May we be excused?” and in the company of the teacher left the office. I kind of wondered why and how both of them were going to do it at the same time, but I got distracted by overhearing a piece of their conversation.

“You will!”

“I will not!”

“You will!”

“I will not take him back.”

A lot of things I didn’t hear, but at the end the teacher went back to the classroom, and the principal came into the office smiling.

“I finally figured out what the problem is, and it appears we solved the problem. It is evident that Pepe has finished the first grade and since he already knows more than the first grade teacher can teach him, he is ready to go into the second grade.”

It was nice to find out what the problem had been, and both my father and I ran all the way home to spread the good news. I have never seen so much relief and happiness all over the place, except perhaps the day I enrolled in college at the age of fifteen.

My mother made *champurrado*, *buñuelos* and all kinds of other goodies. My father said he had to go back to work, but I’ve always suspected that he just wanted to go back to spread the good news. He sure was proud to have a son who finished the first grade in six weeks. Even my oldest brother never did that. His deportment was a lot better than mine, but it took him a whole year to finish the first grade.

Being a humble and charitable family there was a lot of talk of trying to understand the poor teacher, who obviously had not been brought up around pianos. Everybody agreed that Americans were funny people and by the time that the janitor delivered the two-by-four we had left in the principal’s office, the entire affair was water under the bridge.

I started the second grade the following day, and had little difficulty finishing it by May, mostly because I gave up drawing cats and tried to help the second grade teacher just like I had helped the first grade teacher. Word must have gotten around about my accomplishment because even though I have always been tone-deaf, as long as I was at that school, I always got straight A’s in music. I guess all the teachers respected my knowledge of musical instruments in general, and pianos in particular.

Chapter 2: Missing the Bus

"You're going to miss the bus," Fito said to me for the tenth time that night. We were sitting at the bar in my hometown this evening, just as we sat at the same bar almost every evening. It was one of those bars popularized by the "Cheers" TV show, "Where everybody knows your name." Except it was more so. In Smalltown, South Texas, U.S.A., where life is slow-paced and change is always slow in coming, it is not unusual for the same crowd to spend endless days doing the same thing, saying the same things.

In Smalltown, there were few concerts, no sporting events, other than the high school football games on Fridays, and few business, professional or social obligations. In 1951, there were few TV sets in bars, although occasionally a bar would have a radio, and we would listen to the world heavyweight championship bout.

"You're going to miss the bus," Fito repeated. I looked at my watch and concluded that I had time for one final beer before walking the three blocks to the bus depot where I would join the group of draftees being shipped to the big city for induction in the armed forces and participation in the Korean war.

"You're going to miss the bus," said Fito for the final time. I paid my tab, picked up my satchel and departed with a "I'll be seeing you."

I did make the bus, and I reported in time to be sworn in and made a part of the American war effort in Korea. As promised, I was discharged from the U.S. Army in 1953, two years to the day that I had been inducted.

Since I was interested in going to graduate school when I was discharged from the Army, and there was no graduate program in my hometown, I did not return after the Korean war. I eventually completed the master and doctor of education programs. I became a high school vice principal, an elementary school principal, college professor and college administrator. In 1969, 16 years after my induction into the U.S. Army, I became a superintendent of schools. At about the same time, I received an invitation from my hometown superintendent to give the graduation speech at my old alma mater.

Going home after an absence of 16 years, I checked in at a comfortable hotel, and having a few hours to kill before presenting the high school graduation speech, I wandered in the downtown area, looking with nostalgia at the many places and sites that reminded me of my youth.

While roaming around and reminiscing, I happened to walk right by the bar where I had my last civilian beer before going into the service. The temptation to see the place was strong, and although I have never had any kind of a drink while working, I thought it wouldn't hurt just to see the old place.

I walked in and, lo and behold, there was a much older Fito sitting at the same place at the bar, having a beer, just like in the old days. I thought it would be a good idea to play a joke on him, so without saying a word, I sat down next to him.

Fito turned in his bar stool, looked at me, and then turned back to his beer. Without lifting his head, he casually said, "I told you that you were going to miss the bus."

Chapter 3: Typing for Bill Crane

Regardless of the hat I wear at the time, I have always enjoyed and profited from visiting schools. So much so that each year I make the time to make a swing around the city and state, capitalizing on the coundess “Mae West” invitations which I receive to visit the schools, “Why don’t you come up and see me some time?”

During my tenure at St. Mary’s University, I served as a professor and chairperson in the education department, but it was in my role as director of student teaching that I spent the most time in the schools. I consistently invited staff from the various teaching fields to accompany me as I visited the student teachers. My invitations produced mixed results from the various faculty members, but there was one professor of government, Dr. Bill Crane, that never passed up an invitation to visit some of his students doing student teaching in the schools.

Visiting schools with Bill was an experience. His sense of humor, his inexhaustible repertoire of jokes and stories, his interest in everything guaranteed an enjoyable morning or afternoon.

One time we were visiting in a high school, and he made several recommendations to the cooperating and student teachers of source material on a specific social studies unit. As he left the classroom, he promised mat he would write out a bibliography before leaving the school.

During the rest of the afternoon Bill made notes on a piece of paper as he remembered the various materials he was recommending. As we terminated our visit, he stopped by the high school office hoping he could find someone to type up the bibliography so that he could leave it for the teachers.

As we walked into the office, we noticed that the secretary was not at her desk. Instead, there was a high school student, obviously a student helper or aide, sitting in front of the typewriter at the secretarial desk.

“Do you work here?” asked Bill.

“Yes sir,” responded the student.

“Do you know how to type?” Bill asked, holding the list of materials in front of him.

The student took his time thinking over Bill’s question. Looking kind of perplexed, he finally responded, “I don’t know. I’ve never tried it.”

Chapter 4: The Rules of Golf

Golf Center
The Dominion Country Club
1 Dominion Drive
San Antonio, Texas 78228

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

The following are my answers to the PGA/USGA Rules Quiz in the August-September 1993 issue of the Golf Center News, a publication of The Dominion Golf Center.

I like and appreciate rules. The best rule of our club is the one which prohibits pets on the golf course. One of my cousins was married to a guy who was a member at the old Turtle Creek Country Club, which did not have a "no pets" rule. Every time he tried to play golf, the cats would bury him in the sand traps. I guess those little animals knew by instinct what it took my cousin so long to find out.

Obviously, there are a lot of rules, and it is important that all golfers follow them. However, following rules is not as difficult as it sounds. In addition to the PGA/USGA rules there are also Common Sense Rules, Hustling Rules, and Drive-You-Up-The-Wall Rules. It is a question of deciding which rules to apply.

If you don't know the rule, ask a player in your group to lend you his cellular phone and call the Pro Shop where you will receive instant assistance. If you are playing with a lawyer do not borrow his phone until he has had a chance to call his wife and tell her that he is tied up in his office taking a lengthy and important deposition. It is a well known Courtesy Rule that you don't yell, "Fore" when the lawyer is talking to nis wife on the phone. (These are known in golfing circles as "Super Rules" which is lawyer talk for "Super Rules.")

The following are the correct answers to the four questions in your article:

1. Accidentally moving the ball in ground under repair
Balls can be moved in ground under repair, the same as in any part of the fairways, roughs or greens, as long as the mover says in a clear, loud voice, "I'm sorry, but I accidentally moved my ball. I'm putting it back where it was."

However, as a rule, if this happens more than twice on any hole it is obvious that you are being hustled. In that case go to the nearest maintenance worker and ask him, "*Esta caliente el sol?*"

He will give you a lengthy response in Spanish which you pretend to translate. “He says that I have a very important call at the club house, so I am going to have to leave.”

A lot of this hustling can be eliminated by following a very important rule. When you tee up on the first hole, make it a rule to ask yourself, “Who is being hustled in this group?” If you can’t spot the sucker, then it is probably you.”

2. Responsibilities in scoring
In every group there is a guy who insists on taking the scoring responsibility. These people know everybody’s handicap, never make mistakes on the scorecard, and they always know the handicap number for every hole. Golfers are anxious to help. If you meet a golfer with a handicap of thirty-four, nodce that he is always looking for a golfer with a handicap of 36 in order to give him some golf tips.

The obvious answer is: play with someone who knows. You cannot change rules, but you can change who you play with.

3. Movable obstructions
Movable objects are easy to determine if you follow the General Guidelines. (See Combined PGA, Seniors PGA and LPGA Rules, Section XXI, Subsection W, Rule 378, Article 79, Pages 474 to 968.)

A tree, unless recently transplanted, is not movable. A portable toilet, as the name implies, is obviously movable. All other objects can be placed in either of these two categories. You then apply the rule, “If it bothers you and it is movable, move it; if it is not movable, then move the ball, stupid.”

4. Immovable obstructions outside the bunker
This item is a tricky one. Last Sunday, I played a round with my wife. In Holes 1 to 5, I had an immovable obstruction outside each bunker. On Number 6, I finally told my wife, “Go stand somewhere else, and quit being an obstruction.” She said, “I like it here.” I wanted her to move voluntarily so that I wouldn’t have to decide if she was movable or not. Deciding whether your wife looks more like a tree or a portable potty is definitely a no-win situation.

The correct question is, “What is an immovable obstruction?” The correct answer is, “If its movable, move it.” For most golfers, this rule is not very important because if the ball is in a bunker, they are never going to hit it anyway.

I disagree with your statement that rules can be dull. Rules are what make golf such a fun sport. It is especially gratifying to see Dominion golfers in the middle of the first fairway reading the

rules on Saturday mornings and having all seven players in the group confer on the correct interpretation. Golfers should be asked to think up more rules. As every golfer knows, “The more rules; the more fun.”

I can’t wait for your next issue in anticipation of another challenging quiz like this one. Please apply my winnings on this rule contest to my Dominion account which, as a rule, keeps getting bigger as my income keeps getting smaller.

Sincerely,

José A. Cárdenas
Membership Number X - XXXX
(This is not my real number. I don’t want to give my new number because some sorry S.O.B. charged a lot of beers to my old number. You know my number, anyway.)

Chapter 5: Mister Roebuck

"The buck stops here." This saying was popularized by President Harry Truman, who never ceased to me awed by the power and responsibilities of the highest office in the land.

This saying is appropriate not only for the highest office, but for offices at any level. School administrators, harassed by the increasing demand for administrative reports, performance indicators, state and federal compliance regulations and increased accountability, commonly find themselves having to delegate more and more the traditional duties of their office. This is especially critical for top administrators, the school superintendent and the campus principal who are perceived as the chief executive officers in their respective domains.

The need for delegation of responsibility is complicated by the need to handle the "buck," that is, to deal with many sensitive decisions that should be made at the highest level. In addition to dealing with high level decisions, the top administrator has to be accessible to students, parents, teachers, sales persons and others that wish to deal with only the highest level administrator. Each person perceives his/her problem, interest or concern as important enough to merit the consideration of the top administrator.

The best lesson on administrator access I received was not in the educational administration training program, but as a part-time worker at a Sears-Roebuck store before I attained either of the two administrative offices, and this lesson served me well in both educational positions.

I've always said that I became a teacher by choice and an administrator by economic necessity. Like so many other members of the teaching profession, teaching was a love that could only be afforded by extensive sacrifice. One common sacrifice that a teacher must make is having to moonlight in order to make a living and support the family. Although I sometimes had as many as five part-time jobs while I was teaching, the most consistent job was working at the Sears-Roebuck credit department. I worked there for eight consecutive years, on Monday and Thursday nights, on Saturdays and school holidays, and during the Christmas and summer vacations. As a matter of fact, most of the part-time staff in the credit office during irregular hours were teachers.

Although many businesses are now open during the evening hours, and some of these stores do a large part of their business "after hours," during the 1950s department stores were just experimenting with me concept. It was not unusual for most of the regular work force to leave at five or six p.m. and have the part-time crew take over until nine or ten.

One evening, as was often the case, I was working at the Sears credit department. The night crew was under the supervision of a young manager trainee named John Roebuck. Suddenly, there was a big commotion at the entrance to the credit department as an irate customer walked in wanting to speak to the man in charge.

Being next in line to wait on customers, I walked up to him and asked if I could be of assistance.

“I want to speak to the man in charge,” he screamed at me. “I don’t want to speak with a flunky. I don’t want to speak to an assistant. I don’t want to speak to a department head. I want to speak to the top man in the store.”

“Just a minute,” I said. “I’ll have you speak to Mr. Roebuck.” Without hesitation, he responded, “Roebuck, hell! I want to speak to Mr. Sears.”

Chapter 6: Lana Turner in South Texas

Texas Attorney General John Hill vowed that he would end political corruption in South Texas. I don't know why he decided to address political corruption in South Texas. He could have addressed it in Austin and saved himself a lot of travel money.

But regardless of the reason for targeting the southern part of the state, ne did initiate a lot of activity in the area. It can't be said that he eliminated the problem since dead people still comprise a respectable part of the active registered voters, elected public officials tend to financially out-perform other members of the community and the "patron" system is as entrenched as ever.

I am sure that the attorney general was motivated by the right reasons, but I am equally sure that his failure to reform the system stems from a lack of understanding of the system. A friend of mine who is a judge in San Antonio, argues that outsiders do not even realize that political hanky-panky does not even have a moral connotation in South Texas. It is just a way of life. Outsiders not only do not understand the system; they don't even understand the language of the system.

The following illustration took place in an inquiry before the grand jury of a small South Texas community. An assistant attorney general from Austin was questioning a female county official:

"What is your name?"

"Elvira Mascorro."

"Where do live?"

"Eleven Twenty-eight Third street."

"In this town?"

"Yes, sir. In this town."

Up to now everything was going smoothly. Now the communication problem begins.

"You are also known as 'Lana Turner'?"

"Who?"

“Lana Turner.”

“No sir. I’ve never been called ‘Lana Turner.’”

“It says so here in your deposition. Do you know what a deposition is? When I was questioning you a few weeks ago, you said, ‘My name is Elvira Mascorro, but everybody calls me Lana Turner.’ Do you remember saying that?”

“No sir. I never said that.”

The assistant attorney general places the transcript in front of the witness and points to the text.

“See. ‘My name is Elvira Mascorro, but everybody calls me Lana Turner.’ You see?”

“Oh, I see. But that’s not what I said. I said, ‘My name is Elvira Mascorro, but everybody calls me La Ratona.’”

Chapter 7: The Rebirth of Bustamante

Bustamante, Nuevo Leon is a sleepy little town in the north of Mexico. It is located on the railroad line connecting Laredo, Texas, to Monterrey, Saltillo, San Luis Potosi and other leading Mexican cities. While in years past being situated on a main railway provided an impetus for business and growth, the decline of the railroads in Mexico has paralleled the decline in the United States, with much of the transportation dependent on trucking, buses and airlines and a proportionate decline in rail passenger and freight service.

Historically, the major industries in Bustamante have been agriculture and mining. A large number of native and hybrid pecan trees led to the extensive sale of pecans, along with pecan products such as pecan candy (nogada), and related delicacies such as semita, an unleavened oread with cane sugar and pecans, and empanadas, turnovers filled with pecans or some other sweetened vegetables and fruits, such as sweet potatoes, pumpkin or applesauce along with the pecans.

It is amazing to find in a town of 2,000 people, 312 state-licensed panaderias (bakeries). The inhabitants of Bustamante used to supplement their income by selling tacos and pastry to passengers on the several trains that stopped there each day, but the decline in rail service has all but eliminated the practice. In recent years, contrary to economic theory, the main source of income for most residents of the town has been the selling of pan de dulce (pastries) to each other.

There is still some amount of tourism in Bustamante. The town lies at the foot of the sierra, and a short drive, or a long walk, away is a beautiful canyon which attracts its share of sightseers. The sierra, called the Sierra Morena, is the same one popularized in the Mexican folk song, “Cielito Lindo.” The second verse states, “De la Sierra Morena, cielito lindo vienen bajando, un par de oiitos negros, cielito lindo, de contrabando.” The Sierra Morena or song is the sierra which casts its shadow on Bustamante, providing long, cool evenings during the hot summer months.

One part of the sierra is called “la montana del leon” since its highest part is in the shape of a reclining lion. Climbing to the top of the lion’s head is a must for tourists, along with cooling off in the famous ojo de agua, a natural spring in the Bustamante canyon.

Regardless of the beauty of the place and its popularity as a picnic area, the population has declined. Urban mobility has taken its toll in Bustamante. The younger generation migrates to the urban centers in search of education and jobs, two urban essentials not very plentiful in

their home town. Although you meet many people from Bustamante in nearby urban centers such as Monterrey or Nuevo Laredo, you seldom meet people who actually reside in Bustamante, or at least until recent years.

I say “until recent years,” because a catalytic event has occurred in Bustamante that has changed its economy and its urban character. A little town which for decades was headed for oblivion has been revitalized by an unusual economic revolution.

Bob Sánchez, a prominent attorney in McAllen, Texas, whose family comes from Bustamante, Nuevo Leon, was informed that he had inherited his grandmother’s old house in Bustamante. The house is located in the center of town, just a block from the Catholic church and the city plaza.

As luck would have it, Bob Sánchez was tired of urban life in the fast-growing Rio Grande Valley and looking for a vacation home away from the metropolitan area. Upon learning of his inheritance and revisiting the old family site, it occurred to him to remodel the old house and use it as a vacation home.

In short order, Bob hired a contractor to oversee the remodeling of the house and a couple to stay in it as caretakers during the remodeling process. This immediately made Bob Sanchez the largest employer in Bustamante. The employment rolls were quickly augmented as the contractor hired plumbers, electricians, carpenters, brick layers, stone masons, tilers, roofers, cement workers, painters and various other artisans for the remodeling task. According to the remodeling director of accounting, payroll for the job is now running in excess of 138,000,000 Mexican pesos monthly, plus a similar amount for the necessary fees and bribes (mordidas).

Once the remodeling got started, it led to an amazing amount of spinoff businesses and industries. A new Bustamante Lumber Yard sent workers into the sierra to hew and process lumber for the many braces and forms essential to the remodeling. One of the contractor’s cousins returned to Bustamante to form the new City Cement Center, which has thrived on the business from the remodeling effort. The pool of water formed by the “ojo de agua” is now three times larger as tons of sand and gravel have been hauled out for the concrete needed in the house expansion effort. Bustamante Iron Works provides the steel reinforcing rods necessary to give strength to the concrete used in building new additions to the old house.

A new business, the Bustamante International Imports, has been able to acquire raw materials, appliances and furniture destined for use in the Sánchez residence. The architectural firm of Guillermo Cárdenas and Associates in Monterrey set up a branch office in Bustamante for the design and construction of the Sánchez Fountain, a beautiful water fountain located in the

backyard of the refurbished house, and which has become the leading tourist attraction in the town.

The local hotel, El Gran Hotel Ancira, while not as large as the Ancira Hotel in Monterrey, has a larger clientele, as people from both sides of the border travel to Bustamante to see the remodeling in progress.

The menu of the Ancira hotel restaurant is unique, featuring many local recipes, including sopa de nuez (pecan soup), arroz con nueces (rice and pecans), pecan tacos and the ever-popular frijoles borrachos Bustamante, made up of refried beans with a liberal sprinkling of pecan bits and pieces. Unlike most Mexican frijoles borracnos (drunk beans), the Bustamante variety are not cooked in beer or some other intoxicating beverage. They are called borrachos because of the inebriated state of the two Bustamante brothers who concocted the recipe.

As the sun dips behind the Sierra Morena, local couples stroll around the fountain in Bob's backyard and are joined by visitors from Scandinavia, Europe and the Orient. The local mariachi group plays and sings Mexican love songs as the candy and raspa vendors ply their trade from the rear wall of the Bob Sánchez residence to the property line just beyond the Bob Sánchez Vineyards and Winery.

The evening ends early since the young musicians and vendors must arise before dawn to work at the many new enterprises in the old town. Some of the young men must drive long hours for the Bustamante Freight Company, which transports the raw materials coming in from the ship docks in Houston for use in the Sánchez house.

In the north end of town, the city fathers have just inaugurated the Bustamante Vocational and Technical College, a school especially created for the retraining of former panaderos and to ensure an abundant supply of skilled labor among the new generations of Bustamante youth who will continue the rebuilding of Bob Sánchez's house in future years.

The educational impact of the remodeling goes beyond post-secondary education. The following is a word problem from the new fifth grade mathematics textbook, Matemáticas Prácticas used in the Bustamante public schools:

"If a master bricklayer lays six bricks every hour, and his wife removes five of the bricks each hour, how many years will it take to lay the 4,638 bricks in the west wall of Bob Sánchez's house?"

The City of Bustamante will soon schedule the inauguration of its new City Hall, the Bustamante Public Library and its first fire station, all built from surplus materials from the Sánchez house.

Two new shifts have been added to the Bustamante Police Department to supervise the orderly transfer of labor and materials to the various city construction sites.

The newly chartered Bustamante Banco de Comercio is doing a brisk business in the conversion of McAllen dollars into Mexican pesos. At the request of Bob Sánchez, the Mexican government eliminated three zeroes in its currency in order to facilitate money exchange transactions between the two countries.

The Bustamante Chamber of Commerce is now actively involved in the development of a five-year plan for the remodeling of the Bob Sánchez house. Plans have already been finished for knocking out portions of the new exterior walls in order to install vents for the stove, clothes dryer, hot water heaters and other appliances, which, not being very common in Bustamante, were not envisioned and included in the original reconstruction. The connecting of the outgoing sewer lines to the incoming water main was not a construction error, but an unsuccessful attempt by the Bustamante Water Conservation District to recycle water. Since the inauguration of the water fountain in the Sánchez backyard, towns situated over the Bustamante Aquifer, such as Villaldama, Lampasos, Camaron, Sabinas-Hidalgo and several others, have been without water. It is regrettable that all the new floors had to be torn out to rectify the improper water linkage, particularly since the recycling of waste water was unnecessary. A new water conduit being built by Bob Sánchez from Amistad Dam in Del Bio to Bustamante will easily meet the water needs of the new fountain and provide relief in nearby communities.

The economic growth of Bustamante has not gone unnoticed. Later this year, a ceremony will be held in Washington, D.C., where the U.S. Department of Commerce will recognize Bob Sánchez for his international accomplishments. His house remodeling project in Bustamante has led to an unexpected acceleration in the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Trade goals between Mexico and the United States, which were projected to be met in 1999, were met early in 1994 through the Bob Sánchez remodeling effort in Bustamante, Nuevo Leon.

“It is this type of individual initiative which is moving Mexico out of the Third World and into the family of developed nations,” said President Salinas of Mexico in acknowledging Bob Sánchez’s contribution to the economic development of the Republic of Mexico.

Chapter 8: El Turnio Tobin

On many occasions I have had ample opportunity to observe politicians at work. This has Been particularly so in relation to my work in school finance, where I found it necessary to attend each legislative session in Austin during a 25-year period. Some of the politicians are good, and some are not so good, but they all pale in comparison to my father-in-law, Antonio W. Tobin.

He was born and raised in South Texas, a direct descendant of Jose Antonio Navarro, leader and hero in the creation of the Republic of Texas. Navarro's daughter, Josefa, married Dan Tobin. They had a son named Antonio W., who had a son named José Antonio, who had a son, Antonio W., who had a daughter named Laura, who I married.

On his mother's side his roots in South Texas went back to the days of the Spanish Empire, with ancestors once owning the fabulous Espiritu Santo land grant (*encomiendo*) in the border area that now includes the city of Brownsville. One of my wife's ranches, located in Palito Blanco, Texas, just south of Alice, has the title dated 1735 and signed by the king of Spain. The tide specifies that the land was given "for past services to the crown in the New World," so that the family's history in Texas must go back to much earlier than 1735.

I have said that his name was Antonio W. Tobin, but few people used the name. Among English-speakers he was known as "Tony Tobin," and among the Mexican American population of South, Texas, everybody knew him as "El Turnio Tobin." The nickname stems from a slight strabismic condition, and in English it would translate to "Cross-eyed Tobin."

Although officially he listed "ranching" as his occupation, politics seemed to be his primary business, concern and avocation, as well as that of the entire family. Suffice it to say that Tony Tobin was Commissioner of the infamous Box 13 the night that Lyndon B. Johnson was elected to the U.S. Senate. On that day, or perhaps that night, every registered voter in the precinct turned out to vote, in alphabetical order.

I don't know how the dead managed to vote in every election, but I do know that on the evening when Laura and I got married, he pulled me aside, reached into his pocket, pulled out his wallet, gave me a card from it and sadly stated, "I guess this belongs to you now." The card which he so reluctantly presented to me was my new wife's voter registration card.

Nothing pleased him more than getting involved in a political campaign. One time I mentioned to him that his good friend, Congressman Kika de la Garza, was going to have an opponent when he came up for reelection. His face lit up, and he responded with a quick, "Thank God."

“Kika has not been opposed in the last three elections,” he added.

“I thought you were a good friend of Kika’s,” I noted.

“I am. I am, but it’s awful going all these years without any big fundraisers and campaigns. If he draws an opponent, we’ll be all over South Texas during the next election.”

Since I was keenly aware that I would never be really accepted into the family without my involvement in ranching, I bought four hundred acres close to my wife’s main ranch and proceeded to learn to be a cowboy, a calling that I pursued for about 15 years.

Tony Tobin became my mentor, teaching me the difference between a cow and a bull and allowing me to learn by doing most of the well repairing, barb wire splicing, branding, castrating, dehorning, spraying and vaccinating at all the ranches.

One time that his water well went dry, he asked my wife and me to meet him in San Diego on a Saturday morning. At the appointed time, he shows up with a queer contraption in the back of his truck. It was a “Ditch Witch,” a marvelous machine, something like a small tractor, but with a ditch digging apparatus in the back. He picked up a large supply of PVC pipe, and he informed us that we were going to lay a water line from his sister’s ranch to his. As the pipe was being loaded on his truck, a group of friends drove up and started teasing him about the ditch digger.

“What do you know about the operation of these fancy machines?” he was asked.

“*Bola de pendejos* (bunch of idiots). I don’t know anything about this machine, and I don’t have to know anything. That is why I have a son-in-law with a doctorate degree. He’s an expert on this type of machinery,” he yelled back.

In less than an hour we were at his ranch ready to start putting in the water line.

“How are you going to get that contraption off the truck?” he asks me.

“I don’t know. How did you get it on?”

“I just backed the truck into a loading ramp, and they drove it on.”

“Well, you don’t have a loading ramp at the ranch.”

“I know that, but maybe we can find a hill or a mound. I’ll back up the truck, and you can drive it off.”

We drove around until we found a good sized mound of dirt. Sure enough, he backed up the truck, and I got into the Ditch Witch. I had never even seen one of these contraptions before and was trying to figure out how to start it and how it worked.

“Hurry up. Start it and back it into the mound. Hurry up and get it started.”

I finally got the thing started and managed to put it in reverse. It may seem easy, but keep in mind that the machine didn’t even have a steering wheel while Tony shouted for me to go to the right and then to the left and every which way.

To make a long story short, I got the machine off, dug the ditch, and my wire put in about a mile of PVC pipe. I even managed to get the thing back into the truck, but to this day, I still don’t know if such machines have a brake, let alone where it is located, since I never found it.

Once my wife and I rigged up the fittings at both end of the pipe, it was only a matter of time before water started flowing. Our eyes got moist watching the thirsty cows come up to the trough to drink.

It wasn’t all work, though, since every weekend we spent considerable time in what is known in South Texas as “ranch hopping.” No matter where he was, Tony Tobin was sure to have two things in his pickup truck: an ice chest full of cold beer and a package of loaded ribs. The ribs were specially cut for him in a meat market in San Manuel. The butcher used an English cut which left a three-inch slab of meat on the rib. Each rib was loaded with rib eye, one of the tastiest cuts in a steer.

On weekends, we would drive over to some ranch to look at the cattle, check on the amount of rainfall all over the county, or perhaps just make a social call on some of his many friends and relatives. As we drove around, we would make a stop at an icehouse and replenish our supply of ice and beer. Occasionally, we would pick up a package of tortillas here and a couple of avocados there. Whenever we got hungry, we would gather some mesquite wood, start a fire and cook the ribs.

His biggest thrill was having someone with a guitar come over to the ranch in the evening. Then we would have quite a party, culminating with Tony singing “Juan Charrasqueado” in English, one of his most amazing accomplishments.

Tony was known from Laredo to Corpus Christi and all points south, even in the border area of northern Mexico. Even today, I can walk into any ice house, bar, restaurant – even political rallies and weddings – in South Texas and say, “*Soy yerno del Turnio Tobin* (I’m Tony Tobin’s son-in-law),” and I am always welcomed.

One time he informed me that he had signed a lease with an oil company to do some drilling at his Rosita ranch in Duval County. The rental payment was minimal, and, since he didn't own the mineral rights for that ranch, the prospects of making money from the drilling were not good. Yet, he appeared to be enthusiastic, stating, "There are ways of making money even without the mineral rights."

As part of their exploration, the oil company workers dug a sluice pit on the ranch. When we saw it, we were disappointed that they had erected a sloppy barbed wire fence around it and worried that some of the cattle would fall into the pit. The concern grew greater when the sluice pit was filled with water.

As luck would have it, a small calf weighing about 200 pounds did fall into the pit and drowned. You hate to see that happen to a little calf, and you hate the monetary loss. At that time a calf like that would have been worth as much as $200, a very significant amount, considering that the profit margin in ranching is very small.

Tony immediately contacted the oil company and submitted a claim for the value of the calf. The oil company, they always try to maintain good relationships with the landowners, accepted responsibility and volunteered to provide compensation.

The next day Tony received a call from an attorney in Alice representing the oil company. After providing condolences and an apology for the incident, the attorney asked Tony to drop by his office in Alice and get payment for the value of the calf. The following Saturday, Tony asked me to go with him to Alice to collect the money.

The lawyer took out a checkbook and asked, "How much do you figure the calf was worth?"

"Well, the calf was from a registered Charolais bull given to me by Mr. Howard, a friend in East Texas. I figure it must have been worth at least $1,200."

The attorney almost jumped out of his pants when he heard the figure.

"That seems extremely high for a 200 pound calf, even for a registered calf, and this one wasn't even registered."

"That may be, but I am sure the calf was worth every penny of it. And besides, this has been a traumatic experience for me. I had gotten very attached to the calf. I'm not even claiming compensation for the psychological injury I have experienced at the loss of a pet calf. However, I'm not too familiar with the value of Charolais cattle. You may wish to call Mr. Howard and get an opinion from him."

Needless to say, Tony had already talked to Howard, and Howard was actually sitting in his office waiting for the call from the oil company lawyer.

“Mr. Howard, I am an attorney for an oil company, and Mr. Tobin lost one of his calves in one of our sluice pits. I am trying to get an estimate of how much that calf would be worth.”

“I gave Tobin one of my best bulls. I would guess that the calf would be worth about $1,500.”

After ending his conversation with Howard, the attorney hung up the phone and proceeded to write out a check.

A few minutes later we were on our way back to the ranch with a check for $1,200. As we passed Pedro Trevino’s hardware store in San Diego, Tony said, “Pull over at the hardware store. I need to get something.”

I waited in the pickup, and Tony returned carrying two new lassoing ropes.

“What do you want with the lassos?” I asked.

‘We need them to catch some more calves and throw them into the sluice pit.”

But it turned out to be a needless expense. By the time we got back to the ranch the oil crew had already filled up the sluice pit. Obviously, they had no intention of paying $1,200 for any additional calves.

On another occasion, Tony and I sponsored a political rally in Duval County for Ruben Hinojosa, who was running for the State Board of Education. When Ruben arrived a few minutes before the rally was to begin, he informed me that the political signs I had requested were m the trunk of his car.

Tony called over a few of his nephews and nieces and told them that there were some campaign signs in the trunk of the car. Without a further word of explanation or directions, the kids took out the signs, obtained staple guns, hammers and nails from the house, ana in no time at all had the whole neighborhood looking like Ruben Hinojosa’s campaign headquarters.

Tony saved some signs so we could post them along the various highways around San Diego.

“Do you have any stakes?” Tony asked Ruben.

“No, we ran out of them today. Can you use the signs without the stakes?”

"Sure. Don't worry about it."

The next morning, Tony and I rode out in his pickup truck with the ample supply of campaign signs. As was customary, he prescribed the division of labor between us. He selected the sites where a sign should be posted, while I was assigned the task of putting up the sign.

Without stakes, the task proved to be much harder than we had assumed. It was illegal to post the signs on utility posts, and trees and barbed wire fences were not too cooperative in displaying the signs so that they could be easily seen from the highway.

As the thermometer moved closer to 100 degrees, Tony decided the results didn't justify the effort. "Let's go down to the ice house in Gonzalitos and figure out something else," he said.

As we arrived at the ice house on the highway, Tony, as was his custom, immediately noticed a maroon pickup truck parked in front of the ice house.

"I wonder what cousin Oscar is doing out here?"

"I don't know, but look at what he's got in his pickup," I replied. The back of cousin Oscar's pickup had a stack of campaign signs promoting a candidate for the Texas Railroad Commission. With the signs was an abundant supply of wooden stakes.

"I think we have solved our problem," said Tony. "Let's go inside and work up a deal. You just keep your mouth shut and let me do all the talking."

Just as soon as we had ordered a couple of beers, Tony goes over to Cousin Oscar and asks him what he is doing out on the highway on a terribly hot day like this one.

"*Que hay de nuevo, Turnio*? I'm putting up campaign signs for a candidate for the Railroad Commission. I just stopped for a cold beer."

"That's a coincidence," said Tony. "We are also putting up campaign signs – for Ruben Hinojosa."

After a decent pause, he added, "Seems like a waste of time and energy for both of us to work up a sweat putting up signs in the same area. Tell you what I'm going to do. José and I will place a sign for your candidate in every spot we put up a sign for Ruben."

Oscar immediately asked a kid working in the ice house to transfer the signs from his pickup to Tony's. "And all of the stakes," Tony added to the kid's instructions.

“Well, we got what we needed, let’s go before it gets any hotter outside, I suggested.

“I told you to keep your mouth shut,” Tony replied.

He then turns to Cousin Oscar. “It’s going to be hot out there putting up those signs.”

“What do you want? You were going to do it anyway.”

“A case of cold beer would make it tolerable.”

Cousin Oscar hesitated only a moment before saying, “All right.” He then turned to the ice house attendant and instructed him to put a case of beer and a bag of ice in the ice chest in Tony’s pickup truck.

“And a case for José,” added Tony. “He helps me a lot.”

“OK.” “Put two cases of beer in Tony’s pickup.”

We said goodbye to Cousin Oscar and got in the pickup truck.

“What for?”

“To dump those Railroad Commissioner’s signs. It’s too hot out there for you to be putting up two sets of signs. Besides, we don’t have enough stakes for both candidates.”

One Saturday morning Tony showed up at my ranch in a brand new pickup truck. At about the same time that he showed up, my wife asked me to get her about half a dozen cottontail rabbits, and she would fix them for us in garlic sauce since all of the meat in the freezer was frozen solid. I had a brand new Ruger semi-automatic .22 caliber rifle with a telescopic sight, just perfect for rabbit hunting.

“Bring your new rifle and get in my new truck so that I can show it to you while we look for cottontails,” he offered. I got on the passenger side, and his son, A.W., jumped in the back.

We had only gone about 50 yards before he spotted a cottontail just ahead on his side of the pickup. I opened the door on the passenger side, got off and drew a bead on the rabbit. It was an easy snot to the head, but unbelievably, the bullet went high, hitting about six inches above the rabbit.

“You went high. Haven’t you sighted that damned scope?”

“I sighted it yesterday at the rifle range. I got it dead center.”

“Well bring it down and try again.”

The little rabbit hadn’t moved, so this time I aimed a few inches below the head and squeezed off another shot.

“You’re even higher. Bring it down!”

I tried again. “You’re still high. Bring it down!”

Six times I shot at that rabbit, and six times I missed high. It seemed that the lower I aimed, the higher the path of the bullet.

“Dad, he’s shooting up your new truck,” screamed my brother-in-law.

Sure enough, I was shooting over the hood of Tony’s new pickup, and each shot opened up a four-inch gash on the gleaming surface of the hood ana pushed the bullet up. The more I towered the rifle, the bigger the gash and the higher the trajectory of the bullet.

Tony got out of the truck and looked at the front of his new pickup truck. I was glad that we were 50 yards from the house because I wouldn’t want my wife or the kids to hear what he had to say about me, or what he suggested that I do with my new rifle.

Tony Tobin passed away on July 3, 1985, leaving a big void in the lives of his family and friends. His passing also left a big void throughout South Texas where his pickup is no longer seen going along the highway with an ice chest full of cold beer and a package of loaded ribs.

Chapter 9: Silence of the Lambs

Almost every time that I attend an educational function, such as a meeting, workshop or conference, I invariably receive a Mae West invitation from educational personnel, “Come up and see me sometime.”

Since I enjoy visiting schools, seeing good teaching, identifying bad instructional practices, and it is very necessary for my work in educational research and development, I usually pursue the Mae West invitations until I can determine a day and time when visiting a school is feasible.

So it wasn’t surprising that I found myself in an elementary school late one morning. The school was in an urban area, with most of the enrollment made up of disadvantaged Mexican American students, many of them with limited proficiency in the English language.

The school did not have a bilingual education program, but most of the kids were receiving special instruction in English as a second language.

By the time the visit was finished it was almost noon, and I received an invitation to have lunch at the school. Nobody in his right mind would classify a school lunch as a gourmet experience, but since it did provide an opportunity to communicate with the school staff, I readily accepted.

As we walked into the cafeteria I was struck by a most unusual characteristic. All school cafeterias are noisy places where even the clatter of dishes and utensils are drowned out by the constant speaking, squealing and yelling of students temporarily released from the constraints of the classroom. This cafeteria seemed as quiet as a funeral, with the clatter of spoons and forks hitting the trays being the only sound in the large room.

“Staff usually sit at the principal’s table,” I was told, “and I have to warn you, he does not like a lot of conversation while we are having lunch.”

I sat at the table with the principal I had just met that morning and about one dozen teachers who had joined him for lunch.

“It sure is quiet in here,” I commented to the principal.

“It sure is,” he responded in a whisper. “I insist that there be no talking in the cafeteria. The children are supposed to come in, get their lunches, eat them, and exit the cafeteria with a minimum of talk. I hold teachers accountable for violations of this policy.”

Although I was dying to find out why absolute silence was desirable, I was afraid that my host teacher would be held accountable for any excessive speech on my part. So I just nodded my head every time the principal made a muted statement.

“Some principals find it hard to achieve this much order in the school, let alone in the cafeteria, but I have developed some techniques which are quite effective.”

“What kind of techniques?” I asked in a whisper. I knew I shouldn’t encourage too much communication, but my curiosity got the best of me.

“See all those tables over there?” he asked as he pointed to groups of students obviously in the higher elementary grades.

Note how the teachers seat their classes with boys and girls in alternating seats. At that age the children are becoming gender conscious, so seating them boy, girl, boy, girl makes the students self-conscious and discourages conversation.”

I looked at them again, and sure enough, not only was there no verbal communication, most of the students were looking down at their plates without even making eye contact with other students.

Having come from a large family where mealtime was the time for extensive recapitulation of everybody's experiences and my father usually used these occasions for relating extensive stories and jokes, I felt very weird sitting through this silent eating ritual at the elementary school. I managed to keep my mouth shut until the end of the meal. As I was leaving, I politely thanked the principal for the opportunity to visit his school.

“You are most welcome. Come back anytime. By the way, do you have any questions about our instructional program?”

“Yes, I do. What do you consider the biggest problem in the education of these children?”

Without hesitation, he replied, “Language. These students do not speak any language. They do not know English, and they do not know Spanish. They are like little animals. Their language development is so arrested that it is almost impossible to teach them anything.”

“I see,” I replied, wondering why he could not see the relationship between speaking and language development.

Chapter 10: The Epidemic that Never Was

“It is unbelievable that as an educator and a school superintendent you have so little concern over the well-being of children.”

I was shocked by this damning accusation from a respected member of the medical profession. The speaker was a San Antonio pediatrician who had come to my office with an urgent request.

He had advised me of a high incidence of diphtheria cases in San Antonio and specifically in the west side of San Antonio where the Edgewood school district is located. The children in this part of town were particularly vulnerable to the potential diphtheria epidemic since very few of them had received their DPT shots.

The local pediatric society had been calling on school superintendents with a request for assistance in averting a massive diphtheria epidemic. Their request was that the schools recommend to their respective school boards that they enact a resolution asking parents to have their kids inoculated and prohibit students who had not had their DPT shots from attending school.

I had no trouble with asking parents to have their kids inoculated. My problem was with the second part of the request, prohibiting students from attending school without their inoculations.

“Where are all of these 23,000 kids going to get their shots?” I asked.

“From their pediatricians.”

“Most of them don’t have a pediatrician, most of them don’t have a family doctor, and many of them have never been seen by a doctor in their entire lives. These are low-income kids. Most of them are participating in the federal free lunch program.”

“In that case, they can go to the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District and get their inoculations at no cost.”

“How are they going to get there?” I continued.

“They can drive or take the bus.”

Having worked as a teacher, principal and superintendent in Edgewood, one of the poorest school districts in Texas, for 12 years, I had severe reservations about the effectiveness of a board policy requiring immunizations before permitting school attendance.

Since there were few physicians practicing in the district, many of the kids did not have access to personal transportation, the San Antonio transit system provided poor service to this low-income section of town, and it was difficult for working parents to get the necessary time off to accompany their children for medical treatment, I could not conceive of 23,000 students receiving inoculations in the immediate future. What I did conceive was a massive absenteeism problem, and since the state's formula for the distribution of the inequitable funding of low-wealth districts was very dependent upon student attendance, the exclusion of a large number of students on the basis of not being inoculated could become the final nail in the financial devastation of the school district.

My reluctancy to make a positive commitment to the visiting physician produced the accusation of me not being concerned with the well-being of my students.

This type of dilemma is typical in the failure of social institutions to recognize and adapt to the unique characteristics of atypical children. It is commonly assumed that low-income families have the same access to services, transportation, time off and funds as more affluent homes. The inability of low-income people to meet their children's needs is commonly construed as a lack of concern on the part of the parents, rather than understanding the formidable barriers they face in meeting these needs.

Immediately following the departure of the disappointed physician, I called Dr. William Roser, head of the Metropolitan Health District. He informed me that the health district had already had a run on the vaccine in question, and there was no way he could provide immunizations for any significant portion of the district's 23,000 children. He could place a rush order to the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, but he was skeptical about the health district being able to handle that large number of inoculations in any reasonable amount of time.

"On the other hand, I am also concerned about the possibility of a serious and extensive diphtheria epidemic. José, let's get together and see if we can work out something."

We did get together, and we did work out something. Bill Roser mobilized the entire community to get the children immunized. Lackland Air Force Base contributed technical staff and some marvelous, compressed air inoculation guns, which can inoculate kids as fast as they can be moved in a line. The county nurse professional association volunteered to help. Nurses from the school district entered inoculation data in student health records, and teachers and

volunteer parents organized the students for the massive inoculation. Permission slips went out to 23,000 homes on one day and were processed by the schools the next.

In one week, 23,000 children in the school district were inoculated against diphtheria, and the process was subsequently repeated for booster shots. As a result of our action, the threat of a diphtheria epidemic never became a reality.

I was anxious to get the reaction of the physician who had accused me of having a lack of concern for the well-being of the children. The reaction was fast in coming, and it was strong. I was labeled a socialist and a communist and received a severe reprimand for moving the country a step closer to socialized medicine. Well, sometimes you just can't win.

Chapter 11: Jesus Christ Was Not Bilingual

The largest funeral I have ever attended was on the untimely death of San Antonio State Representative Matt García. At the services, appropriately held in San Fernando Cathedral, it appeared that every Mexican American in San Antonio was in attendance. This is not strange considering that Matt was not only a great guy, but he was also one of the most entertaining persons I have ever met.

Matt was a strong supporter of bilingual education and felt that much of the opposition to this methodology which surfaced from time to time could Be attributed to xenophobia and the typical American aversion to foreign languages. On one occasion he told me the following story, swearing that it was true. He never told me where he picked it up, and although I subsequently heard several versions of this story from various sources, I have never seen any documentation.

The newspaper reporters gathered outside the Office of the Governor of Texas waiting for the promised press conference. The doors finally opened and Governor "Ma" Ferguson entertained questions.

Miriam "Ma" Ferguson was elected governor of Texas in 1924. She ran for office on a "two governors for the price of one" campaign since she was seen as a stand-in candidate for her husband, James "Pa" Ferguson who was ineligible to run due to having been removed as governor in 1917 and declared ineligible to hold any public office.

"Governor, legislation has just been introduced which would make it mandatory for every high school student in the State of Texas to learn a foreign language. Do you support or oppose this proposed legislation?"

"I am 'agin' it. Definitely 'agin' it."

"Why do you oppose it?"

Ma Ferguson picked up a copy of the Holy Bible from her desk, lifted it above her head, and explained, "I'm agin it. I don't see any reason why anybody would want to learn a foreign language."

Looking with reverence at the Good Book, she continued, "If English was good enough for Jesus Christ, it ought to be good enough for the children of Texas."

Chapter 12: The Shape of the World

I can't remember making a decision to go to college. Throughout my early life, it was just something that everybody took for granted. My paternal grandfather had been a lawyer and newspaper publisher in Mexico prior to being exiled to the United States for his criticism of President Porfirio Diaz' dictatorial government. My maternal grandfather was a graduate of the Colegio Civil in Monterrey, Mexico. He came to the United States during the early 20th Century, realizing that revolutionary Mexico was no place for a man with a wife and five young daughters.

Family tradition has a strong impact on educational ambition. My father wanted me to be a lawyer and/or a newspaperman like his father; my mother wanted me to follow my oldest brother into medical school.

For my part, I wasn't sure what I wanted. When I enrolled in the University of Texas at the tender age of 15,I wanted to study journalism, law and medicine, but I also wanted to major in science and literature. It wasn't until my senior year after having taught some adult literacy classes and the enactment of the Texas Gilmer-Aiken legislation, which provided beginning teachers with an unbelievable high beginning salary of $2,405 a year, that I decided to become a teacher.

During my senior year at Martin High School in Laredo, my father was transferred by the Missouri Pacific Railroad to Monterrey, Mexico. My mother joined him in Monterrey at the end of the school year when my brother and I graduated from high school. My parents were very supportive of my higher education schooling, but, unfortunately, they were equally supportive of my oldest brother in medical school, my other brother at Texas A&M and my sister enrolled as a boarder at Ursuline Academy in Laredo, where she would have the opportunity to graduate from an American school prior to enrollment at Texas Women's University in Denton.

Every month, my father would send me whatever financial assistance he could, although what he sent me could not even take care of my room and board, let alone tuition, textbooks, clothing and other college expenses. I therefore had to earn the major portion of the cost of my college education. Although I had a multiplicity of part-time jobs, my main source of income during my freshman year came from working at Renfro's Drug Store at a pay rate of 50 cents an hour. Most of my sophomore year, I worked as an apprentice carpenter in the building of student housing. My junior and senior years were mostly financed by translating into Spanish scripts for a radio station operated by the University of Texas. During all four years at the

university, I picked up some extra money waiting on tables in some or the luxurious fraternities and sororities, as well as tutoring other students in various subjects, but especially in Spanish.

I mention all of this because I want to emphasize my feelings upon graduation with a teaching certificate and the prospect of getting a job that paid the unbelievable sum of $2,405 a year. I didn't attend the graduation ceremonies. That same day, I was taken to the Scott-White clinic in Temple, Texas, where I was paid $10 for a pint of blood. With this money, I shipped all of my belongings to Laredo and hitch-hiked home to look for a job.

The year of my graduation was 1950. The baby boomers of the post-World War II years were too young to be enrolled in school, and the low birth rates during the depression and the war, and the discharge of military service men and women had created a surplus of teachers.

As soon as I arrived in Laredo, I submitted an application to the Laredo Public Schools and waited for a call. They had no vacancies, and it started to look as if my dream job would never materialize. On the last day before the start of the 1950-51 school year, I received a call from the personnel office informing me of an opening teaching science at L.J. Christen Jr. High. I was scheduled to meet with the county sheriff, who was also president of the school board.

South Texas communities sometimes have very strong political leaders heading very strong political groups. One such political boss was George Parr of Duval County, commonly referred to as the Duke of Duval. Another such political powerhouse was my interviewer in Laredo, who doubled up as president of the school board and County Sheriff.

When I arrived for my interview, I was disappointed to find four other applicants for the same position waiting to be interviewed. I took a seat among them, most of whom I had met before; some of them even close friends.

One of the applicants was called in, and spent a few minutes in the sheriff's office. He came out, muttered something about "stupid questions," picked up his things and walked out.

In turn, each of the other applicants was called in, came out confused or angry, made reference to "stupid questions," and left the office.

I was the last to be called in. I greeted the sheriff, conveyed greetings from my father, and was asked to sit down for my interview.

"I have only one question for you," he stated. "You want to teach science in our schools. Do you teach that the world is flat, or do you teach that the world is round?"

Just then I realized that the job was mine. I had heard the question before, I understood it, and I knew the answer the political boss of Laredo wanted to hear.

“Sheriff, I can teach it either way.”

That same day, I walked off the streets of Laredo and started my educational career.

Chapter 13: My Mother Went to Town

Back in the good old days, we didn't have any bilingual education or English as a second language programs. Those of us who were not very proficient in English were placed in regular classes where we either learned to swim or sink. Some of us learned to swim; a lot of us sank.

As we tried to survive in school, we did receive some form of assistance in the form of English language development activities. Invariably such activity dealt with the structure of the English language, the conjugation of verbs, and the occasional reminder that whereas in Spanish the adjective follows the noun, in English syntax the adjective precedes the noun. Instead of saying, "the car red," we were supposed to say, "the red car."

Following the conjugation of a verb, we always had an exercise that began with, "Make a sentence using…" This was followed by the verb and the specific tense, person and/or number.

One day, we had spent considerable time in the conjugation of the verb "to go." The teacher then called on the class to make a sentence using the past tense of the verb "to go."

"O.K., class, who can make a sentence using the past tense of the verb 'to go'?"

Immediately, Raquel raised her hand. Raquel could always make a sentence using any tense of any verb.

"My mother went to town," responded Raquel.

"Very good! Who else can make a sentence using the past tense of the verb 'to go'? Simón?"

Simón stood up and very slowly and carefully gave his sentence, "My father went to town."

Simón was followed by María, who told the class, "My brother went to town." Maria was followed by Luis who informed us that his "sister went to town."

This went on and on as each of us made our somewhat repetitious sentences using the past tense of the verb "to go" using members of the nuclear family and even getting into the members of the traditional extended Hispanic family.

Finally, there was only one student in the class who had not gone through the conjugation exercise. "Lupe, will you make a sentence using the past tense of the verb to 'go'?" asked the teacher.

Lupe was the biggest student in the class. He was twice as big as most of us, and he was always the last one to be called upon and the last one to volunteer for recitation. As he stood up, most of the class was already giggling over what he would say.

"My…, My…, My… That's no fair, teacher! These *cabrones* used up all my relatives."

Chapter 14: One Minute of Silence

I have often criticized school administrators for their lack of support for bilingual education. Of course, such criticism should be tempered by an admission that it is a generalization and does not always hold true. Many administrators are strong supporters of bilingual education. This is particularly so in the case of language minority administrators who have consistently supported bilingual programs, probably because personal experiences in the era prior to the advent of bilingual programs led to their development of a unique sensitivity to the learning problems of limited-English-proficient children. Just how supportive of bilingual education administrators can be is illustrated by the following personal experience.

I was invited to speak to a group of parents and teachers in an evening meeting. After having spent so many years around the schools, I was well aware that speaking at PTA meetings can be one of the most demanding ana frustrating experiences of a professional educator. Invariably, the PTA uses a sound system it purchased with profits from fundraising activities, and invariably, it does not work. Parents are encouraged to bring their children, and the innocents tend to run up and down the aisles during the course of the meeting. But the most taxing aspect for me has always been sitting through a never-ending sequence of committee reports, PTA business and school events that usually have little relevancy or interest for the guest speaker.

On this particular evening, after listening to the secretary's presentation of the minutes of the gist meeting, the treasurer's report on the financial status of the PTA, and several committee reports on fundraising activities, the founder's day dinner, and the status of purchases of audio-visual equipment that the PTA was going to donate to the school, the school principal was asked to report on school news and events. Toward the end of the report the principal made a very special and somber announcement.

"I regret to report that Mrs. Rodríguez is still very ill and is not expected to recover. I therefore ask that everyone present stand and observe one minute of silence as a token of our respect for Mrs. Rodríguez."

We all stood, bowed our heads and silently prayed that Mrs. Rodríguez would somehow recover and return to her teaching position in the school. We remained so for a minute and then started to sit down.

We were restrained from doing so when the principal added, “Since Mrs. Rodríguez teaches in the bilingual program, I now request that we all observe an additional minute of silence in Spanish.”

Chapter 15: Bilingual Onions

During the past 25 years, I have had ample opportunity to visit bilingual education programs throughout the country. My most traumatic observation was in a school district in West Texas in the late 1970s.

Visiting in the school district on school finance matters, the superintendent of schools and several board members asked me to observe their bilingual program. In the company of assistant superintendents for elementary schools, instruction, special programs and the director of bilingual education I visited a bilingual first grade class.

The class of some 24 Hispanic limited-English-proficient kids was divided into two groups. In one corner, the teacher was conducting a Spanish language development activity with about 12 students. Diagonally across the room in another corner, the teacher aide was conducting a similar English language development activity.

The teacher was blond, blue-eyed and obviously had little, if any, facility in the Spanish language she was using. Pointing to a picture of an onion in a large chart she stated, "*Esta es una cebolla* [this is an onion]." Except that the way she pronounced the words it sounded more like, "*Estáy ace iúna sebóla*." The kids then repeated the sentence, "*Estay es iuna sebola*."

The teacher then flipped the chart to a picture of a radish and modeled, "Estay ace iun rabáno." She then had the kids repeat it several times.

Meanwhile the obviously Hispanic teacher aide with dark eyes, jet black hair and dark complexion was using an identical chart. She said, "These are onions," but it sounded more like "*Dese or oñons*," which the kids repeated. With the next picture the teacher aide said, "*Dese or radiches*," which the kids also repeated. A little later she pointed to a picture of a coconut and said, "*Dese or cacanuts*."

I didn't stay very long in the classroom, but when I walked out there were haff a dozen district administrators anxiously awaiting my reaction to the bilingual program.

"What do you think?" the assistant superintendent asked.

"I think it is an admirable effort in responding to the language needs of children," I replied. "But let me ask an important question. Why don't you have the English-speaking teacher present the English-language activity and the Spanish-speaking aide present the Spanish activity?"

"It's interesting that you bring this up because that's the way we used to do it. However, on our last monitoring visit from the state education agency, the program officer noted that the teacher is being paid from a Title VII bilingual grant and therefore has to teach the Spanish lesson, and the teacher aide is being paid from our Title I grant and therefore cannot be allowed to teach in the Spanish language."

Stunned as I was, I had the presence of mind to ask, "Did you get this criticism in writing?"

"Yes sir, we sure did."

Before I left the district, I had a copy of the monitoring visit report from the State Department of Education specifying which language each of the two instructors could use in keeping with their source of pay, rather than their language proficiency.

As I was leaving, I was asked one more question. "What do you think we should do?"

Without hesitation I responded, "Have the English-speaking teacher teach in English, the Spanish-speaking aide teach in Spanish, and lie like hell to the State Department of Education."

Chapter 16: My Side of the Story

The basic reason for my spending so many years of my professional life in a student advocacy role is my realization that there are segments of the school population for whom little advocacy is found in the school.

Middle-class families easily master the techniques for the manipulation of social institutions. I believe that this is one of the main differences between the haves and the have-nots of the world and plays a major role in upward mobility and recovering from adverse situations. Middle-and upper-class members frequently fail to understand the inability of the lower social and economic classes to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty, since they commonly assume that all people have equal access to services and influence over social institutions.

The higher classes have a lifetime of experience in making applications, appealing decisions, exerting influence, applying pressure, obtaining legal redress and receiving services. If the garbage is not picked up, a call to City Hall or to the city councilperson we talked to at last Friday's reception is sufficient to remedy the problem. Unfortunately, the disadvantaged do not know who to call, do not understand bureaucratic hierarchies, have no way of applying pressure, and tend to resign themselves too easily to arbitrary or unfair decisions by authority figures.

The school as a social institution is no different in responding to its clientele in a manner consistent with the influence of the specific client. The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) has spent much of its resources these past 20 years as an advocate for disadvantaged, minority, limited-English-proficient, migrant and immigrant children, not because we feel that mainstream children are less worthy of our attention, but because we realize that parents, community, social and political organizations provide an extensive amount of advocacy for these mainstream children.

In my professional experience, I have never ceased to be amazed at how little advocacy for students is available in the school. Although this lack of student advocacy is very common for atypical students, it also manifests itself for almost every type of student in a problem situation.

A rule of thumb in dealing with schools is, "Once a student lands in a problem situation, the whole system closes ranks against that student."

I remember one time when I was serving as district superintendent, I received an emergency call from one of the high schools informing me that a student walkout was imminent. I drove to

the school to appraise the situation and was informed by the principal that the situation was well in hand. The reason for the pending student walkout was a protest over the quality of the food served in the school cafeteria. Administrative staff and faculty had worked out a plan of action. Everything had been addressed. Police had been alerted, an administrative official was prepared to meet with the news media if they showed up, teachers had been assigned to each exit to take down the names of the students who walked out, disciplinary procedures had been worked out, printed and handed out to the students, secretaries were prepared to call parents, etc. As I said, everything had been worked out to deal with the student walkout. I was impressed but did have one question. "How is the food in the cafeteria?" The principal responded immediately, "It's awful. I would never eat there."

One day, I was working in my superintendent office when the receptionist buzzed me and informed me that there was a high school student in the lobby who wanted to talk to me. I asked her to send him in.

"Are you the guy in charge here?" he asked me after giving me his name and the school he attended.

"Yes, I am. I am the superintendent. What can I do for you?" "I'm a high school student, and I have just been suspended for one week. Can I tell you my side of the story."

"I don't see why not."

"Well, I had an incident in class with one of the girls, and she told the teacher. The teacher told me to report to the office. I asked the teacher if I could tell her my side of the story, and she said she didn't want to hear it. She took me to the vice principal's office and told him what the girl said I had done. He told me I was in serious trouble. I then asked him if I could tell him my side of the story, and he said, "No, just sit there until I meet with the principal and tell him what you did."

In a while, I was taken into the principal's office and told that I was suspended for one week. I asked him, "Can I tell you my side of the story?" He said, "No, put away your books and take this note to your parents telling them that you are suspended for one week, and you cannot return unless your parents come in with you. "

He then repeated his persistent question, "Can I tell you my side of the story?" "Sure," I replied, "go ahead." The student then proceeded to tell his version of what had happened in the classroom.

I asked him to wait outside while I called the school and got the school's version of what had happened. After receiving the information from the school, I called the student back into my office.

"I heard your side of the story, and I heard the school's side of the story. I think that they are not very inconsistent. As far as I'm concerned, the suspension stands, and you should consider yourself lucky that you didn't get expelled."

The student grinned. "I know it, but I just wanted a chance to tell somebody my side of the story."

Chapter 17: The Molly Bee Syndrome

Few words in the English language have gone through a history of total depreciation as the word "bureaucracy." Originally, bureaucracy formed the basis for the science of administration. Its early use was in reference to organization and grouping of administrative tasks by specialization of functions.

Excesses in organization led to the deterioration of the concept so that today the word "bureaucracy" is associated with slavish adherence to fixed rules, officialism, red tape and proliferation of organizational positions.

In my involvement as an advocate for school finance reform, I am frequently asked if school systems employ an excessive number of support staff. I served as a school principal in a low wealth district before the advent of federal programs and extensive state equalization aid. The school had 1,200 students, 40 teachers and one administrator. Aside from janitors and cafeteria workers, there was not a single person besides the principal who did not have a full-time teaching load. I didn't even have a secretary, or assistant, or librarian or anything else, although a nurse did visit the campus one day a week. Needless to say, the number of clerks, paraprofessionals, resource personnel, counselors, administrative assistants, etc., will always seem large to me. Although I am appreciative of their roles, it seems that there is a relationship between an increased size of support staff and an increased level of bureaucracy in a system.

The following story provides some insights into the growth of a bureaucracy within an organization.

"Molly Bee needs help!" The tone of voice, as well as the curtness of the statement indicated an unmistakable desire to bring closure to the issue.

Molly Bee was the person responsible for providing duplication services for the organization. Although the Xerox 9100 required some amount of training for operation, the duplication operator position was not considered a very technical, difficult nor high-level position in a research and development organization where all of the employees had at least two college degrees and most had doctorates in specialized fields.

"Are we still providing same-day duplication services?" I asked the assistant director for administration.

"Yes, we are."

"Is Molly Bee having to come in early or leave late?"

"No, she isn't."

"Is she still taking a noon lunch break and a rest break in the mornings and afternoons?"

"Yes, she is."

"Then, why does she need help? I haven't heard any complaints about duplicating services."

I had not heard about any problems in duplication, although I am a poor sample when it comes to services. I know that I can ask my secretary for five copies of a letter and get them within five minutes. But this doesn't mean that someone at the low end of the organizational totem pole isn't waiting all day to get something copied.

"She just has too much to do," he responded. "As we keep expanding program activity the amount of duplication keeps increasing. We have to get her some help."

"What kind of help does she need?"

"Well, she needs an assistant. I have contacted a young lady that is willing to work for minimum wage. I suggest we hire her and assign her to Molly Bee as an assistant. She really needs her during peak workloads."

"You know that only one person can run the Xerox machine at any one time."

"We can stagger office hours."

The assistant was determined to get my approval. "We have a clerical position we aren't using. Why don't you let me hire Laura as a temporary, that's the name of the applicant, and let her help Molly Bee in the duplicating room? If it doesn't work out, we can release her before the end of her probationary period."

As executive director of the organization, I had tried for years to keep support service and administrative costs at a minimum and focus resources on program activity, but the determination and resolution evident in the assistant's face made me wonder if perhaps we really needed more help.

The decision was probably moot anyway. The decision was made when some program director decided six months previously on the need for additional clerical staff and wrote it into a proposal. Once the proposal was funded, the law of the vacuum insisted that the position be

filled whether needed or not. Anyway, it was evident that he had already promised Molly Bee some help, and I had to allow him some discretion in the performance of his duties.

“Okay. Hire the new assistant, and we’ll see how it works out.”

I didn’t even get to meet Laura before I left for Washington where a series of meetings kept me for slightly more than a week. When I returned, I immediately faced a procession of program directors wanting to talk to me about support services.

“You have to do something about duplication. I can’t be expected to meet deadlines for the new materials if I can’t get anything duplicated around here.” Similar complaints surfaced from training, technical assistance, research and evaluation program directors.

“Didn’t the assistant hire the new duplication helper?”

“He sure did.”

“So, what’s the problem?”

“I think you’d better go see.”

Very perplexed, I hastened to the duplicating room where I met a young girl running the Xerox machine.

“Hi, I’m the boss man. Are you Laura?”

“Yes, sir. I’ve heard of you.”

“How long have you been working with us?”

“Seven days.”

“Are you doing a lot of duplication?”

“Yes, sir. I do all the duplication. I sure have learned a lot, and I really like it.”

“Where’s Molly Bee?”

“She is in her office, but you can’t go in without an appointment.”

She had pointed to the door to the small inner office in the duplicating room that we had used for the storage of paper stock. On the closed door was a fairly large sign that I hadn't noticed before:

MRS. MOLLY BEE, DIRECTOR
Duplication Services Division
Knock Before Entering

Not knowing what I would find on the other side of the door, I knocked timidly before entering the room. There was Molly Bee sitting at a desk bigger than my own with a sign similar to the one at the door that provided me with her old name and the new job title. Behind her was a credenza with a series of bins containing lots of paperwork.

"Hi, Molly Bee."

"Oh, hi, Doc. How was Washington? It took me several days, but I finally got our duplicating services all straightened out."

"How did you straighten them out?"

"Well, I started by creating a new system from scratch. We never had a duplication system before."

"What does this duplication system look like?" I was afraid to ask.

Molly Bee pulled out a notebook from her king sized desk. She opened it to a page entitled, "Duplication Services Division, Administrative Memorandum No. 2, Duplication Request Form."

Administrative Memorandum No. 2 dealt with the procedure to be followed in requesting copies of a "document." A form was provided in which an employee wanting copies could check off the number of copies being requested, the size and shape of the copies, the date and time the request was initiated, the date and time it was needed, and the date and time it was completed. The form included a job order as well as space for four different signatures denoting approval of the job order by personnel from the entire organization. The Duplication Request Form was then stamped with one of four rubber stamps on the director's desk; which included a huge "approved" stamp with space for the director's signature. The other stamps were "not approved" with a space for the reason, "job priority assignment," and "resubmit."

Being completely enthralled by Administrative Memorandum No. 2, I backed up to look at Administrative Memorandum No. 1. It dealt with the creation of the Duplication Services Division staffed by Molly Bee, director ,and Laura as chief duplicator.

Administrative Memorandum No. 3 provided rules for the preparation of documents for duplication. For example, all staples were to be removed prior to paper clipping the pages together, no creases or folds were allowed. Requests not in compliance would be stamped "resubmit" and returned to the "originator."

Administrative Memorandum No. 4 dealt with timelines. "Documents needed by Thursday must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. on Monday" and same-day duplication required special justification and approval.

Administrative Memorandum No. 5 required all employees to adhere to the regulations promulgated by previous memoranda.

"Does Laura do all the duplication?" I asked.

"She has to. I am booked solid just keeping track of all the requests and sorting them out for Laura."

"Why are program directors complaining about duplicating services?

"Well, I am having to return lots of them because of errors in filling out the forms. I have also had to return a few because of inadequate preparation for duplication."

Following my briefing on the new system for document duplication I called in the assistant.

"Molly Bee's duplicating system is not working out too well."

"I know it. Maybe we need more time. Perhaps we should give it a few more weeks so that everybody can learn the new system."

"I don't think so. Things are already sufficiently messed up. I think I have to do something now."

"I figured you would. I knew you wouldn't like it. Shall I release Laura?"

"Hell no! Laura is doing a good job with the duplication. Fire Molly Bee. She is the one that doesn't have a damn thing to do."

Chapter 18: The Verbs

As a school principal, supervisor and superintendent, I have had ample opportunity to visit classrooms. Invariably I take exception to the great amount of speaking done by the teacher and the little amount of speaking done by the students. This problem is especially critical when a large number of the students in the classroom are limited-English-proficient and are in desperate need of language development activities. Most of the teachers do not realize the extent to which they tend to dominate classroom language activity. As superintendent of a school district comprised of over 90% Mexican American children, of which more than half had limited proficiency in the English language, I became extremely sensitive to this problem. At one point I acquired a video camera and had some technicians video tape specific classrooms. I subsequently allowed the teachers to review the video tape and make the inevitable discovery that the children contributed little to verbal communications in the classroom.

A similar problem that I commonly encountered was the failure of instructional personnel to adapt the instructional program to the language characteristics of students. Instructional materials are commonly developed for typical English background students with the assumption made that the students have sufficient mastery of the English language to profit from the instructional activity. When this assumption built into the materials is erroneous, the consequences can be disastrous. I don't advocate a slow-paced, watered-down instructional program, but on the other hand, teaching content material to students who do not understand the language is fruitless.

One Monday morning, I walked in on a language arts class comprised of limited-English-proficient Hispanic students. The teacher was just introducing a new unit on verbs.

"All right, students. You did very well last week on nouns. This week we start a new unit on verbs. How many of you read the lesson on verbs I assigned last Friday?"

About three-fourths of the students raised a hand.

"That's good. Did all of you understand the lesson? Do you have any questions on the lesson before we begin? Do you have any questions about verbs?"

Not a single hand went up.

"All right. First, we want to find out what a verb is. What is a verb?"

No one seemed anxious to respond since not a single hand went up.

“All right class. What is a verb? If you read your lesson, you surely know what a verb is?”

No response from the students.

“Can one of you students tell me what a verb is?” “Anybody?” “Can anyone of you students tell us something about a verb?”

The silence was very uncomfortable and would have gotten worse, except one little boy raised his hand.

“All right, Tomás. I can see that you read the lesson. Tell the class something about a verb.”

Little Tomás stood up. He placed his hands under his armpits, flapped his arms up and down and said, “Teacher, a verb, it flies.”

Chapter 19: Measure of Progress

“Mr. Juan Hernández is here to see you.”

“Who?”

“Mr. Juan Hernández. He says you do not know him, but you have heard of him.”

“Dr. Cárdenas? *Yo soy Juan Hernández. El Señor Kaimowitz me dijo que hablara con usted*. [I am Juan Hernández. Mr. Kaimowitz asked me to talk to you.]”

Similar conversations have become a part of daily life. I strained to remember but couldn’t. I said a few pleasant trivial things, “How are you?” etc., keeping the conversation going while I tried to remember or pick up some clue – any clue to prevent the embarrassment of having to say, “I don’t know who you are, please tell me.”

“My daughter, Guadalupe Hernández…”

That rang a bell, “Guadalupe Hernández…,” and suddenly flood gates of my memory opened, inundating me with information.

Guadalupe Hernández… *Hernández v. Porter*… Michigan… “Mr. Kaimowitz sends his regards…”

Gabe Kaimowitz, attorney… never met him, but communicated with him… both by phone and mail…

“Dr. Cárdenas, we just moved to San Antonio. Mr. Kaimowitz gave me this note with your name and address. He said that if we had any problems to contact you immediately.” They say that in the split second between the realization that death is coming and the end of life, a person’s whole life comes into consciousness. I really don’t know, never having been in that situation, but I do know that at the moment of remembering, large quantities of stored knowledge immediately surface. Not as if it goes past chronologically or in any other type of sequence. It is suddenly all just there.

This happened now. Guadalupe Hernández… 10, no 11 years-old now… born in Texas… Mexican American… Spanish speaking... moved to Detroit… enrolled in the public schools…

“*Por favor sientese, Señor Hernández*. [Please have a seat, Mr. Hernández.]”

Those who study human behavior say that the human mind seeks closure. We enjoy entering the last word in a crossword puzzle, closing a circle. It felt like that to see Juan Hernández, who up to now had been only a name. I wished I could see Guadalupe.

Guadalupe Hernández moved with her parents to Detroit, Michigan. In September 1970, she was enrolled in the first grade in the Detroit Public School System. Like so many other children moving toward the northern part of the United States with their famines looking for better work, she had been reared in a Spanish-speaking home. At the time of the first grade enrollment, she spoke no English.

The psychometrist who spoke no Spanish administered an individual intelligence test and, in spite of the incompatibility of language, determined the child was not mentally retarded.

Yet the school had no program to deal with a 6-year-old child who spoke no English. So the psychometrist recommended that she be placed temporarily in Logan School which had a class for

mentally handicapped children. The reason for the recommendation was that the classes for the mentally retarded were much smaller and could allow for one-to-one instruction made necessary by the language characteristic.

Unfortunately, none of the school personnel to whom Guadalupe was assigned did or could communicate with her in Spanish. She was placed in a classroom with mentally handicapped children and stayed there for two years without any special instruction compatible with her language characteristic, but very compatible with the non-existing mentally retarded characteristic.

In September 1972, the Hernández family moved to the Lincoln Park School District in Michigan. Again, Guadalupe was placed in a class for mentally and/or emotionally handicapped children; again, in an all-English instructional program.

Guadalupe's parents, aware of the disservice being done to their child, attempted to have her moved out of the class for the mentally retarded. In her own neighborhood, Guadalupe was already labeled a "dummy," and her parents were aware that she was not doing well in school. Efforts to get her out of the class for the mentally retarded were unsuccessful for five years.

Finally in 1975, after hearings requested by a community organization, it was determined that Guadalupe had been misplaced, and she was moved to a regular classroom. But since it was evident that she was not mentally retarded, no special program was afforded or made available to her.

Finally, the family, along with the families of other children in similar circumstances, sued the school districts, the Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Michigan State Board of Education, and just about everybody connected with the situation.

Although I never met with Gabe Kaimowitz, who handled the case for the Michigan Legal Services, Inc., there was extensive communication between us, and using some of the arguments I had previously presented in *U.S. v. Texas* and *Keyes v. Denver,* the attorney won the case. A final settlement was reached in 1977.

A lot of publicity associated with this case was that the families asked not only for injunctive relief in the Federal District Court, but also asked for payment for damages suffered by the children involved at the hands of the school, making the case an early "educational malpractice" suit.

"Dr. Cárdenas, we just moved to San Antonio. Mr. Kaimowitz gave me this note with your name and address. He said that if we had any problems to contact you immediately."

"Please have a seat, Mr. Hernández, what seems to be the problem?"

"Well, we moved to San Antonio and enrolled Guadalupe in the school district where we live."

"That's nice."

"Well, it's not that nice. In spite of our objections, on the basis of her records, which show placement in special education in Michigan, she has just been placed in a special education class for the mentally retarded, and…"

Chapter 20: The Dining Room Table

“José, I need a favor.”

“Anything. Just ask, and I’ll do it.” This was the only possible response to a request for a favor from our program officer in one of the largest foundations in the country. He had been instrumental in the creation of the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) and had provided extensive handling for our various student advocacy projects through the years.

“I want you to go to California for a few days and provide technical assistance to a teacher who has been in contact with our foundation. We have been receiving a lot of correspondence from her for some time now with requests for assistance. Now, we are receiving correspondence from other persons recommending that we provide her with assistance. The impressive thing is not the number of recommendations we are receiving, but who is sending letters of recommendation for her. I want you to go to California, check out what she’s doing, and write me a brief report. I’ll underwrite all your expenses and even provide a fee for your technical assistance.”

I have had sufficient relationships with foundations to develop an understanding of the ways in which most foundations function. All foundations get an unbelievable number of unsolicited proposals for financial assistance. I believe that many of these requests go unread, since I have personally seen the storage rooms at various foundations where thousands of requests for handing are kept until staff has time to go through them. Since foundations receive extensive criticism if the amount spent on staff is disproportionate to the amount spent on philanthropy, they never appear to have sufficient personnel resources to properly address all solicitations received.

Most unsolicited requests for funds eventually are responded to by a form letter acknowledging the request and stating either that all of the foundation’s funds for the current fiscal period are already committed, or that the proposed activity is not within the programmatic interests of the foundation.

Most foundations that I have worked with are in constant communications with experts in their fields of interest, and it is this expertise that receives most of the foundation’s support. Some experts are such eminent figures in their fields that they are sought out by foundation staff and urged to conceptualize activities which the foundation will be eager to hinder.

An alternative to providing funds for solicitations is the provision of technical assistance, which is less expensive for the foundation, may create a short-lived relationship through a limited commitment, or may even prove interesting and lead to subsequent funding.

The teacher in California that I was going to assist was interested in the development of an international school records transfer system between the United States and the Republic of Mexico. As director of the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)’s Center for Migrant Education, I had been a member of the U.S. Office of Education’s task force, which conceptualized the Migrant Student Record Transfer (MSRT) system currently based in Little Rock, Arkansas, so I figured that I and at least a basic understanding of the issues and problems involved.

I made all necessary logistical arrangements with the teacher and flew to California. During my service in the U.S. Army, I had lived in California and was fairly well acquainted with the lush fruit-producing region I was to visit. Subsequently, I have done extensive work with school districts and universities in California, and I like to revisit the state periodically.

In various ways, California amazes me. I am always expecting the big earthquake to level a large portion of the state. Even before this happens, it is possible that when vegetation has been completely stripped by the developers, a good, hard rain will wash most of the state into the Pacific Ocean. The people of California similarly fascinate me, with their conviction that if they eat enough oats, or whatever the current health food fad is, they will live forever. They jog continuously, engage in all kinds of strenuous sports activities, eat disgustingly healthy, and yet they are all sick. A person can't light a cigarette in the middle of a 40-acre park without a dozen people coming up and requesting that the cigarette be put out because they suffer from a deadly respiratory ailment. I estimate that 90% of the population of the state has some form of a deadly respiratory ailment.

They do have the classiest cars. You can stand for half an hour outside the lobby of your hotel and see more vintage carriages than there are in the whole City of San Antonio.

The teacher picked me up and gave me a tour of the region in which she worked. Part of the tour included visits to several of the many migrant camps, temporary housing provided for migrant agricultural workers and their families as they harvested the local crops. Almost all the people in the camps were Mexicans. I don't mean Mexican American like myself, but Mexican. The cars in the camp parking lots had license plates from most of the Mexican states, although the majority appeared to be from the Mexican state of Michoacan.

I like Michoacan. The word comes from the Nahuatl language spoken by the Mixtecas (Aztecs) and means "land of many lakes." It sounds very much like our own word, Michigan, which is also a Native American word which means "land of many lakes." Maybe the pre-Columbian native Americans were not as uncommunicative as historians lead us to believe.

These cars with Mexican license plates stayed in the parking lots most of the time, since very impressive bus service was provided to and from the fields where they were harvesting the crops.

All of the migrants I encountered spoke fluent Spanish, few spoke any English. I asked several migrants what type of documentation they had for this temporary residency in the United States. A few indicated that they had no documentation, but most of them evaded answering the question. My hostess indicated that I was being rude and shouldn't persist in asking this question, since almost all of the migrants in the camps were undocumented, and I was embarrassing them.

I was amazed to see thousands of undocumented people undetected by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). In Texas, INS scatters sand along the border, and the immigration officers, looking like John Wayne scouting around Fort Apache, check several times a day for footprints, which indicate that someone has walked through there. If they find a footprint, they then follow up using four-wheel drive vehicles, horses, airplanes and even helicopters in their attempts to capture each and every person who may have entered the country illegally.

In California I saw thousands of undocumented people residing in very well-organized camps, living right under the very noses of the unsuspecting Immigration and Naturalization Service.

In Texas, all major roads leading from the border have checkpoints at which each and every vehicle is stopped and inspected for the presence of “undocumented aliens.” In California, they were being moved up and down to different fields along the major highways, by the bus load, in broad daylight without drawing the suspicion of the “migra” (INS).

Maybe I just happened to make my observations at the wrong time of the year, that is, during the harvest season when there is a beautiful symbiotic relationship between agriculture and the INS. Once all the crops are in, INS is shocked to learn that there are undocumented people in the region, and all hell breaks loose, resulting in a massive effort at apprehension and expulsion. Then the California governor expounds on how all of the state’s problems stem from the unwanted flow of undocumented aliens and their drain of public money through their extensive demands on schooling and other social services.

Like I said, Californians are strange people.

My hostess also took me to various schools to observe the excellent educational programs provided to the elementary and preschool-age population. These programs were the fulfillment of every educator’s dream with what appeared to be unlimited resources to address the needs of children from birth through the elementary grades.

I did note two discrepancies. The first was that in some of the schools, the portion of the campus that was being used for the summer migrant program was separated from the rest of the campus by a chain link fence. It was regrettable that this physical segregation precluded the integration of students with differing lifestyles. I feel that the segregation prevented a golden opportunity for providing priceless experiences in multicultural education, including the possible development of bilingualism among members of both student groups. It is alright to have children learn about Mexicans sleeping under a cactus and see pictures of them leading their cute little burros to market loaded with firewood, but it is no substitute for personal contacts with the real thing.

The second discrepant was the absence of programs for high school-age youth. My inquiries led to an assurance that the school did not wish to compete with agriculture for the time and attention of students old enough to contribute to the harvesting of the crops. This is regrettable, since I feel that it is the responsibility of education in a free society to provide feasible alternatives for the exercise of choice, rather than to predetermine which children will have the opportunity for socio-economic mobility and which will be doomed into a stoop labor existence for the rest of their lives through the provision or denial of educational opportunity.

During all this travel through this lush area of central California, my hostess teacher informed me of the history of her involvement in migrant records. She had been a teacher in a summer migrant program, and she had felt frustrated at having little or no information about the past educational experiences of Mexican students. On her own initiative, she had written a letter to the Ministry of Education in Mexico explaining the desirability of having such information. She was surprised to receive an immediate reply from Mexico City, recognizing the problem and volunteering to transmit such records if she would furnish them with the names, places of origin and other identification data for students enrolled in the California migrant educational program.

She sent the necessary information and, in a few days, personnel from a nearby Mexican consulate delivered a diplomatic pouch with all of the student records she had requested. The records from the various Mexican states included grade placement, achievement data, anecdotes, inoculations and other health information and standardized test data. It was interesting to note that the standardized test industry is doing as well in Mexico as it is in the United States.

Other teachers then asked her to obtain records for their students, which they readily received. This was followed by other schools and other districts requesting student records, to the extent that she was no longer teaching any students. Obtaining requests for student records, sending the information to Mexico, obtaining the records and distributing them throughout the region had become a full-time job in the migrant program.

We stopped by her house, which had become the headquarters for the international record transfer system, and she showed me her dining room table where she sorted and organized incoming student records for distribution to the appropriate schools.

During the operation of the system, she had maintained extensive communications with the Mexican Ministry of Education and the education departments of several Mexican states. She had gone to Mexico City at her own expense and met with their education agency personnel. At one point she had suggested holding an international conference on record transfers in California, and the idea was found appealing in Mexico. The teacher had gone so far as to schedule the conference and obtained a commitment for participation by the Mexican Secretary of Education and the education secretaries of several Mexican states that were already providing records for her.

Obtaining a similar commitment in the United States proved much more difficult. The United States Secretary of Education was in the midst of a reorganization of the Department of Education (in football, if you don't know what to do, punt; in education, if you don't know what to do, reorganize), and he expressed regrets that he could not attend. The teacher contacted the California Department of Education, and, by coincidence, the State Superintendent of Schools was also involved in the reorganization of his department and could not attend.

Finally, the California education agency informed her that a program officer, from the Migrant Division, of the Special Populations Section, of the Instructional Services Department, of the California State Department of Education would be available to represent the United States in the international conference.

This created a problem in the implementation of the conference in that some of the Mexican secretary's aides took it as an insult that the Mexican Secretary of Education would visit the United States to meet with a program officer from California, rather than with his counterpart in the United States. The Mexican commitment for participation was withdrawn when the teacher could not find a higher level official willing to meet with the Mexican delegation, and nothing ever came of the conference.

Another problem that the teacher experienced in the transfer of records was the lack of acceptance of inoculation records received from Mexico. California law requires that all school children submit proof of specified inoculations, and all the international migrant children were being routinely inoculated, in spite of many of them having already been inoculated in Mexico, as verified in the transferred student records.

While still in California, I called up Mario Obledo, the California Secretary of Health and Human Services at the time. Mario had lived in San Antonio when he was head of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and we had worked together on various court cases in education. I explained the problem, and he promised that he would take care of it. By the time I left California, the secretary had already issued a memorandum to all state agencies stating that health records, including vaccinations administered, bearing the seal of the Republic of Mexico were to be accepted in meeting the requirements of the California law.

By the end of the trip, I was astounded by what I had seen. If the foundation program officer had asked me to develop an international migrant student record transfer system, I would have probably requested at least $250,000 per year for a two- or three-year period to conceptualize, develop and pilot test the system.

The California teacher had done this single handedly, with a minimum of expense, which she had underwritten with personal funds.

Just before she took me to the airport for my return to Texas, we sat in her living room organizing my notes for my report to the foundation.

I repeatedly expressed my admiration over her accomplishments and promised that I would submit a strong recommendation for foundation assistance.

“What assistance do you need from the foundation?” I asked.

She took a long time to respond, “I don’t know.”

I persisted. She eventually looked at the student records stacked on her dining room table, and finally responded, “Well, I could use a bigger dining room table.”

Chapter 21: My School – Budget Monitoring At Its Best

When people find out that there is a school named after me, they invariably ask why. I usually respond, "Because I stole the money for building it." It isn't really true, I didn't steal the money for building the school, but acquiring the money for it was almost as easy as stealing it.

When teaching the graduate course in school finance at the University of Texas at San Antonio for many years, I commonly mentioned to the students that although the school finance system of the state has always been short of funds, and what funds are available are most inequitably distributed, the accounting procedures required by the state are excellent. The budgeting system is not as good as it should be, however, mostly because school systems are allowed to amend the budget all the way until the end of the fiscal period, therefore allowing school officials to spend money without regard to budget, and at the end of the year amend the budget in keeping with the way the money was spent.

An even bigger failure in the state's school finance system is the lack of an adequate budget monitoring system. There is no requirement for monitoring expenditures, and few districts have sophisticated mechanisms for projecting funding needs and future resources necessary for meeting these needs. It is not unusual for a district to run out of money prior to the end of the school year and either make drastic cuts in spending for the remainder of the fiscal period, or else carry over a deficit balance into the next school year. Even more common is the use of conservative expenditure practices to ensure that all of the money in the various categories is not expended. Although this practice may seem commendable as a way to curb expenditures, it is regrettable that available money is not spent wisely in a state educational system, which is notorious for its unavailability of money. A lack of funds is a common excuse for lack of improvement in the performance of the schools.

While there is common agreement that schools suffer from insufficient funding, each year, staggering sums of money amounting to millions of dollars are returned unspent to federal and other external sources of funding because of the failure of the school systems to coordinate spending and available resources.

Many school districts do produce periodic reports on past expenditures, but such information is far from functioning as an adequate budget monitoring system. An adequate system determines the amount available m budget line items, notes the rate of expenditures, uses expenditure history to project future expenditures, takes into consideration encumbered funds, funds that are already committed for future expenditures, makes an adjustment for irregular and one-time expenditures, and then projects the status of the accounts at any future date until the end of the funding period.

Using such a sophisticated system at IDRA, two months into a year-long program, we can predict that at the end of the program year, 10 months in the future, there will be an over expenditure of $152, or perhaps an unexpended balance of $3.50.

The main purpose of using such a sophisticated system of budget monitoring is not to ensure that all of the money will be spent, nor to insure that we will not run out of money prior to the end of the program year, but rather to allow for the reallocation of resources in order to best meet program goals.

Cities, counties and states are not much better at budget monitoring than school districts. I am always reading in the newspapers that a governmental unit is drastically over expended and another unit has a large unexpended balance. Such deviations are not perceived as serious, since unexpended funds are usually placed in reserve accounts and over expenditures are taken care of simply by raising the tax rate for the following year. This is not usually the case with external categorical funding where unexpended funds must be returned and over expenditures must be repaid.

During the 1969-70 school year, the City of San Antonio began implementing the federal Model Cities program. Both the San Antonio school district and the Edgewood district, where I had just been appointed superintendent, were included in this federally-funded pilot program for improving life in the central cities as part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's war on poverty.

The approval of projects to be funded by the Model Cities program was a long and tedious process. Various committees reviewed proposed programs. Approvals, when given, were passed up the bureaucratic hierarchy where they were again reviewed and approved, although it was very common for proposed projects to be found wanting and sent back with recommendations for modification all the way down to the bottom of the bureaucracy where the entire process was repeated. The final product was sent to Washington where the federal bureaucrats went through their own time consuming review and approval processes.

This process, while commonly utilized by government, is so slow and cumbersome, that it was not unusual for final approval to be given and project activity to be initiated several months into the program year. During the 1970-71 Model Cities program year, which terminated on June 30, 1991, most of the projects were not initiated until three or four months after the beginning date of the program year. I noticed that about 70% of amount budgeted for the program year was in personnel costs. It didn't take me long to calculate that if $15 million was available for funding, 70% was allocated for personnel, and one-fourth of the program year had expired before any staff was hired, the multiplication of $15 million by 70% and by 25% produced an under expenditure of over $2.5 million.

Since Edgewood was the poorest school district in the state, and no state funds were provided for school facilities, the district was always in desperate need for facilities. I called in Richard Moore, the school architect, in January 1991 and asked, "Are you willing to plan a school even though I can't guarantee that the funds will be available to build it?" He immediately agreed to do so and proceeded with the design, blueprints and specifications.

During the month of May, I called the San Antonio Model Cities coordinator and asked him to check the status of Model Cities accounts. He returned my call with the information that it appeared that there would be millions of dollars in unexpended funds. This was tragic, not only because so many funds would be returned unused, with an accompanying political liability, but also because a request was already being made for the next year's funding. Entities being funded dread hearing the words, "Why do you want so much money this year when you didn't even spend the funds we gave you last year."

Therefore, when I proposed to help them out by using the anticipated unexpended funds for building a new school in the Model Cities area, there was considerable interest in City Hall.

"The funds would have to be encumbered by a signed contract for the building of the school prior to June 30th. Can you meet that deadline?" I was asked.

"I guarantee that I can put it out for bids and have it contracted within 30 days alter you give me final approval," I responded.

The request for funding was steamrolled through the hierarchy and immediately sent to Washington for approval. I imagine that the federal bureaucracy was similarly concerned over not expending all the funds appropriated by the Congress, because approval for funding the building of the school was immediately given.

Bids for the construction of the school were opened, reviewed and approved by the Edgewood school board way before the June 30 deadline. The new school was finished by July 1972 and given my name by the board. I guess it was the proper thing to do since I almost stole the money for building it. By the way, I repeated the same process and again helped the City of San Antonio by building Gus García Middle School the following year.

Chapter 22: The Road to Indio

My good friend, Armando Rodríguez from Los Angeles, was appointed assistant commissioner of education in the days before the breakup of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Not only was Armando the first Hispanic to reach this high a level in the federal government, he was one of the first Hispanics employed in the Office of Education at any level. I have heard it said that he was the first Hispanic employed in the Office of Education, but I don't think that's true because when they first established the Office of Spanish-Speaking Affairs, which Armando was appointed to head, Lupe Anguiano preceded Armando by a few weeks. Maybe Armando was hired before Lupe, but it took him longer to clear up his business in California and move to Washington.

It was indeed unusual to see a Mexican American in the Office of Education. It was even more unusual since Armando Rodríguez looked like the Zapotec Indian who served as president of the Republic of Mexico. As Bob Sanchez in McAllen used to say, "Armando Rodríguez es Benito Juarez vuelto a nacer."

One day Armando was driving from Los Angeles to Indio, California where he was to be the keynote speaker at a conference.

He stopped at a gas station to fill up the car. As the Mexican American attendant pumped gas, Armando, curious about how far he had to go before getting to Indio, asked him, "Que me falta para Indio?"

The attendant looked at the Benito Juarez look-alike and responded, "Nomas las plumas, hermano."

One time when Armando as assistant commissioner was visiting federal programs in San Diego, he boarded the commercial airliner for his flight back to Washington. An officer of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) boarded the plane just before takeoff. One look at Armando and he asked, "May I see your papers?"

In the ensuing argument the INS officer admitted that he wanted to see Armando's proof of citizenship because he "looked Mexican." Armando pointed to a blond, blue-eyed passenger in front of him and asked the INS officer, "Why don't you ask for his papers? He looks German."

Armando was not the only prominent Mexican American receiving special treatment from the INS because of his looks. One time a very respected Mexican American appointed as a federal judge, and subsequently promoted to the district court of appeals, was riding in a car to San Antonio with a group of other federal judges. The car was stopped at a border INS checkpoint just south of Falfurias. The INS officer peered into the car, singled out the Hispanic judge, and demanded to see his papers. On objecting, he was ordered out of the car and would still be there if he had remained obstinate about not having to provide proof of citizenship.

For many years later, lawyers with immigration cases exerted an all out effort to have their cases tried in his courtroom. On the other hand, INS prosecutors avoided trying immigration cases in his court. INS personnel presenting evidence would be reminded by the court or the injustice of Hispanics having to carry proof of citizenship in this country, an honor afforded only to members of very unique ethnic groups.

Mexican Americans have become accustomed to such special treatment. In 1974, my wife Laura, Rosie Castro, a friend who was an expert in the education of migrant children, and I went to Laredo on the Texas-Mexico border to do a workshop for teachers and administrators in the Laredo public schools. I had promised Laura and Rosie that I would get them home at an early hour, so we deviated from the usual ritual of having a delicious and inexpensive dinner in Nuevo Laredo on the Mexican side of the border and opted for three orders of Kentucky Fried Chicken to go. As soon as we were on the highway, we ate our fried chicken. Laura took all of the chicken bones and other trash from our portable dinner and placed them in the Kentucky Fried Chicken paper bag.

We had barely finished eating when we reached the INS border checkpoint on Interstate 35 outside of Laredo. Since Rosie has a darker complexion than Laura or I, we made bets that the immigration officer would want to see her papers. Sure enough, as soon as I stopped my Cadillac at the checkpoint, and Laura lowered the window, the officer peered into the car and began his familiar ritual.

"Where were you born," he asked Rosie. All three of us answered, "In the U.S.A." Before he could ask Rosie for her papers, my wife placed the trash bag in his hands, asking, "Will you please dispose of this?" She then raised the electrically operated window on her side. I didn't know what else to do but step on the gas and get out of there. As the car sped away, all three of us looked back to see the immigration officer standing alone in the middle of the road with the bag of Kentucky Fried Chicken in his hands. We didn't stop laughing until we got to the outskirts of San Antonio three hours later.

Some years later, Lionel Castillo was appointed commissioner of immigration by President Carter. At the time I was running cattle on my ranch in Duval County in South Texas. Every time I grabbed a hoe to clear the weeds around my mobile home, an INS helicopter would come around and hover while the INS agents studied me through binoculars. They figured that anyone doing work in the hot South Texas sun must be an illegal alien. Just for kicks, I would lower my Stetson and move to the opposite side of the house. The helicopter would circle around, keeping me always in sight. Eventually they would decide that I wasn't dark enough for them to mess around looking at my papers, and they would move on to other ranches in their relentless search for undocumented aliens.

For several years, I tried to get Lionel Castillo to visit my ranch. My plan was to get Lionel to lock up his wallet, identification papers and all other valuables in the glove compartment of my pickup truck so he wouldn't lose them as he helped me clean up around the house. I would then wait for the INS helicopter to spot him working with a hoe and drop down to apprehend him. Of course, I would deny that I had any papers or anything else of his. Just think of the beauty of it, the South Texas office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service hauling off the commissioner of immigration. Unfortunately, he never got around to visiting my ranch, so my favorite fantasy remained unfulfilled.

In spite of there being little love lost between Mexican Americans and Immigration and Naturalization Service, INS would occasionally provide some pleasant surprises. During the trial of Doe v. Plylar and the subsequent Multiple District Litigation, I received a call from Joe Staley, head of the INS regional office in San Antonio. He informed me of his concern that undocumented children would be kept out of school by their parents for fear that the school would report their undocumented status to INS. He assured me that in his region, INS would not use the schools as a focal point for the identification of undocumented children and would even ignore and not follow up on tips received from the schools.

This concern for the education of children contrasted sharply with the attitudes of the educational leadership in Texas that was demanding that undocumented children be excluded from Texas schools. It has always been a bone of contention for me that there was more advocacy for the education of children in the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service than in the educational system of Texas.

When LBJ became president and Hubert Humphrey became vice president, a whole bunch of us Mexican Americans received invitations to the White House. The reason for this rare recognition was that Vice President Humphrey had Chris Aldrete, a Mexican American from Del Rio, on his staff, and Chris often participated in putting together lists of invitees to White House functions.

One time Armando and I received invitations to the White House for a state dinner honoring some foreign dignitary. We showed up in our new tuxedos and black ties as early as possible. As other guests arrived, Armando started getting very nervous. Movie stars, corporate CEOs, famous singers, top politicians and internationally known dignitaries crowded the East Room. We were pushed further and further back until we had our backs to the wall in the most remote corner of the East Room. Suddenly, Armando's face lit up as he saw a closet in the corner. In joyous anticipation, he opened the little closet, but his new-found elation quickly disappeared as he peered into the empty closet.

"Golly, Joe," he said in disappointment, "I was hoping we would find a broom and a dustpan in the closet. Then we could feel at home sweeping up the room during this reception."

Chapter 23: King Antonio's Exile

"King Antonio Exiled" read the huge headlines of the *San Antonio Light,* which informed the people of San Antonio that the new Mexican American superintendent of the Edgewood School District had banned the traditional visits of Fiesta's reigning monarch to schools in the district.

For as far back as anybody can remember, King Antonio, the personification of the spirit of Fiesta, has been selected from the ranks of the Texas Cavaliers, an organization in San Antonio whose membership includes the so-called social elite of the city. Since the membership of this prestigious organization did not include any Hispanics, African Americans or Jews, this traditional relationship between the Texas Cavaliers and the Fiesta Association guaranteed that the reigning monarch was consistently Anglo.

This relationship is strange because, even if you have to respect the right of members of the Texas Cavaliers to set their own parameters for membership, the Fiesta activities of the king, and his similarly lily-white court, is heavily subsidized, not only by the Fiesta Commission, but by public funds from the City of San Antonio.

For many years, I had considered the psychological impact of this royal-plebeian relationship determined oy race and ethnicity, where royalty is always Anglo. I have never been particularly impressed with the concept of royalty, let alone with the membership of this elitist group. My forefathers fought for the removal of the yoke of monarchy in America, not in the removal of the demented George in the 13 colonies, but for independence from the long of Spain and, subsequently, the removal of the naive and pompous Emperor Maximilian installed by the French to rule over what previously had been the Republic of Mexico.

When Queen Elizabeth of England visited children's programs in the Edgewood section of San Antonio, I declined an invitation to meet her. I was not about to take instruction on how to behave in her presence. Besides, I have always believed that she could stay home and tend to the behavior of her own children, who obviously have more hangups and need her more than the children in Edgewood.

On a more personal basis, as a school teacher and administrator in the Edgewood schools, I had witnessed distasteful behavior in the relationship between the mythical Fiesta ruler and his subjects. Although most of the King Antonios that visited the schools to get the kids excited for Fiesta exhibited the decorum expected from a visiting monarch, I did witness a situation in which the King and his royal court's behavior left much to be desired. On this occasion, they stayed in their convertibles in front of the school, safely out of reach of the kids they were visiting and tossed out coins especially made for the King's Fiesta activities. Several of the coins fell short of the kids, and, as kids are prone to do, they threw themselves on the ground to retrieve the coins. The kids groveling in the dirt was found so amusing by the visiting royalty that they no longer attempted to toss the coins to the kids, preferring to throw them in the dirt to perpetuate the wallowing.

I resented this royal entertainment, not only because of the disgusting treatment of the kids, but also because of the more practical problem of getting them cleaned up prior to their return to the classrooms and, eventually, their homes. Parents who take great care to dress up their children for school tend to take exception when the kids return covered with dirt.

Following my appointment as superintendent of the Edgewood district, I received a letter from the Texas Cavaliers informing me of the schools King Antonio would visit that year and requesting my cooperation in making the necessary arrangements. Visits to minority schools during Fiesta is a public relations necessity since San Antonio minorities comprise the bulk of Fiesta carnival attendance, and it is this annual carnival that raises the funds for the subsidizing of all Fiesta activities, including activities of the Texas Cavaliers, their annual King and his court.

I wasn't particularly interested in making arrangements for the visit by the racially segregated dignitaries, so I referred the matter to the district board of trustees. At the next board meeting, I distributed copies of the Cavalier's letter to the trustees and explained to them that in my professional opinion it was psychologically detrimental to the Mexican American children to play a perpetual subservient role to a consistently Anglo king.

The board bounced the ball back to me by refusing to consider a resolution establishing policy. They concluded that decisions concerning visitors in the schools was an administrative matter, and they would defer to my judgement. I thanked the board and informed them that that being the case, I did not wish to have King Antonio visit our schools.

Doris Wright, educational reporter from the *San Antonio Light,* attended the board meeting, and the next day's headlines proclaimed the banishment of King Antonio from the Edgewood schools.

The lack of Edgewood participation in San Antonio's celebration of the antebellum South must have been inconsequential to the Fiesta Commission and the Texas Cavaliers. What did prove to be of concern to them was the San Antonio minority reaction to the exile. I imagine that the all-Anglo Fiesta monarchs had been a bone of contention with the minority community for some time, because in no time at all, minority civic organizations, business and political leaders, and the public itself arose in support of my position. Various minority organizations scheduled non-Fiesta sponsored activities to run parallel to the official calendar of events. A massive minority boycott of Fiesta activities was in the works, and the Fiesta Commission was very cognizant of a possible disaster if the minority money from plebeian Fiesta participation failed to materialize in order to subsidize the elitist activities.

Since this was during the heyday of the civil rights movement, I am sure that there was some consideration of the impact of city subsidies being enjoined by the federal Department of Justice. Carryovers from President Lyndon Johnson's administration and the Warren Supreme Court would not be very tolerant of the use of public monies for the segregation and racial-ethnic exclusion commonly found in the San Antonio Fiesta.

Personally, I was contacted by a host of San Antonio's most prominent citizens, asking me to reconsider my position on the Edgewood visits. I was informed that the Texas Cavaliers evolved from the German Club, an ethnic group that precluded Hispanic, African American and Jewish membership. When I asked how come the exclusion of minorities had been perpetuated by the present Texas Cavaliers, I was informed that membership priority is given to descendants of past members and that this policy was responsible for the all-white membership, not the intentional exclusion of minorities and Jews. I usually responded by stating that Adolph could have made a similar rationalization for the Nordic characteristic of his Hitler Youth.

My opposition to this institutional racism was quickly altered by the San Antonio media. I had objected to Edgewood schools being visited by members of racist organizations. Very quickly, my objection was changed in the media and presented as an objection to Anglos visiting the schools. I can't help but note that the assumption that all Anglos are racists was made in the media and not by me. Thus, my stand against racism was reversed, with a substantial portion of the San Antonio population perceiving me as a racist practicing reverse discrimination. This practice of switching roles and making the subjects of discrimination the discriminators, finding the victim guilty of the crime, has been so successful, that it is now standard practice in American race relations.

The erroneous perception did not particularly bother me. What bothered me was that the professional staff of the Edgewood district was predominantly Anglo, and there was extensive resentment as a result of the media erroneously reporting that I did not want members of their ethnic group visiting our schools. The extreme repercussion was an Anglo teacher who had been a close and dear friend of mine since the time that we were both teachers at Edgewood High School in 1954, coming by my office and tearfully asking me why I hated Anglos.

The Fiesta situation became so precarious that the commission called for a meeting with me and other representatives of minority organizations. The meeting chairman recapped the existing situation and surprised us by readily admitting that the entire problem had been created by the exclusion of minorities from Fiesta activities. In a brilliant Machiavellian move, he informed the audience that the Fiesta Commission was ready to rectify this past exclusion by adding additional events to the Fiesta agenda for minority participation, particularly fundraising events for minority organizations.

When I was playing in the Martin High School band in Laredo, we used to amuse the audience during the half-time football show by putting on what we called the Dumb Drum Major routine. In this marching event, the drum major would lead the band and consistently mess up by making a turn while the rest of the band continued straight down the field, or he would go straight while the entire band went in an opposite direction, much to the delight of the spectators. By the end of that meeting with the Fiesta Commission, I felt like the dumbest drum major in the state.

In no time at all, the minority organizations signed on as sponsors of Fiesta activities. I left the meeting before its conclusion, painfully aware of the triumph of pragmatism over principle and not wanting to see my minority colleagues groveling over the bones tossed to them by the Fiesta Commission, in much the same manner that their children had groveled in the dirt over the coins tossed to them by King Antonio.

The Fiesta Commission informed San Antonio that the problem had been resolved, and this resolution continues up to this day. The Fiesta Commission now sanctions El Rey Feo, the Charro Queen, and a host of minority-sponsored activities. But King Antonio is still selected from an organization with limited minority representation.

I say, "limited," because I was once called by a member of the Texas Cavaliers with whom I shared a hunting lease in Uvalde and informed that Dr. Aureliano Urrutia had become a member of that organization, so that the total exclusion of minorities was now a thing of the past.

Ruben López, who followed me as superintendent at Edgewood, was quick to open the doors of the district to King Antonio and his entourage.

Ever so often, Carlos Guerra, a columnist on the *San Antonio Express-News* writes a column about King Antonio always being Anglo and the exclusion of minorities from elitist Fiesta activities subsidized with public funds. His column is inevitably followed by public cries of his instigating divisiveness in the community and opening old wounds that time has completely healed.

The lack of sensitivity to minority cultures is still prevalent. When Dr. Henry Cisneros was mayor of San Antonio, he refused to ride in the Fiesta parade because his daughter was precluded from riding with him. The Fiesta organizers never understood the cultural connotations of the Hispanic family structure, nor the impact of this subtle attack on the structure of family while social scientists were informing us that the breakup of the family structure is accountable for most of our many social problems.

Very recently, the Fiesta Commission sanctioned a new event, "The Plantation," an event in which the revelers celebrated in a pre-Civil War context, where the masters had plenty of time for recreation while the slaves did all of the work. The event was eliminated as a Fiesta activity when African American musicians refused to participate in this reconstruction of a shameful chapter in American history. I believe that to this day, the Fiesta commissioners still cannot understand why the African Americans took exception to this fun event.

As for me, I just stay away from Fiesta activities and avoid any contact with the reigning King Antonio. One night during each Fiesta, I work as a volunteer in one of the booths of the San Antonio Conservation Society. If I accidentally find myself on a San Antonio street while King Antonio and his court drive by, I turn my back to them as a modest form of protest over what I still consider to be a racist and detrimental tradition.

Chapter 24: Fiesta San Antonio And Human Rights

On April 13, 1994, a surprisingly large number of minority and special interest organizations met with Mayor Nelson Wolff concerning racism in the San Antonio community. It appears that this issue surfaces periodically, particularly during the annual Fiesta celebration.

As usual, the San Antonio media gives extensive coverage to this perennial topic, although the coverage is usually slanted toward the sensational, such as the possibility of a Fiesta boycott or litigation and does not always address the pertinent issues.

As is the case since 1970 when King Antonio was exiled from the Edgewood schools, there are common misunderstandings in the information concerning this issue provided by the media.

Media coverage focusing on the community and charitable contributions of the exclusionary group is reminiscent of the attitude of the kind slave owners of the antebellum era: We feed them well, we clothe them well, we do not beat them. Why do they complain?

Neither the exiling of King Antonio in 1970, nor the current issues discussed in the April 13 meeting should be perceived as an attack upon the white Anglo segment of the community. It is not even intended as an attack upon the Texas Cavaliers, who have a right to enjoy the same freedom of association guaranteed by our constitution to all people and forms the basis for the membership in some of the organizations comprising this coalition. The purpose of the April 13 meeting was to protest the City of San Antonio tolerating, supporting and even subsidizing exclusive and discriminatory groups at any time, not only during Fiesta activities.

San Antonio accepts, cultivates, celebrates and advertises its cultural diversity. Its failure to address the human rights of all of the various elements of the community that provide this cultural diversity is hypocritical and an exploitation of San Antonio's minority population. San Antonio's cultural diversity is a valuable asset of the community. It should not be treated as a mythical commodity to be marketed to the tourist trade during Fiesta activities.

The members of the coalition seek for the City of San Antonio, and all other government entities, to establish a policy that rejects and repudiates racism and sexism in the community by any group, regardless of the composition of the group. The coalition further expects subsequent necessary action in keeping with this policy.

The establishment of a Commission for Equity by the City of San Antonio is one way of achieving this goal; there are other ways.

Prejudice and discrimination dehumanize. They dehumanize not only the recipients of prejudicial and discriminatory treatment, but they also dehumanize the perpetrators as well. Therefore, everybody in the community loses human dignity and respect when such practices exist.

A coalition of organizations called upon the City of San Antonio, other government entities, and the entire community to move forward in the complete elimination of overt and covert racism and sexism wherever they may be found. It is an imperative for the well-being and future growth of the community.

Chapter 25: The Fifty Most Memorable Quotes in School Finance

After 25 years as an active proponent of school finance equity, I believe that I have heard it all. The following are 50 of the most remarkable quotes I have heard in Texas between 1969 and 1994. I have paraphrased some of the quotes in order to make them easier to understand.

State Supreme Court: "The Constitution demands that all districts have the same amount of money. When they all have the same amount of money, then it's all right for some to have more."

Federal Courts: "It's an unfair, dirty, stinking, rotten system, but it's not unconstitutional."

State Courts: "It is unconstitutional, and it must be fixed immediately. We are giving the Legislature five more years to come up with a better system."

State political leader: "I am strongly in favor of equalization as long as nothing changes."

Texas legislator: "The new law is perfect. All districts in the state will have an equal amount of money per child, and those districts which are used to having more money, will continue to have more."

Republican: "Texas will have the finest system of education in the country, if we do not raise taxes."

Democrat: "Education is our highest priority. These new taxes will go for education after we finish building our new highways."

A Texas Governor: "We need a new study of the school finance problem."

Out-of-state school finance expert: "Thank you for the $5 million for our new study of the school finance problem."

Candidate for Governor: "If you elect me governor, I will call for a new study of the school finance problem."

A Texas Lt. Governor: "Now that we have solved the school finance problem, we can concentrate on the quality of our schools."

Texas Senator (1982): "I know that Texas has a $2.86 billion surplus, but you can't fix the school finance system by throwing money at it."

Texas Senator (1989): "How can you expect us to fix the school finance system when we don't have any money?"

Texas Representative: "The present system is bad and it is illegal. If you enact my proposed constitutional amendment, it will no longer be illegal."

A Texas Attorney General: "The system may be bad, but it is the law, and I have sworn to uphold the law. The equal protection law? What's the equal protection law?"

Rich man from Dallas: "It's perfectly simple. See this line? It's districts with lots of money. See that line? It's districts with no money. Now, you just take money from this line and put it in that line. It's — just — as — simple — as — that!"

City Manager: “Schools don’t need more money. Schools need good management. Give us the money and we will help them manage.” (Gee, maybe Texas schools will now be able to participate in the South Texas Nuclear Power Project.)

State educational leader: “I know that all kids are equal, but the system has to take into account that some kids are more equal than others.”

Rich school district: “The solution is to level up. If we increase the state share from $8 billion a year to $56 billion a year, all districts will have the same amount of money. Then the rich school districts can add more money.”

Richest school districts: “Sure we have more money. But we spend all that money to develop curriculum materials which we then make available to the poor districts.”

Rich, low taxing district: “You can’t raise our tax rate to the state average; our taxpayers won’t like it.”

Parent in the lowest taxing, rich school district: “We have lots of money for our schools because we make sacrifices and support high taxes.”

District with less than 10 students enrolled in grades 1 to 12: “If we are consolidated with another school district, it will destroy our educational program.”

School superintendent: “It’s not fair. If the money appropriated for bilingual education has to be spent on bilingual education, where will we get the money for the new band uniforms?”

Superintendent in a poor school district: “I don’t envy the rich districts. Eventually I may get a job in one of them.”

Superintendent in a poorer district: “Our district is located on the Rio Grande, just across from Mexico. Sure, we attempted to consolidate with another district; but we’re so poor, the Mexican district didn’t want us.”

Superintendent in an even poorer district: “We don’t have to go to Austin to see what the Legislature is doing in school finance. The districts in the Dallas area look after our interests.”

Eighth poorest district [out of 1,600] in Texas (1972): “We have to fight these court suits. The courts are going to take away our money and give it to the poor school districts in the state.”

Teacher organization (from 1969 to 1994): “The Legislature must fix the Texas system of school finance. The best way of fixing it is by raising teacher salaries and increasing fringe benefits.”

Teachers in rich districts: “The system is good because it allows the districts with the best students to attract the best teachers.”

Teachers in poor districts: “Where can I get an application to teach in a rich district?”

Teacher without a degree or certificate: “If they keep putting more money into the system all the jobs will be taken by qualified teachers.”

TEA (Texas Society for the Preservation of the Status Quo, 1970): “The amount of equity provided under the new law is the exact amount that is needed.”

TEA (1975): “The amount of equity provided under the new law is the exact amount that is needed.”

TEA (1985): “The amount of equity provided under the new law is the exact amount that is needed.”

TEA (1993): “The amount of equity provided under the new law is the exact amount that is needed.”

Old TEA Deputy Commissioner (1985): “Money does not make a difference.”

New TEA Deputy Commissioner (1993): “Have you noticed how all the low performing kids seem to be clustered in the low wealth districts?”

TEA statistician: “There are no big differences in the amount of money available to wealthy and poor school districts. In this chart, we have eliminated the 150 richest and the 150 poorest districts. As you can see, the difference in money in the remaining districts is small. In simple words, the extremes appear extreme because the extremes are very extreme. If you eliminate the extremes, the extremes are not so extreme.”

TEA expert witness: “We already have a perfectly equitable system of school finance in Texas, if no district levies a tax higher than 65 cents, and if districts do not construct new schools, and if there is no increase in the number of students, and if the cost of education does not increase, and if all teachers are paid the state minimum salary, and if…”

Expert on school finance: “It’s good to have some children in schools with less money than others because it forces the state to pump in new money each year. The children in poor districts are like rabbits in a dog race. They serve an important purpose giving the dogs something to chase.”

School boards (1973): “1,603 school districts is the exact number needed in Texas.”

School boards (1983): “1,194 districts is the exact number needed in Texas.”

School boards (1993): “1,048 districts is the exact number needed in Texas.”

Chamber of Commerce: “We need a plentiful supply of cheap labor in order to attract high-tech industries to Texas.”

Farmer: “We don’t need better schools. In a few years cotton will return as the backbone of the Texas economy, and we will again be rich.”

Demetrio Rodríguez (1969): “I wanted to have adequate schooling.”

Demetrio Rodríguez (1973): “I want my children to have adequate schooling.”

Demetrio Rodríguez (1988):“I want my grandchildren to have adequate schooling.”

Demetrio Rodríguez (1994):“I want my great-grandchildren to have adequate schooling.”

Chapter 26: My Magnificent Twenty

Every educator dreams of the opportunity to work in an educational Utopia, a school situation in which the concern for the student overshadows all other considerations, a place where all staff is dedicated to providing improved learning opportunities for all students, a place of harmony, hard work and success.

Certainly, my assignment as superintendent of the Edgewood Independent School District in San Antonio in 1969 was anything but utopian experience. Edgewood was the poorest of 1,600 school districts in Texas prior to school finance equity becoming a state court mandate. Over one-half of the instructional staff did not meet minimum requirements for state certification, and a teacher turnover rate of over 33% made staffing a perennial problem.

For many years prior to my superintendency in Edgewood I had been a strong advocate for early childhood education. Working for the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) in Austin from 1967 to 1969, I had the opportunity to develop a proposal for an Edgewood pre-school program for submission as part of the San Antonio Model Cities Program. The school district had decided not to include early childhood education as part of the Model Cities program, but upon becoming superintendent, I resurrected the plan and included it in the proposal.

In 1969 the Texas Foundation School Program did not provide for kindergarten or other preschool age programs, therefore, there was no available pool of trained teachers for employment in the preschool Model Cities program when approved for the 1969-70 school year.

That same year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in an attempt to upgrade teacher competency, had issued new regulations which prohibited the use of emergency certified teachers with less than 90 semester hours of college work. The previous minimum requirement had been 60 semester hours, and the personnel office had already hired a number of prospective teachers with at least 60 but with less than 90 hours of college work.

The personnel office contacted TEA and requested that 20 of these newly hired teachers with between 60 and 90 semester hours of college be allowed to teach in the Model Cities early childhood education program. TEA responded in the affirmative, stating that the program was not state funded nor of much importance in terms of teacher preparation.

So it happened that in September 1969, the early childhood education program was initiated with 20 teachers with less than three years of college. Since state regulations demanded that education courses be offered in the upper-division program, none of the teachers had taken a teacher education course.

It is surprising, therefore, that these 20 teachers became the best group of teachers it has been my privilege to work with in my more than 40 years as a professional educator. Along with the program director, they created the Utopia which every educator dreams of. The Early Childhood Center for 3, 4 and 5 year-old economically disadvantaged children became the place where concern for the student overshadowed all other considerations, a place where all staff was dedicated to providing improved learning opportunities for the students, a place of harmony, hard work and success.

The 20 teachers worked with SEDL in the development and pilot testing of a prototype early childhood curriculum for economically disadvantaged, minority and limited-English-proficient children. The teachers developed a relatively unstructured, warm, loving, nurturing environment that was a joy to behold. Parents were not only welcomed at the school, but few parents ever visited the school for any purpose without finding themselves in teacher aide roles, participating in educational activities with their children.

Parents reluctant to visit the school were enticed by the 20 teachers. They managed to get the cosmetology classes from all three of the district high schools to offer free hairstyling and manicures which brought out many of the mothers. The teachers issued them a number, and while waiting for their number to be called, the mothers were hustled into their children's classrooms where they performed as teacher aides. Fathers were brought to the school to assist in the building and maintenance of playground facilities and in the building of the hundreds of educational toys and manipulatives used in preschool programs.

Visitors to the Center usually found themselves similarly involved in instructional activity. We had visitors from over one-half of the 50 states, and the never-ending stream was becoming a problem until the 20 teachers requested that visitors provide instructional assistance, rather than sit in the rear of the room as non-participating observers.

In addition to instruction and curriculum development, Center personnel conducted research and training activities. Innovative practices included extensive staff participation in school management, a precursor of the site-based management which was to become universally accepted almost 25 years later. Other innovations included the employment of a social worker, the use of outdoor language development activities, flexibility in student assignments with extensive exchange of individual students and groups, a community employment agency, pre-natal parent training, infant stimulation and comprehensive medical and dental services.

The most amazing characteristic of these 20 teachers was their creative capability. There was no student, instructional or administrative problem that they could not solve in their daily staff meetings, although I frequently had to spend hours putting out brush fires ignited by their creative genius.

All 20 teachers participated in the design of the José A. Cárdenas Early Childhood Center, built in 1972 with Model Cities funds. The facility was unique in many ways. It was designed for preschool age children with hardware and fixtures easily accessible to a three-year-old child. There was an emphasis on de-institutionalization with individual rest rooms rather than the traditional gang facilities common to schools. The Center did not include a cafeteria. Meals prepared in the kitchen were served in a home setting in each classroom in order to make the meal part of the instructional activity. The building had ample provisions for research, staff training and curriculum development.

My main contribution to this prototype preschool program was fiscal management. Since the program was located in the poorest school district in Texas, local funds were too scarce to augment the core funding by the San Antonio Model Cities Program. The entire Center was partially supported by funds from Title I and Title I – Migrant from the federal Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965, Career Opportunities, Urban/Rural, Experimental Schools and National School Lunch programs. Additional funds came from the Handy Andy food store chain and from various foundations.

I have always believed that the main reason for dismantling this most successful program after I left Edgewood schools was the inability, or unwillingness, of subsequent administrators to do the innovative financial juggling necessary to support the program from more than a dozen sources of funds.

As early as 1970, the Edgewood Early Childhood Education Center staff had identified the three essential components of all successful innovative school programs: the valuing of children, the provision of support services and forming unique interrelationships among the home, the community and the school.

The success of this program raises some interesting educational issues. Foremost is the assumption that the existence of the three essential components, valuing of children, support services and home relationships, can provide the elusive success so drastically absent in regular and traditional school programs. Since my experiences in Edgewood, I have maintained that the presence of these three characteristics of successful innovative programs in the regular school program can bring about an immediate solution to the education of children from atypical populations.

A second issue is the conspicuous absence of teacher preparation among the Center staff. Can one assume that teacher preparation is a liability and its absence an asset for teaching personnel? I don't believe so. I believe that my magnificent 20 were successful in spite of a lack of preparation and experience, rather than because of it. The most that I am willing to concede is that no preparation and experience is preferable to poor preparation and experience.

A third issue is the extent to which school governance and tradition constrain teacher creativity. I believe that the unusual creativity of the preschool group was related to the complete absence of experienced personnel that have already learned the boundaries of teacher behavior imposed by the school. If each of these 20 teachers had been assigned to the various elementary schools, I doubt that even a small fraction of their creative potential would have ever surfaced.

A fourth issue is the obvious existence of a "tipping" factor. A group establishes the norm for the behavior of its members. When a majority of the group holds a specific view or value, all members of the group are expected to share the view or value, or at least behave in ways consistent with the majority view.

At the Cárdenas Center, unlike other district schools, corporal punishment was deemed unprofessional and unnecessary. When a problem teacher was transferred to this school and the whipping of preschool children became routine in her classroom, she was professionally and socially ostracized by Center staff, until she requested a transfer from the Center.

School personnel commonly adhere to the "deficit" model, that is, that the poor school performance of atypical children can be attributed to deficit characteristics of such populations. This accounts for the low levels of expectancy which is the most formidable barrier to the successful educational performance of minority and other atypical children. Efforts of individual teachers to improve educational opportunities are fruitless as long as these teachers constitute a minority in the school. Success will remain elusive until such a time as school personnel believing that atypical children have positive qualities for successful school performance become the majority in the school and dictate educational policy favorable for successful performance. Their advocacy for atypical children is now often deemed unacceptable behavior

by the professional group. If the number of school personnel with a positive perception of such children increases to the point that they constitute a majority of the school personnel, then it can be expected that “tipping” will take place, with a group value reversal, and student deficit perceptions will become the unacceptable perspective.

A fifth issue which surfaced early in the Center and 25 years later became a state-wide issue is the emphasis and content of the preschool program. The primary value of preschool education for economically disadvantaged children should be the provision of enriching experiences for physical, mental, social and emotional development. This development subsequently enhances student performance in the academic content of the first grade. Unfortunately, school personnel have a tendency to view preschool programs as an opportunity to present academic content at an earlier age. According to evaluation reports, this “pushdown” curriculum is prevalent in the new state preschool program, with disastrous results. The curriculum that six-year-old atypical children found difficult is now being presented to three-year-old children with a lower level of development. Such academically oriented preschool programs increase the propensity for failure and brings about failure and the accompanying negative concepts of self at an earlier age.

Preschool program staff are pressured by the regular staff to introduce academic content, hoping that the early exposure will enhance academic performance in the regular grades, with an accompanying improved performance on the state-mandated competency tests. The location of the Cárdenas Center in a separate and isolated facility provided a buffer from regular program staff in the various elementary schools. The decentralization of the early childhood program and the assignment of participating children to individual schools eliminated this buffer. It is therefore not surprising that preschool programs were pressured into the “pushdown” curriculum with a substantial decline in student performance.

The four years that I worked with the staff of the Edgewood early childhood education center are by far the most rewarding in my professional career. The unbelievable success of the program can be attributed to the caring, hard work and dedication of 20 magnificent teachers that created their own mold for a school and its educational program.

The group was dispersed shortly after my leaving the district. The relationships among staff have persevered over the years and many of the teachers still communicate and interact with each other. Some of them I haven’t seen in many years. Others, I see regularly. And one of my magnificent 20, Laura Tobin, I see every day. We have been married since 1972.

Chapter 27: Mike the Knife

Perhaps the biggest concern in education today is the massive failure of U.S. schools to extend educational opportunity to students from atypical populations. Students who differ from mainstream children make up the bulk of underperforming students. The relationship between socio-economic class and school performance is so close, that of all variables available to social scientists, economic class is the best predictor of school success. I have long believed that the reason for this is not a deficit in atypical populations, but rather a deficit on the part of the school. Schools have little understanding of cultural, language, social and mental characteristics of atypical children and consistently interpret minority or disadvantaged children's differences from mainstream populations as lack of mental capability. The inevitable placement of culturally, linguistic or economically different children in remedial programs with low level, slow paced, repetitious and boring instruction leads to the misdiagnosis becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, with an increasing cumulative deficit that leads to frustration, failure and withdrawal. The following anecdote about a mainstream student illustrates the impact that a unique characteristic may have on school perceptions.

"You have to attend the PTA meeting tonight," said my wife.

After a hard day's work, the prospect of sitting through a PTA meeting was not very appealing. Over the years as an educator and as a parent I have formed some mixed opinions about PTA. On the one hand, I have a lot of respect for PTA. In the history of U.S. education, it has made an important contribution to the status of education as a local, state and national priority. PTA has always been and continues to be supportive of children, schools, teachers and educational systems in general.

On the other hand, individual PTA meetings are not always the most interesting way to spend an evening. One can opt to stay at home and watch dust settling on the mantelpiece and get more excitement and enjoyment than at a PTA meeting. I once attended a PTA meeting in which 45 minutes were dedicated to a heated discussion as to whether the laminating machine purchase committee had been authorized to select and purchase a new laminating machine or whether the committee had been authorized to look into the purchase of a laminating machine.

In some schools, the PTA serves as a valuable vehicle for parent communications with the school. In other schools the PTA serves as a vehicle for channeling parental interest and concern into trivial, irrelevant, time consuming and non-threatening activity.

I consider parental interest, concern, and involvement as desirable characteristics for enhancing student performance, though I have some severe doubts about the extremely high value being placed on parental behavior as a basic necessity for school success. Certainly not to the extent commonly stated nowadays, that it is impossible to educate a student if the parent is not interested. I have never known orphans to present any insurmountable educational challenge, nor have I ever seen any research studies to substantiate the assumption that parental interest is an essential element for school success.

I'm more prone to believe that schools, unable or unwilling to be accountable for student failure, tend to extend the student deficit model to the parents, thus using the family as a convenient scapegoat for the school's failure.

There are a lot of studies in the literature that indicate that the involvement of the parents in meaningful school activities leads to improved performance on the part of the student, but I find it difficult to assume that attending a PTA meeting is very meaningful.

My spouse has always contended that if a student's parents fail to attend PTA meetings, the student will be penalized by the teacher, particularly if the student is in a self-contained class or homeroom in a school where teachers are pressured to produce good PTA attendance. My spouse also contends that it is necessary for parents to participate in a lot of school activity because school personnel give preferential treatment to students whose parents are well known, are active in school affairs or simply spend a lot of time in and around the school.

In teaching graduate courses in testing, measurement, statistics and research, I have found that one of the most common errors committed by neophyte statisticians is in once having determined a correlation between two variables, assuming that the relationship between the two variables is causal, i.e., that the relationship is a cause-and-effect relationship, and in many cases even assuming which variable is the cause and which one the effect.

In observing the correlation between parent involvement and student performance, it is very tempting to label parent involvement as the cause and student performance as the effect. Yet it is possible that a reverse relationship exists, that is, students who perform well in school are the cause for their parents being involved with the school. Or, in keeping with my wife's observation and behavior, the relationship between parent involvement and student success may be an indirect relationship, with each of the two variables being related to a third variable not commonly considered. The hypothesis for this indirect relationship would read, "Parents who are involved with the school cause the school to give preferential treatment to the child, which causes the child to perform better in school."

Anyway, I did attend the PTA meeting, which turned out to be very interesting. The superintendent of the school district made a presentation about an upcoming bond issue election, and I found his enrollment projections, facility needs and financial information much more interesting than the typical PTA program.

It was announced that there would be an open house after the meeting, and parents were invited to go to their kids' classrooms where samples of their work would be available for their perusal and an opportunity would be provided for parents to speak to the teachers about their children's performance. I visited several classrooms and eventually wound up in my son's classroom. I reviewed Mike's materials and capitalized on the opportunity to speak with his teacher.

"I'm Mike Cárdenas' father."

"Oh, yes. Mike is such a dear child. It is a pleasure having him in my class." While she spoke glowingly about my son, I was thinking of a research study I had recently read that said teacher-parent interviews tend not to be very successful because of three weaknesses in the discussion. First, teachers tend to speak very positively about the student and are very reluctant to bring up problems. Second, teachers fail to provide concrete evidence of student performance, generally speaking in general and abstract appraisals that provide little meaningful information to the parent. Third, teacher-parent interviews tend to stray into discussions of other children and parents rather than being focused on the child of the parent participating in the interview.

“Mike is doing so well in school,” she concluded.

“I’ve been monitoring his work, and I have just gone over samples of his work, and it doesn’t appear he is doing all that well in school this year.”

“Well, I’m glad you brought that up, because I have been wanting to schedule an interview with Mike’s parents. Do you have time to talk now?”

“I’ve got all the time in the world,” I answered, not being overly concerned about missing the punch and cookies being served in the school cafeteria.

“Well, Mike is doing very well in school when you consider his limitations. Please understand, Mike is not mentally retarded, he is just a slow learner. A slow learner is a child that is not mentally retarded, but on the other hand does not have all of the learning capabilities of an average student. Mike will never do well academically, but he can profit from schooling if we don’t expect too much from him. That’s the reason I have been wanting to speak with his parents. Expecting a high level of performance from him can only lead to frustration. My recommendation is to be satisfied with how he is doing and not push him. The most important thing for you to remember is not to push him. He is very slow in responding, but he generally tries.”

I strongly disagreed that my son, Mike, was a slow learner and attempted to argue with her diagnosis. I knew that Mike was slow in responding in both oral and written communications, but I knew the reason for it. Mike has always been rather unique in that he likes to think before speaking. Considering how many people I have met who are prone to speak before thinking, I had never considered Mike’s characteristic as a liability but rather as a unique asset.

“Look, I know that you are obviously disappointed, but you don’t seem to understand. Frankly it is difficult to explain in language that you can understand. It requires a background in education to understand concepts about capability, maturation and motivation, but take my word for it, Mike learns slowly, and above all don’t push Mike into trying to perform above his current level.”

I didn’t have the heart to inform the teacher that I was the chairman of the education department at St. Mary’s University and was more than familiar with concepts of capability, maturation and motivation. I didn’t pursue the matter, didn’t request a change to another classroom, and I certainly did not ease up in pushing Michael toward improved performance in school.

Twenty-seven years later, I look back on the day I was informed that he was a slow learner and his subsequent education. He did well in the rest of his elementary school grades, did well in middle school, made National Honor Society in high school. Like Jaime Escalante’s kids in *Stand and Deliver*, he placed out in calculus and then went through The University of Texas at Austin in three years, graduating with honors. Mike was recruited by several medical schools and finally chose Southwestern in Dallas. He is now a very successful surgeon, doing extremely well personally and in his chosen profession.

I point out Mike’s achievements with the typical pride of a parent, but I also point them out because I am still haunted by the “what ifs.”

What if I had accepted the teacher’s erroneous diagnosis? What if my son had performed at the teacher’s level of expectancy? What if I had accepted a lower standard of performance for my son?

What if cultural, language and socioeconomic characteristics are similarly interpreted by the school as lack of capability?

After more than 40 years of professional experience working mostly with atypical school populations, I am firmly convinced that the basic reason for the general under performance of minority, disadvantaged, limited-English-proficient, migrant and immigrant students can be attributed to the tendency of the school to confuse unique and different characteristics of students with lack of mental capability. Low levels of expectancy for these students are quickly internalized by the student and family and result in the poor performance that presents the most formidable barrier for drastic improvements in the United States' system of education.

Chapter 28: The Analogy of the Amoeba

I have been a professional educator since 1950, when I received my bachelor's degree from the University of Texas and a teaching certificate from the state. During these years my strongest commitment has been to the children involved in the educational process. My second strongest commitment has been to the adaptation of educational practice to the characteristics of different types of children.

I do not consider a commitment to children as being a prime consideration of the schools. Although there certainly is a pervasive dedication to children by most educational personnel, this dedication is often debilitated by a conflicting commitment to self, to the profession and to the educational system.

The commitment to adaptability in the educational system has been late in coming and weak in intensity. It has always been preferable to expect children to adapt to uniform materials and methodologies than to develop a pluralistic curriculum that adapts to the unique characteristics of groups of students and to individuals with a diverse background in culture, language, socio-economic status and lifestyle. Thus, schools have traditionally communicated with students in a language that the students cannot understand and presented instruction that is culturally irrelevant at best, and culturally contradictory and psychologically damaging at worst.

Looking back at my experiences as an educator, I can't help but note that I didn't always have a sensitivity to the differing characteristics of children, nor a strong commitment to the adaptation of educational practice. It wasn't until my seventeenth year as an educator that, like St. Paul, I was struck down on the road to Damascus and arose with a different perspective on the education of atypical children. This perspective was to have a strong influence on my professional role for the remainder of my life.

The incidence that triggered my conversion was a conversation with a cultural anthropologist in which he mentioned some interesting experiments with low forms of animal life. In order to put across some minor point that I have since forgotten, the anthropologist mentioned that using different colors and intensities of light, even an amoeba could be trained in a laboratory to differentiate between letters of the alphabet. Having spent 17 years as a teacher and administrator and having spent 17 years dealing with the frustration of attempting to teach reading to students who could not differentiate between letters of the alphabet, I was stunned by the capability of these micro-biologists.

Long after this revelation took place, I contemplated the educational implications of this bit of information. I eventually concluded that the success experienced in teaching amoebas in the laboratory was attributed to the unique adaptation of the instructional process to the characteristics of the amoeba. Scientists in the laboratory created a special instructional environment for the amoeba, including microscopic versions of the letters to be presented.

The importance of this adaptation was realized when I speculated on what would happen if instead of teaching letters of the alphabet to amoebas in the laboratory, the scientists would have simply sent the amoebas to a school where there were experts in the teaching of reading and reading readiness skills. I speculated that the student amoebas would have been placed in a regular classroom, assigned to a regular seat and given a regular reading textbook.

The size of the textbook would have precluded the amoeba traveling the length of one page in a lifetime, and the attempt to educate the amoeba would have ended in frustration and failure.

Following this frustration and failure, the unsuccessful school would inevitably rationalize its failure by attributing it to the victim:

* The amoeba did poorly in school because it had a limited knowledge of the English language.

* The amoeba came from the wrong side of the pond where education is not seen as a vehicle for upward mobility.

* The amoeba came from a foreign culture that does not value education.

* The amoeba's parents did not cooperate in the education of their offspring.

* Amoebas have lost their family values.

* The amoebas were obviously female since they were more interested in mitosis than in schooling.

* Amoebas have a poor sense of deferred gratification. They would rather party and have fun now, than work and sacrifice now to attain future benefits.

The list could be expanded, but it is not necessary to do so. The salient point is that a failure to adapt instructional programs to the unique characteristics of students' accounts for their poor performance in school. The victim of inappropriate schooling is then blamed for the poor performance.

Chapter 29: Basics of Motivation

“The problem with these kids is that they are not I motivated,” is a commonly heard lament among teachers and other school staff!

The difficulty of having students participate and succeed in school instructional activities is one or the most salient problems in U.S. education. School personnel are inevitably faced with the dilemma of the student who is not motivated to learn.

It is surprising, therefore, that I have encountered so little knowledge and understanding about motivation among school personnel. This shortcoming is evident in spite of the requirements for educational certification commonly including one or more courses in educational psychology, in which the concept of motivation is invariably addressed.

Motivation is the propensity for a certain type of behavior. The degree of motivation may vary from one individual to the next, or it may vary within one individual at different times.

Psychologists explain motivation in terms of need fulfillment. Every individual has basic needs that have to be fulfilled. Basic needs are commonly divided into physiological and psychological needs. The physiological needs, such as food, water, shelter, rest, etc., are commonly known and understood. An individual deprived of one of the basic needs directs his behavior to the satisfaction of that need. A thirsty individual may eventually forego all behaviors, other than those which have a propensity for meeting the need for water. The individual is said to be motivated to seek water.

Psychological needs differ only slightly from physiological needs. They are usually subservient to physiological needs, with behavior directed toward their fulfillment only after the basic physiological needs have been satisfied. Psychological needs are also less satiable than physiological needs. Whereas the thirsty individual can drink only a certain quantity of water and having satisfied the thirst can direct behavior to other objectives, the psychological needs are relatively unsatiable.

Different psychologists group and describe needs differently. One common listing of psychological needs may include recognition, affection, belonging, independence, achievement and self-esteem. After meeting basic physiological needs, all behavior is directed to the meeting of these psychological needs, or the behavior may be a reaction to the frustration of not meeting the needs.

A student in the classroom is constantly seeking ways to meet these needs. If they can be met through classroom activity in educationally and socially acceptable situations it is determined that the student is motivated, and there is a high propensity for successful school performance and learning.

A student in a math class does not have an intrinsic propensity for learning mathematics. The classroom instructional activities provide a convenient vehicle for need satisfaction. The student may receive recognition, affection, a sense of belonging, independence, achievement and self-esteem. The instructional activity may provide an opportunity for the satisfaction of any one or these needs, or combinations of some of them. As long as there is need satisfaction through instructional participation, the student continues to learn.

On the contrary, if there is no need satisfaction, the student quickly loses interest in the instructional activity and is described as not being motivated. Actually, there is no such thing as a student not being motivated. What occurs is that the student seeks to acquire need satisfaction in ways other than through the instructional activity, which the student deems a poor prospect for the satisfying personal needs. This is analogous to a thirsty individual finding a water bucket empty when searching for water. It can be expected that the thirsty individual will seek out an alternative way of satisfying his thirst, a water fountain, a pitcher of water, a bottle or soda pop, or something else, until the thirst is quenched.

In many cases, students not acquiring need satisfaction in an instructional activity, can find such satisfaction through an alternative form of behavior. If the math student cannot receive recognition through instructional activity, he may seek and find such recognition by making snide remarks to the class, by throwing an eraser at the teacher, by poking an adjacent student, or some other socially unacceptable form of behavior. The student may satisfy his need for achievement by being the worst-behaved student in the class. He or she may satisfy the need for belonging and affection by associating and being accepted by a disruptive clique in the classroom or school, or by association with a gang in the larger community. Confrontations with teaching and administrative staff may establish his or her independence and self-esteem.

The obvious implication for the school is to provide ample opportunity for need satisfaction in socially acceptable school activity. The school motivates the student by presenting opportunities for need satisfaction. This further implies raising the propensity for success in the educational program, since success is need rewarding while failure is need frustrating. Techniques, such as a determination of a student having the necessary pre-requisite skills for a high probability of success in a learning situation, appropriate increments of difficulty in consecutive learning tasks, and the provision of immediate, strong and frequent positive reinforcement for correct performance, can be used effectively by the school to insure a high propensity for success and the satisfaction of a student's psychological needs.

The continued denial of need satisfaction in school will usually lead to a student determination that the school does not provide sufficient opportunities for need satisfaction, with an accompanying decision to drop out and seek need satisfaction elsewhere.

"The problem with these kids is that they are not motivated," commonly indicates that the students see little propensity for need satisfaction in the instructional setting. It is indicative of a need for modifying instructional materials and methodologies in order for students to perceive opportunity for need satisfaction.