Opinion

Disability cutoffs still unfair

Remember Roy B. Benavidez? He's the disabled Vietnam war hero, awarded the Medal of Honor by President Reagan in 1981 for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity," and then was rewarded by the Social Security Administration in 1983 by being removed from its disability rolls.

The former Green Beret master sergeant, who still carries shrapnel in his body, appealed. Now, an administrative law judge has decided in his favor.

"This proves the system works," a Social Security Administration press officer declared.

Not by a long shot.

The right decision in a well-publicized case does not mean that wrong decisions in thousands of unpublicized cases are not being made every day. And the reality is that wrong decisions, based on unfair procedures and unfair criteria, are being made every day. How else can anyone explain the fact that most of the disabled who, like Roy Benavidez, are reinstated on the disability rolls after appealing the termination of their benefits?

Many of the mentally disabled, though, do not appeal. For them it is a classic Catch 22: If they are not competent enough to appeal when their disability benefits are taken away, they lose them; if they are competent enough, then by the Social Security Administration's criteria they have to lose.

Shortly after the Benavidez case hit the headlines, Health and Human Services Secretary Margaret M. Heckler, emphasizing the Reagan administration's "fairness and compassion," held a news conference to announce a number of changes that turned out, on examination, to be more cosmetic than substantive. Meanwhile, the Senate has approved Pennsylvania Republican Sen. John Heinz's proposed moratorium on reviews of beneficiaries with mental disabilities — an important stopgap — and a House subcommittee has held hearings on the disability program, but the right action has yet to be taken.

That is a comprehensive reform of the disability program which, as one critic put it, is now being run with the "heart of a Doberman pinscher and the mind of a piranha."

No one can say that the program's approach to denying or terminating disability benefits is working until it's run with basic human decency.

Crumbling highway system

The collapse of a 100-foot section of a 25-year-old bridge on Interstate 95 in Connecticut, killing or critically injuring six persons as vehicles plunged into a river below, has nationwide implications requiring federal as well as state response. The Interstate highway system is literally falling apart even before it is completed, and many other highways and bridges are long overdue for repair or replacement.

Apparently the tragedy on the Connecticut turnpike, on a segment of I-95 heavily used by commuters to New York City as well as by long-distance auto and truck traffic, was caused by a missing steel pin only 10 inches long and 7 inches in diameter. Pins are used to hold interlocking bridge sections in place on piers while allowing for expansion and contraction as temperature changes. Records indicate the bridge received a state inspection in September and was reported "not to be in need of major repair."

One question that needs to be answered, not only in Connecticut but nationally, is whether inspection procedures are adequate to determine potentially hazardous problems such as a missing or deteriorating pin. Also questionable is whether there are effective monitoring procedures between inspections, including follow-through on warnings from motorists or nearby residents about possibly dangerous conditions. Persons living near the bridge had reported to Connecticut transportation officials that they had heard noises and vibrations as vehicles crossed the span and that pieces of steel and concrete had fallen off.

Trucks increasing in numbers and weight are giving highways and bridges a terrific pounding, yet Congress has required all states to allow tandems (one tractor pulling two trailers) on Interstate highways and some feeder roads. Pressures for ever-higher weight limits continue. The problem has been compounded by inadequate funding for highway and bridge maintenance and repair. Deferred maintenance has accelerated deterioration.

Congress should reconsider its decision on tandems. It should resist demands for higher weight limits and consider lowering them. It should review highway and bridge repair and replacement needs to determine whether the five-cent increase in the federal gasoline tax that took effect in April will provide sufficient revenue. Scheduled increases in federal taxes on trucks seem inadequate to cover the damage they cause; Congress should consider further increases.

There are more than half a million highway bridges in the United States over 20 feet long. About 45 percent of them need repair or replacement. More than 130,000 are classified as structurally deficient and have weight limits that bar many or all trucks. Highways, including many Interstates, are in disrepair. It is an awesome problem that cannot be treated by piecemeal or random reaction when tragedy strikes, as it did with devastating swiftness in Connecticut.

Return to sender

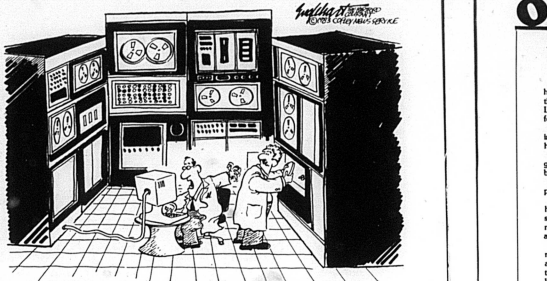
Dear Congressman Hornblower,

I am the person named Resident whom you write to so often. It was just reported in the news that the cost of the "free" congressional mailing privilege has now risen past $100 million a year. Inasmuch as the federal government is running almost $200 billion in the red, I would like you to remove my name from your mailing list so the printing and postage bill can be reduced.

The law says you are only supposed to use your mailing privilege for "official business." I have been reading your newsletters for some years now, and I find it hard to distinguish them from the kind of campaign brochures that are circulated at election time.

If you insist on writing again, please include an explanation of why you are able to mail out newsletters about yourself at the expense of the taxpayers, while candidates running against you have to pay for mailing the same kind of publicity material about themselves. Is that fair?

Sincerely,
A Resident



Agree or not

Maybe the right hand doesn't know what the left is doing, when it comes to spending tax monies

By S.C. Van Caron

Stuart M. Schulman, 56, may have to repay the state all of the salary he has drawn from the highway department since August 1980 for working in a position that didn't exist.

Schulman has been drawing $45,684 per year since January 1981 as deputy highway commissioner, a position that was never approved by the Personnel Board. The board recently notified Personnel Commissioner Dee Maynard to sever Schulman from the payroll August 15.

Arthur "Dutch" Hatterick, executive director of the Personnel Board, said the information has been turned over to the attorney general's office "for appropriate action".

Schulman began work for the state as June 23, 1980 at a salary of $2,807 per month as deputy commissioner of rural highways. That job was transferred to the Department of Finance in August 1980 and became non-existent in the highway department, but Schulman continued in the position and continued to draw his pay.

In January 1981 he received a salary change and the personnel action indicated he moved from deputy commissioner of highways to deputy commissioner of highways.

If the position didn't exist, the Personnel Board believes Schulman was paid illegally and what pay he drew should be returned by Schulman or his superiors responsible for the illegal payments.

Also under question is some expense money that Schulman has claimed.

Attorney General Steve Beshear said the information has been turned over to one of his assistants who is out of the office for a few days. "When we reach some decision in the matter, we will get back with the Personnel Board," he said.

When asked if his office intended to sue for return of the money, Beshear said, "Get back with me in about 10 days or so."

The Personnel Board is also looking into hiring practices in the highway department where several persons have been named to high-salaried positions as deputies or assistants.

Schulman worked for former Transportation Cabinet Secretary Frank Metts as development director in Metts private real estate and development firm in Louisville. He indicated in his resume that he would not work or headquarter anywhere but Louisville. His assignment was Louisville.

Another Louisville man in an administrative position is William J. Bax Jr. who began work Oct. 11, 1982 as director of utilities, division director II at a salary of $2,221 per month. The letter of approval from Gov. John Y. Brown Jr. to Secretary Rumpke was dated Oct. 13, 1982.

W. T. Brooks Jr. is another Louisvillian who worked in highways as an assistant to Metts, but left when Metts left state employment or shortly thereafter.

A Legislative Research Subcommittee is also looking into hiring practices and pay scales in the highway department.

A Source in the department says Bax keeps irregular office hours and has requested that he be signed in by someone in his office if he doesn't report on time or doesn't appear for the day.

Hatterick said if the attorney general doesn't take action the Personnel Board considers appropriate, that the board has the authority to institute action on its own.

The traditional intent and mission created by the constitution for the attorney general's office is that it protects the people's and state's rights.

Down Memory Lane

Italian exchange student visiting Simons family

Thursday, August 1, 1963

Miss Sharon Ockerman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Chester Ockerman, Route 2, Carlisle, was named queen of the Nicholas County Farm Bureau, Thursday night, July 25. Miss Ockerman will compete in the District King and Queen contest in Pendleton County in October. Miss Judy Clinkenbeard, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Clinkenbeard, was runner-up.

The East Union Church held their annual homecoming Sunday, July 28. During the services, Miss Alpha Brierly presented the dedication of the deacon's bench, a gift to the church by friends from Memphis, Tenn. of the late Miss Mabel Reid in memory of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Reid.

Doing their best, volunteers of the Carlisle Fire Department carried the necessary hose to the scene early Wednesday morning and kept a fire that gutted the home of Omer "Shorty" Bussell, McChisten Street, from spreading after the fire truck suffered a broken drive shaft and punctured gas tank.

Franco Micali, 26, of Ridigo Mantova, Italy, an exchange student who has special interests in purebred livestock, farm mechanization and cereal crop production, has been visiting the James Simons family.

Jimmy Joe Downing, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfay Downing, Moorefield, will be transferred to the Blue Grass Airport, Lexington, Aug. 11, as control tower operator.

H.H. Hardin and Paul Smoot have been pictured with 300 quail received recently from the Department of Fish and Wildlife. When the birds are six weeks old they will be liberated on farms throughout Nicholas County.

BORN — To Mr. and Mrs. Dovie Ritchie, a daughter, Shella Denise, July 25 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Gary Joe Jolly, Barterville, a son, Jerry Lee, July 25 at Nicholas County Hospital. — To Mr. and Mrs. Everett Smoot, a daughter, Starla Jane, July 28 at Mary Chiles Hospital, Mt. Sterling. — To Mr. and Mrs. John King, a daughter, Melissa Ann, July 21 at Bourbon County Hospital.

MARRIED — Miss Bessie Mae Fryman and Billy Ray Hunt, Saturday at the Assembly of God Church, by the Rev. Wesley Garr.

DIED — Martin McCann, July 20 at the Naval Hospital in San Diego, Calif. — Mrs. Rosa Dee Kimbrough, July 23 at the home of her son, Charles McGibbons, Dallas, Texas. — Buford Earl Hutchison, 41, July 26 at home in Bourbon County. — Mrs. Mary E. Wagoner, 81, Barterville, widow of William G. Wagoner, July 29 at the home of a son, Otis D. Wagoner. — Robert McDowell Watt, 75, July 23 at home in Lexington.

Thursday, July 29, 1943

Miss Jane Stewart entertained Monday afternoon with a miscellaneous shower for Mrs. Paul Guthrie (Ruth Ralston Snelling), a recent bride. She was assisted by her mother, Mrs. C.M. Stewart, Mrs. Albert Cook and Mrs. Charles Alsop. Forty friends attended.

Miss Ann Collliver entertained about 60 friends Friday night at the Armory with cards and dancing for her honor guests, Misses Nancy Reichsfarr of Richmond and her cousin, Marjorie Adams of Middlesboro.

Dr. Clarence W. Kash, well known retired physician who has been in failing health for several months, was accompanied to Lexington Thursday by Dr. B.F. Reynolds for observation.

BORN — To Mr. and Mrs. William Heck, Cynthiana, a daughter, Connie Rae, July 20 at Harrison Memorial Hospital.

MARRIED — Miss Ruth Ralston Snelling and Paul Justice Guthrie, Thursday at the Snelling home. — Miss Ethel King and Sgt. Dudley Galbraith, July 24 at the Post Chapel at Fort Thomas.

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Op-Ed page

You can always say . . . Sorry, that is not my week for taking a bath

In a just-published book, "The Best Excuse" (Coward-McCann), humorist Donald Carroll cites two plucky excusemakers. When the Prince of Wales summoned Lord Charles Beresford to dinner, Lord Charles declined by telegram: "Very sorry, can't come. Lie follows by post."

An Anglo-Indian author in London recently declined an invitation to a dinner party the following week on the grounds that he wasn't hungry.

Now that's cheeky. But the rest of us may require excuses on a grander scale, and the devious Carroll offers some real gems, in between wisecracks.

It is Carroll's contention that excuse-making represents the high point in human evolution:

"Consider, for a moment, what makes us unique among the higher primates. It's not our ability to make tools, as some people still seem to believe. There are other species with the ability to make tools. It's our ability to make excuses. That's what sets us apart. Any monkey can make a tool of some kind."

According to Carroll, the recipe for a good excuse is like the recipe for a good souffle: Timing is all-important. In fact, if you see an unwelcome invitation heading toward you, beat the inviter to the punch by going on record first that you have big troubles. Whenever anyone greeted W.C. Fields with a "Good Morning," he harrumphed: "Don't jump to conclusions."

It is alarming today to see to what depths the art of excuse-making has sunk. Here are a few real-life excuses insurance companies have gotten from drivers after auto smashups:

- ✓ An invisible car came out of nowhere, struck my vehicle and vanished.
- ✓ A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.
- ✓ The pedestrian had no idea which direction to run, so I ran over him.
- ✓ As I approached the intersection, a stop sign appeared in a place where no stop sign has ever appeared before. I was unable to stop in time to avoid an accident.
- ✓ The telephone pole was approaching fast. I was attempting to swerve out its path when it struck my front end.
- ✓ I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law and headed over the embankment.

To ward off conversational bores, Carroll recommends medical excuses: "Oooh. Ouch! Sorry about this. A-a-a-h, my foot's gone to sleep. I'll just have to get up and walk around for a bit . . ."

Or non sequiturs. When asked your opinion of President Reagan, you might replay, "I wouldn't know. I'm on a diet." Or perhaps, "It's hard to say, I've never been married myself."

Carroll concocted this response to door-to-door solicitors seeking money: "I've already contributed twice to your organization, on condition that nobody bothered me at home. Do you want me to demand my money back?"

Above all, a big-league excusemaker must tell a good story, no matter how bizarre or implausible. Carroll believes people want to be entertained more than convinced by excuses. A Cuban lawyer in Miami used voodoo to explain why he failed to show up in court—he said he had misplaced the rat's tongue he used to put a curse on courtroom adversaries.

Some excuses, however, may put just a wee too much strain on anyone's credulity. One of these surfaced at the trial of a Virginia man who had killed his mother-in-law with a hatchet in the garage. His excuse was that he mistook her for a raccoon. H-m-m, is that possible?

— RM —

Russ Metz

James Dent was telling about this personnel man who was sitting in his office one day when suddenly his door was pushed open and a dog trotted in. It was a clean, medium-sized, well-groomed dog of no particular antecedents and it carried a newspaper in its mouth.

While the personnel man watched in growing surprise, the dog trotted confidently to his desk, rose on its hind legs, placed the newspaper on the desk and put a paw squarely on the classified "help wanted" advertisement the personnel man had inserted just the day before. The dog looked eagerly at the personnel man.

"What's all this?" the personnel man asked.

"Woof!" the dog barked, pawing at the ad and wagging his tail furiously.

"Are you applying for this job?" the personnel man asked unbelievingly.

"Woof!" replied the dog, shaking its head positively.

"Well, well," said the personnel man. "Ah, but look here—the ads says the applicant must be an excellent typist, be able to keep books and be bilingual. Do you meet all those qualifications?"

"Woff, woof, woof!" said the dog, shaking its head again.

"Hm-m-m," said the personnel man. "Oh well, what have I got to lose? Let's just see. You go over there and sit at that typewriter and I'll give you some dictation." The dog trotted over to the indicated desk, jumped up on the chair, placed its front paws on the typewriter keys and looked at the personnel man in anticipation. "The quick brown fox," began the personnel man, "jumped over the lazy dog . . . no, I'm sorry, let's try something else."

So he picked up a letter from his "in" tray and began dictating a reply. Sure enough, the dog started typing rapidly. By the time the fellow had finished dictating, the dog had finished typing. The letter was perfectly spaced and without a single spelling error. The dog had even corrected a couple of the personnel man's small mistakes in grammar.

"Excellent, excellent," said the personnel man. "This is truly remarkable. You know, I really would like to hire you. But the ad also said the applicant has to be bilingual, to be able to converse in at least two languages. Surely you aren't bilingual?"

Looking him squarely in the eye, the dog said, "Meow!"

— RM —

Jan Compton had her two kids give a report on their activities last summer. It went like this:

What I did last summer, by Adam Compton: I had a very nice summer. The slide fell over on my head and I had to have stitches. It happened when my Mom took My Gramma grocery shopping, and the sitter couldn't find the clinic card. My Mom said the usual thing she says when something like this happens: "Wouldn't you know? Wouldn't you know? The best part of the summer was going to a big park that had big, high tiky rides that went around and around and around and getting to ride the biggest one a hundred times. It's too bad my Dad got sick and threw up all over my brother's favorite shirt. We went to that place by the lake again.

What I did last summer, by Janna Compton: I had a very nice summer. I got a Barbie doll the day my brother cut his brains and the next day our dog died. My friend Julie said dogs don't go to heaven, they just let their bones rot. Do you know if that's true? We went to a house by a lake and a swimming pool, where they make you put your face in the water even when you hate to get it up your nose. My Dad told my Mother she shouldn't wear two-piece bathing suits anymore and she got real mad at him. My favorite thing all summer was when my big brother taught me how to burp whenever I want to.

Onward, upward.

Recollections of World War II

by William D. Cochrane

against the blaring sun, but mouth open wide to taste the salt spray as it cascaded into the air above him. One of the many gulls circling overhead decided it was time to rid itself of the gluttonous meal of fish and so down came a thin stream of white substance right into the open mouth of the sleeping bum. Spitting and gagging, he staggered to his feet and jumping up and down waved a bony fist skyward. "You damn birds, you lousy flying good for nothing gang of ugly whatever you are, if my mouth hadn't a been open you'd have let me have it right in the face!"

1940-1941

(As told to me by an old Army buddy who was there)

Panama — Cristobal on the Atlantic side and Panama City on the Pacific. An isthmus of sun and rain, or rain and sun, whichever you want it. On the Atlantic side it rains 10 months out of the 12, while on the Pacific side it only rains nine months out of the 12. The land of iguanas and pelicans, very adept at catching fish on the dive, also at dropping fertilizer on uncovered human heads. A land of siesta, of lottery tickets, of streets such as the Cocanut Grove with its many hawdy houses and pro stations and stinks worse than an open sewer. Of course there is another Panama — the Cathedral side of town with its quiet wide streets shaded with Banyan trees, where the church bells toll mournfully sweet on the early morning air. A private in the U.S. Army in 1940 and 1941 seldom got acquainted with this Panama.

Before Pearl Harbor the duty was long and boring in Panama: cut grass with a bolo; cut grass that had never seen a lawn mower; clean the big 14-inch disappearing coast artillery guns; pull guard; pull KP.

My friend said that before the Japanese hit Pearl Harbor the biggest attraction at Fort Amador was going to the NCO Club. He was a buck sergeant and could go there. Really he had just made corporal but since they were short on good NCO's he was made acting sergeant. He said about the only incident worthy of mention was going to this club and watching an old corporal drink, or, what he drank. I think he said this corporal's name was DoZinsky or some such. He had been a corporal in the Army Band before the Army pulled the troops out of China in the middle or late 30's. In those days in the Army, I understand, you left your rank where you made it when you shipped out and had to start all over anew, but somehow DoZinsky had held on to his two stripes. According to my friend, DoZinsky had to have iron guts to be able to hold this drink of his. He would go to the club, buy himself a cigar and a mug of beer. He would put the beer on a table until it'd go warm. Then he would take a paper clip, straighten it out and insert it into the burning end of his cigar. This paper clip would allow him to build up a long ash on the cigar. When he got the desired length he would dump the ash into the warm beer and then crush a couple of aspirin into the beer, and top it off with three or four dashes of tobasco sauce and drink it down.

My friend said all in all the duty was pretty boring. Right after Pearl, he said, there was some danger of being shot by your own people, everybody was trigger happy. He said then after about a month of this, things returned to their normal boring routine. Said occasionally they would have a Japanese submarine scare, and every now and then they would raid a Japanese fishing village. Except for this, he said the war was at ease on the Panamanian front.

At the break of day on the 9th of April in 1940, German destroyers had torpedoed Norwegian gunboats in a Norwegian harbor, followed by the invasion of German troops hidden in German ore-boats, and before the Norwegians knew what was happening, Germany had occupied their country. More new words were coined such as "5th Column," formed by Nazi agents; "quisling," a word which later would have reference to traitors because of a Norwegian by the name of Vidkun Quisling, who collaborates with the Nazis against his country.

An Ordinary Hobo: 1940-1941

or

Another Jungle Tale or Two

Around the small fire at the end of the railroad yards the talk droned on. The tall tales grew — of the Wheat Harvest in Kansas; the fat bread from Saint Louis who didn't wear no bloomers, etc. Twilight gave way to a night in which the night insects began their calls to one another. The warmth of the fire in the chill of the evening was soothing balm to the group huddled around drinking black coffee.

There was a train being made up in the main yards but it would be awhile yet before anything came out steaming so, in the meantime, the tales continued. One hobo lying on his back chewing on a twig said that he had a brother that was so naive, or maybe just downright stupid that he played piano for over two years in a house of ill repute and never knew what went on upstairs. Then another voice cut in to say, "Hey, I can remember when I attended college in the middle of the depression. I was in Texarkana waiting to catch out to Shreveport to see a broad that I'd met a few weeks before. It was in the middle of the day, and was it ever hot!! A few of us were just lying around, waiting. It was too hot for the usual ball sessions. There was this here footteiler across the tracks; I had crawled about halfway under this footteiler when what looked to be a cooler spot to stretch out and maybe get a little Z time. Well now, across this bridge there comes a little girl, probably about eight years old, tripping across with a basket on her arm. She peeked down through the balusters and said as she scornfully looked up the US Army, 'Um, I'll never believe how unprepared we really were. Why? I really can't say for sure, but I know that it had something to do with the Neutrality Acts that had been passed by Congress in 1935 and 1937. The Isolationists had attacked the President with harsh words accusing him of war-mongering, and had demanded that the Neutrality Acts be strengthened by forbidding America to enter the War Zone. As I say, I know very little about this but I do know there was no money appropriated. All of the branches of services were understrength — and equipment, well, we just didn't have any.

What I am about to say may be funny now, but to us it was sure no joke. It was not unusual to see an Army jeep bearing a sign that read "This is a tank." Nor was it an unusual sight to see a 30-calibre water-cooled machine gun camouflaged in the woods having a sign that read "Heavy Artillery." Some soldiers didn't even have a real bullet-shooting weapon but had a rifle made of wood that resembled a 30 Model Springfield or a British Enfield. We were pretty much a simulated Army, and if it hadn't been so serious a situation, it would probably have been very comical to see a horde of men and boys running through the Louisiana swamps playing soldier. But let me tell you one thing, the spirit was there, and one day some of those very persons running through mud and dust in Louisiana would die on foreign battlefields, and some would win the nation's highest medals, but as I said, the spirit was there, and for a period of 48 hours straight we went what we called "tactical," day and night, fighting the enemy, whoever the enemy might be. This tactical period would begin about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and end at this time 48 hours later. Then there

*See Recollections, page 8

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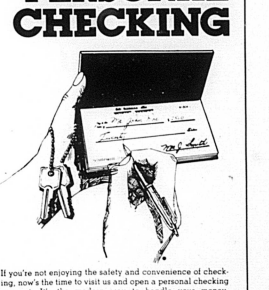

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