



staff photo by Sumanesh Agrawal

They lived happily ever after

Ann Bonnichsen from Orono, Maine, enjoys the pleasant breeze as she sits on the lawn outside the Academic Building and reads a monster story to

her son Shield. They had come to visit Dr. Gentry Steele of the Anthropology department.

Translating takes technical know-how

United Press International
NEW YORK — Language errors are an increasing business hazard in our shrinking world, says Patricia Besner, who runs a large international translation bureau.

Some business translation mistakes are just funny, she said. "Software" came out as "underwear" for some puzzled Indonesian computer customers and "hydraulic ram" emerged in Iranian as "wet sheep," while Italian dentists were offered "barefoot drills" instead of touch-toe drills.

"But errors in translating communications in high technology business aren't one little bit funny," Besner said. "Even a tiny error can ruin a job, lose a contract, cost millions of dollars or even human lives."

For that reason, she said, the business of translation has moved beyond the capabilities of the straight linguist to a remarkable extent. The translator now increasingly has to be a multilingual engineer, scientist, accountant or legal expert.

So, instead of just advertising how many languages her firm is expert in, Besner's AllLanguage Services, Inc., lists 129 technical and professional fields in which it can provide expert translation on short notice in more than 25 languages.

The bureau has 176 full-time and 200 part-time translators, up about 50 from 1975, she said. Its sales are about \$15 million a year. Customers include many Fortune 500 companies.

Besner started it all with

\$40,000 she borrowed from her family in 1957. She says she became interested in languages as a result of collecting foreign postage stamps as a girl.

Translation is a big business today. The New York Yellow Pages phone book has nearly 11 pages of listings for translation bureaus, some of them advertising as many as 60 languages,

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others specializing in only a few of the more exotic tongues. Many provide oral interpreters to appear in courts and in other proceedings. Some do primarily literary translations.

Besner said Agnew Translating Services of Woodland Hills, Calif., near Los Angeles, is perhaps nearest to AllLanguage in its operations.

Speed often is critical in Besner's field. Recently, AllLanguage had to turn out within a week a 398-page proposal for a client bidding to supply Mexico

with a highly sophisticated power system. The company has its own translation department but in order to do all the checking done and bid in on time, it called AllLanguage.

But there is another important reason why translating must be both accurately and instantly interpreted, said. "Most countries in the world now are linked by advanced scientific information services controlled by computers and this makes it difficult to get accurate translations," she said.

A paramount example is the operation of international airports. The lives of thousands of people depend every day on absolutely accurate translation by the persons who operate the pushbutton control of the computerized airport offices and towers.

The prepared manual instructions and the daily procedures to be followed in the ports have to be in many languages and the translation step-by-step interpreting team must guard against any chance of a foul-up.

For example, a weather map, made up of meteorologic data gathered by seismic, geophone, radar and other sophisticated means, can be explained clearly and instantaneously in many languages — or there would be a major trouble throughout the world, Besner said.

Teachers cannot teach, prof says

United Press International
PITMAN, N.J. — English professor Richard Mitchell says he is not surprised Johnny cannot read, write and do arithmetic since education is no longer the product of American schools.

"There can't be education in American schools," the Glassboro State College professor said. "There can only be a lot of indoctrination — some training perhaps — but not education. A teacher's training is designed to prevent it."

Mitchell, 52, a native of Scarsdale, N.Y., graduated from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn., earned a doctorate at Syracuse University, and taught at Defiance College in Ohio before coming to Glassboro 19 years ago.

He believes the roots of the problem with the teaching industry go back to the late 19th century and the birth of educational psychology.

Mitchell said teaching is not hard if you know your subject,

but has been made to seem hard by educational bureaucrats in an industry that speaks and writes in jargon, awards itself degrees for research of little worth and refuses to evaluate itself on whether students learn anything.

For example, Mitchell said, educators are replacing demanding academic subjects, like foreign languages and math, with citizenship education and consumer math in the belief that students cannot master the tougher subjects.

He said those who hold to that theory can often be found at colleges catering to education majors where students spend more time on education courses than on the disciplines they will teach.

"If you want teachers trained as government agents, then they are trained quite properly," he said.

The proof of the failure of the way teachers are trained — and, consequently, the way they teach — is in the students themselves, he said.



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