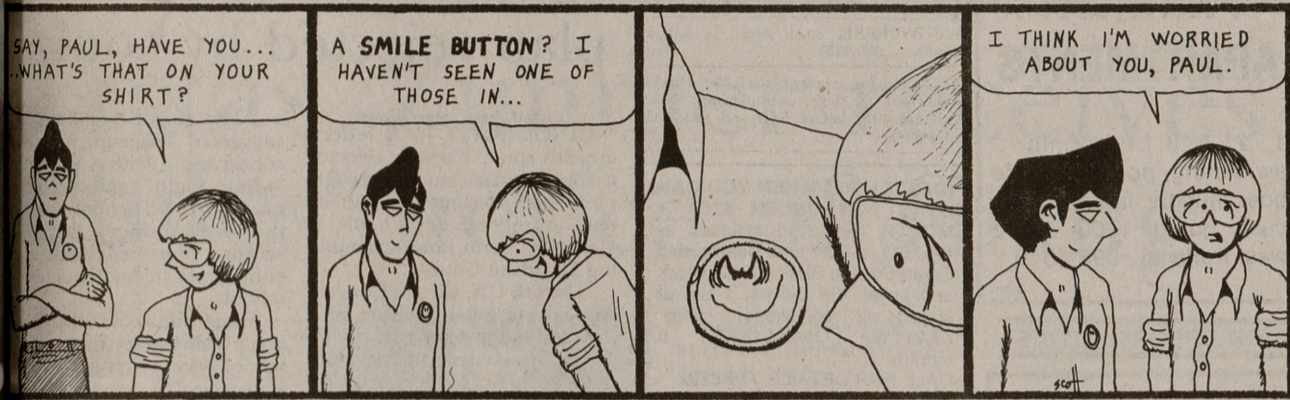


Warped

By Scott McCullar



Woman loses Medicaid because of funeral plan

United Press International
CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. — An elderly woman who sells newspapers from her wheelchair has lost her Medicaid benefits for two years because she bequeathed \$1,000 to make sure she was buried in the gray gown and casket she picked out.

Government officials said they felt sorry for Mattie Dudley, 67, but they had no choice but to follow regulations.

Dudley receives \$280 a month in Supplemental Security Income and earns about \$5 a week by selling The Daily Progress from the wheelchair she rigged with a canopy to protect her

from the elements. She also has a \$1,000 certificate entitling her to a funeral at the Hill and Wood Funeral Home.

"I knew my people won't be able to put me away so I decided to put myself away," said Dudley, who lives alone. "It's just something that you don't have to worry about. I even picked my casket out. It's gray. And my gown's gray, too. If I died tonight, I'd be taken care of."

Her problems with the government started with the certificate. Her assets totaled \$1,694.36, just above the limit to remain eligible for the benefits. To keep the SSI, she transferred her certificate and \$226.27 in interest it earned to another woman.

But by transferring the certificate, Dudley made herself ineligible for Medicaid benefits that pay for prescription drugs and medical bills. Medicaid regulations require such certificates be sold and the proceeds used to buy food and clothing, or to finance shelter or other necessities.

Government officials expressed sympathy the woman's benefits were suspended for two years but said rules were rules.

Paul Wood, president of Hill and Wood, said other elderly people have had similar problems. Another funeral home operator, Joseph Teague, said nine elderly clients recently have given up certificates to meet the federal limits.

"Most of them feel like they've been hit with a wide board and swept away," Teague said.

The woman's congressman, Rep. J. Kenneth Robinson, announced he would introduce legislation to amend the Social Security Act.

Southern governor fighting proposed bill to double cigarette excise taxes

United Press International
HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. — A tobacco-state governor is rallying fellow southerners to fight any federal infringement on excise taxes which states rely on for much of their revenue.

North Carolina Gov. James B. Hunt Jr., from the nation's leading tobacco state, has a pending resolution before the Southern Governors Association convention, urging rejection of the pending federal bill to double cigarette taxes. The measure, passed by the Senate and now in the House Ways and Means Committee, would increase the federal tobacco tax from 8 to 16 cents per pack.

Hunt's resolution is scheduled for a vote by the dozen governors attending the SGA meeting Wednesday.

"The United States Senate has passed legislation to increase federal excise taxes which could cause a substantial reduction in state and local revenues," Hunt said in his resolution. "Other proposals under consideration by the president and Congress could, if implemented, cause substantial changes in state tax bases or state taxation methods."

An aide to the governor said that in North Carolina — which has the nation's lowest cigarette tax at 2 cents per pack — the Reagan administration package of excise tax hikes would cost the state at least \$1 million. The reduction for other states could be greater, he said.

Hunt's resolution would put the SGA on record opposing any action by the federal government to preempt, either directly or indirectly, sources of state revenues, state tax bases, or state taxation methods."

The Hunt resolution before the SGA mirrors a national concern voiced by the National Governors Association in opposing

the excise tax increases. In addition to the economic impact of specific amounts of cigarette, gasoline, alcohol or other excise tax hikes, the governors are concerned that the Reagan administration might seek to reduce the federal deficit by increasing taxes on things traditionally taxed wholly or primarily by the states.

The southern governors began their meeting Monday with a series of talks on energy and education, and how those two topics relate to the economy in one of the nation's poorest regions. Gov. David Treen, a Louisiana Republican, called for quick deregulation of natural gas and said southern industries may face a 35 percent shortage late next year unless prices are deregulated.

Treen said the South's industries, most of them depending on natural gas to power production lines, would face a 50 percent shortage by 1985 unless natural gas regulation is ended by the next Congress.

Govs. Dick Riley of South Carolina and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee warned fellow governors not to shortchange education because of tough economic times in state capitals. Riley said there may be strong pressure to divert education money to other pressing state needs, but that dollars spent on schools now can be saved in welfare and prison spending later.

Alexander urged governors to consider an experimental program he and Govs. Pierre DuPont of Delaware and John Rockefeller of West Virginia have been studying, called "Jobs for America's Graduates Inc." The non-profit organization, funded by private foundation grants, has been tested in Massachusetts, Arizona, Missouri and Delaware, Alexander said,

and has been effective in reducing the unemployment rate among poor high school graduates.

Alexander said the JAGS program involves one counselor for every 30 high school seniors, with students selected from groups which traditionally have a hard time finding jobs after graduation.

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Astronaut couple's infant hospitalized

United Press International
SPACE CENTER, Houston — The newborn son of America's first astronaut couple remained hospitalized Tuesday for a breathing problem characterized as fairly common and not serious.

Astronaut Margaret Rhea Seddon gave birth Monday to the 7-pound-2-ounce baby, who was named Paul Seddon Gibson.

Astronaut father Robert L. "Hoot" Gibson initially reported both baby and mother were doing well. But a National Aeronautics and Space Administration spokesman said because of breathing difficulties the infant was flown by helicopter from Clear Lake Hospital to Houston's Hermann Hospital.

The baby was delivered by Caesarian section, Nesbitt said.

He said doctors at Hermann could better monitor the baby. Seddon was not expected to join the baby at Hermann, but will remain at Clear Lake Hospital until she recovers from the birth.

"Any time a baby has a problem at the hospital down here, it is transferred to one of the Houston hospitals with better facilities," Nesbitt said.

He did not say what type of treatment the baby was receiving.

A Johnson Space Center spokesman said Seddon's astronaut status will not be affected by the birth. After maternity leave, the spokesman said, "She will pick up her training where she left off."

"The majority of the astronauts have children, but this is the first time we have an astro-

naut couple with a child," the spokesman said.

Gibson's mother, Mrs. Paul Gibson of Westminster, Calif., said before difficulties arose she spoke with the couple and both were extremely happy about the birth.

"They seemed very elated," Mrs. Gibson said. "He (Gibson) was thrilled. I think he's real happy to have a boy."

Asked if the boy might become an astronaut, Mrs. Gibson joked: "He better at least be a pilot."

Seddon, a physician astronaut, gave birth at 4:10 a.m. CDT. She had attempted to deliver by the Lamaze natural childbirth method, but doctors decided that after 14 hours of labor, the child should be taken from the mother by surgery. Sources said Gibson stayed with his wife throughout labor and delivery.

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