

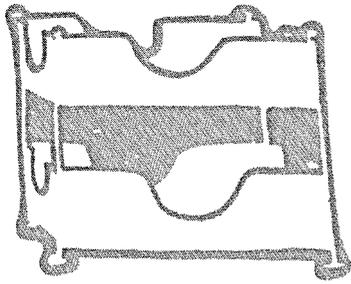
Oasis

SEPTEMBER 1977



Inside, you can--

- Drop anchor in Illinois
- Get tips on holding meetings
- Examine a few interns
- Learn a new kind of judo
- Lose your appetite



In basket

Editor:

I read *OASIS* every issue and enjoy it. In the July, 1977, issue the article entitled "Is 65 Just a Number" repeats the erroneous statement that Bismarck chose age 65 as the eligibility age for the German system in 1889.

The eligibility age in the German system was 70 from 1889 to 1916. It was reduced to 65 in 1916.

Age 65 was not "arbitrarily" selected by Congress in 1935.

I think you might like to refer your readers to the chapter "How was 65 Selected as the Retirement Age?" in my book *Retirement Policies Under Social Security*, University of California Press, 1957.

Keep up the good work.

-WILBUR J. COHEN
Dean
School of Education
University of Michigan

In his book, Mr. Cohen, a former Secretary of HEW, pointed out that among the factors that led to the selection of 65 as the retirement age, the most important was the factor of cost. "It was understood that a reduction in the age below 65 would substantially increase costs and, therefore, might impair the possibility of successful acceptance of the plan by Congress," he wrote. "A higher retirement age, of say 68 or 70, was never considered because of the belief that public and congressional opposition would develop against such a provision in view of the widespread unemployment that existed." His book is available from the SSA Library, Room 571, Altmeyer Building, Baltimore, Md. 21235.

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Editor:

I am writing in reference to a "Letter to the Editor" in the July issue of *OASIS* from Mr. Arlyn Carr, District Manager in San Diego, Calif.

Mr. Carr was upset over cutbacks received in his staff, overtime, and equipment and the erection of the \$100,000 Batcolumn in Chicago. My office services the fourth largest SSI county in Arkansas. I have a staff of 13 employees. We will have our 1977 redeterminations completed by September 15, and our pending is the lowest it has been in 3 years. We have worked a grand total of 512 hours overtime since January 1, 1977.

I guess what I am saying is, it can be done with what you have. Sounds to me like Mr. Carr is suffering from a bad case of "Bat-lash."

-THOMAS GEREN
Branch Manager
West Memphis, Ark.

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Editor:

It seems to me \$100,000 is a small price to pay for Claes Oldenburg's magic Batcolumn. Since the Bat was installed, both the Cubs and White Sox have taken over the lead of their divisions. Who can remember the last time that happened? With proper maintenance and respect, the Bat should last indefinitely and its beneficial effects will be felt on Chicago's baseball teams long after the contributions of expensive free-agents have been forgotten.

Arlyn Carr (In Basket, July) is just sore because the San Diego Padres spent so much for Fingers and Tenace to so little effect. He would do better to order a similar bat for his office from GSA,

-ED MAYS
Administrative Assistant
Huntington Park, Calif.

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Editor:

How can you have the nerve to put the picture of the \$100,000 (of tax payers' money!!) baseball bat on the cover of the *OASIS*?

I am an employee at the Northeastern Program Service Center here in Rego Park, N.Y. We are working in a run-down warehouse atmosphere and the GSA can authorize such a waste of money. The cover on the *OASIS* only shows the lack of tact or sense that is used in this agency. When are we getting our new Program Center??

-IRENE SCHLAGMAN
Benefit Authorizer

Editor:

After the recent cover of *OASIS* (March issue), the claimant in the photograph shouldn't have come as too



much of a surprise. But our receptionist, Tony Molina, and everyone else in the office wasn't quite ready to let him go without a second glance. After things settled down a bit, we were able to complete the business of the other half of the act, a student receiving social security benefits.

-BRUCE CALLANDER
Claims Rep
San Diego, Calif.

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TWO district office employees, Sally Frost, Operations Supervisor, Texarkana, Texas, and David Fricker, Operations Analyst, Clayton, MO., recently wrote rather lengthy letters to us regarding the SSI program and the difficulty of administering it. Both were particularly upset about the new policy regarding deeming.

"I have gone over the policy with several attorneys, who have advised me that the policy will never stand up in court because 1) it discriminates on marital status, and 2) it discriminates against children with income," Sally Frost said. She went on to state that it is "so complex that we are told the all-knowing computer can't handle it till late 1978 at the earliest. . . ."

In closing, she inquired, "Tell me, who is protecting and serving the recipients? Who is proud of our employees? I'm surprised that the recipients have not mobbed us, and these employees surviving the mobbing haven't quit. . . ."

David Fricker thinks that "the persons responsible for the new deeming regulations should be quickly transferred to the 'funny farm'. . . . It's one thing to have fun and games devising

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Scanning Social Security



GEORGIA ART

The staff of the Cordele, Ga., Branch Office honored its older citizens and at the same time offered them the opportunity to get together with people their own age with similar hobbies.

Expanding on activities held for these people for the past 2 years, the BO this year organized a week-long arts and crafts show and invited senior citizens to display needlework, handmade clothing, and other handiwork. Members of the general public as well as people from nursing homes and the neighborhood service center participated.

At an open house on the last day of the exhibit, guests were served refreshments prepared by the BO staff. Entries were judged by representatives of the Crisp, Dooly, Sumter, and Wilcox County extension offices, and awards for the best exhibits were presented by U.S. Congressman Dawson Mathis. Local businesses and clubs donated money for the awards.

Shown with Congressman Mathis (foreground) and State Representative Howard Rainey (right) of Cordele are some of the winners: Standing—J. F. Lovel I, Thelma young, and Margaret Green; Seated—Essie Nobles.

IT'S NOW A PART OF HISTORY

It was a small but significant bit of social security history, lingering in the storage room of every district and branch office in the country.

Perhaps nobody had the heart to throw it away after all the work it had done.

Maybe it was just forgotten as if sat collecting dust.

But now, it is gone.

The machines that stamped numbers onto SS-5s (Application for Social Security Number) from the birth of SSA until 1973 have been disposed of, and record of them has been deleted from inventory lists. They've not been used since the issuing of cards in field offices was replaced by computer-generated central issuance. Before that, the account number clerk stamped the SS-5 with the number that was on each pre-printed social security card, using the manual numbering machine.

In June, offices across the country were asked to locate the relics—one per office—and get rid of them. (The move came about as a result of an employee suggestion.) "Due to their age and limited use,"

stated an OMA memo, "the remaining numbering machines on hand should be donated or destroyed."

But, lest these hard-working gadgets be forgotten, one will be placed in the SSA History Room at central office as a tribute to the lot, which stamped out some 215 million social security cards* during their 37 years of service. Shown holding the machine is SSA Historian Abe Bortz.

*(Exactly 215,737,450 SSNs were issued between November 1936 and April 1973, when the last one was issued in a DO. Some of them in the early years were hand-written.)



GET A FREE SHOT AT WORK

SSA will be offering employees free influenza inoculations again this year. Just one shot is being given; the bivalent vaccine offers protection against both Victoria and Hong Kong strains. Annual flu shots are recommended for all employees, especially those with chronic cardiac, pulmonary, or kidney diseases; asthmatics; diabetics; and, those over 65.

The Public Health Service says that one in five people who take the vaccine may experience minor reactions to it. These can include reddening of the skin, tenderness around the

injection area, or a slight fever. Since the vaccine is grown in eggs, people with a strong allergic reaction to eggs should not be vaccinated. Employees who are not sure about taking a flu shot should talk with their doctor.

At headquarters, the Employee Health Service is scheduling employees for the inoculations. In the field, arrangements for medical personnel to administer the shots will be made by local management. At the time OASIS went to press, EHS did not know when the vaccine would be ready for distribution.