

Schools turning out poorly educated generation

By CAROL R. RICHARDS
Gannett News Service
First in a series

WASHINGTON — After years of shuffling off the decline in college entrance test scores, American educators appear to be reaching a consensus — that our schools have turned out a generation of badly educated young people.

"We're producing a new generation demonstrably bordering on functional illiteracy," says Richard Berendzen, provost of American University here.

Says U.S. Education Commissioner Ernest L. Boyer, "The system is fundamentally flawed if you have to start from scratch teaching college kids to read."

"Today's kids have a lot more street knowledge and bedroom knowledge than we did," says high school teacher Ann Coluzzi. "But they're not into thinking."

The consensus, evidenced in recent speeches, interviews and writings by school teachers, college professors, federal education officials and scholars, is that a substantial percentage of today's high school graduates have difficulty reading and computing because schooling methods embraced in the mid-60's, and still favored in many places today, simply do not focus on teaching those skills.

Why not? More than a dozen educators told a week-long seminar at the Washington Journalism Center here that the cause is a pair of social trends that have intertwined for the past 10 years:

First, in its determination to desegregate the schools, society was paying more attention to the social consequences of education than to education itself. Second, the schools capitulated 10 years ago to the anti-Vietnam War generation's demands for "relevant" courses, relaxing of grading systems and abandonment of



the classic college preparatory curriculum.

"In 1968, in Evanston, Ill., when I was named principal of one of the best high schools in the U.S., my board ordered me to lower the dropout rate and to make school more relevant to the kids," said Scott D. Thomson, now deputy executive director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. "Nobody said anything about it, but standards got lowered. College admissions got easier, too."

Marie D. Eldridge, administrator of the National Center for Education Statistics, said, "The main emphasis of the educational process during the period of desegregation was social change." Money was spent to guarantee "access," not "quality," she said.

Reed Whittemore, a poet and essayist who teaches freshman English, among other things, said the average student he sees at the University of Maryland today is simply not as literate as the average student he saw on a Midwest campus 15 years ago.

"Back in the '60s there was a decision to let racial and ethnic groups do their own thing instead of insisting on standard English, to try to motivate the kids toward self-expression," Whittemore said. "Some of the illiteracy we have now is attributable in part to this self-expression kick."

"Now the problem is how to restore the standards of standard English."

Ann Coluzzi, who teaches high

school English in the District of Columbia, said that the search for "relevance" in the '60s led to dropping the requirement that youngsters take English I, II, III and IV. Instead, electives were offered — she taught one on occult fiction — "and the kids chose fun and games."

A host of other factors also were cited as contributing to the relaxation of high school and college academic standards over the past decade. They include:

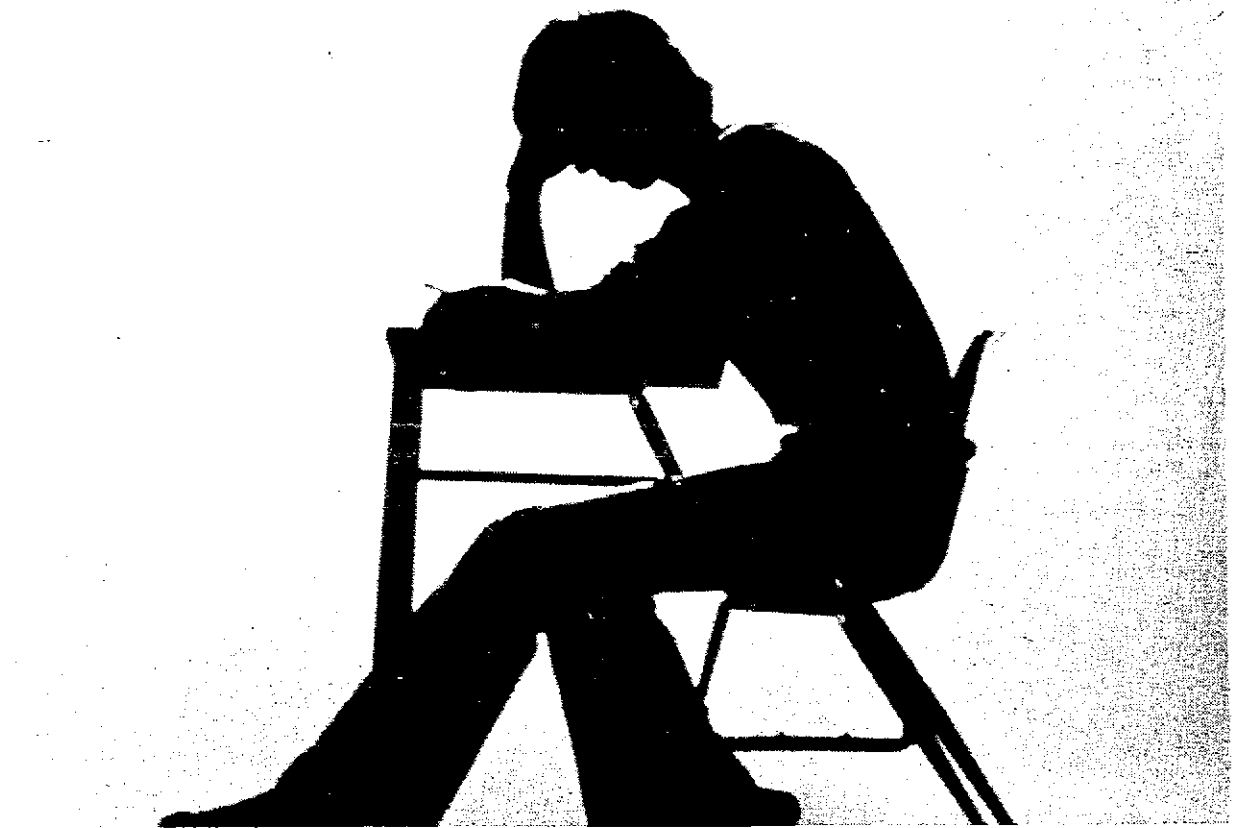
POPULATION: When a blue-ribbon panel studied the SAT scores last year, it found that the first 5 to 6 years of the decline could be attributed to the fact that a larger pool of youngsters — no longer just the cream of the crop — was taking the SATs.

"One very great difference between now and the 1950s," said the NIE's Graham, "is that we have over 75 percent of the group graduating from high school today while in the 1950s it was only half. Before World War II, it was only 30 percent, so the high school diploma was very elite."

However, the College Board's blue ribbon panel also found that the pool of test-takers began stabilizing in 1970, and could not be blamed for the SAT score declines thereafter. The panel speculated that the blame belongs to:

TELEVISION: "The high school graduate of today has watched 15,000 hours of television," Graham said, "but has spent only 11,000 hours in the classroom." Berendzen says television watching tends to squeeze out reading as a leisure activity, and turns children into passive, not active, participants in life.

ACADEMIC GRADE INFLATION: This appears to have begun on campus during the Vietnam War, when professors found that the male students they flunked out were promptly drafted. Also, noted Allan



The New Mexican/Dennis Dahl

W. Osyar, executive director of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, as youth thumbed their noses at the national leaders who had mired us in Vietnam, they also sneered at grades as a symbol of the Establishment's goal system. Thus it became easier to get a passing grade, and today the average grade at many colleges is a B.

CHANGED TEXTBOOKS: American University's Berendzen says elementary and secondary English textbooks are "demonstrably simpler" than they were 15 years ago. Who is to blame for the generation of the poorly taught? Not us, say the teachers. "Most of the changes that occurred in the schools in the '60s occurred over the objections of most of the teachers," says Herndon.

They wanted something different," says Thomson.

Not us, say federal policymakers. "The schools become permissive when society becomes permissive," says NIE's Graham.

Who's to blame? "All the people who say everyone is to blame are right," says Columbia University's Dr. Diane Ravitch, a noted education researcher.

Self-defense: Common sense one good weapon

By MARIA PUENTE
The New Mexican Staff

Women who take self-defense classes should remember that unless they're willing to constantly train, a little bit of knowledge could work against them if they are attacked.

That's the advice of Michael Moore, founder and head instructor at the Santa Fe Karate School. Moore, who has been teaching self-defense classes for women for the past several years, told a meeting of the advisory board of the Rape Crisis Center this past week that plain common sense and awareness may be the best weapons a woman may have.

Moore said too many women take self-defense classes expecting to learn everything in a few easy lessons. But it's not that simple and if a woman drops out of classes for even a few months, she could forget a lot of what she has learned, he said.

If a woman has not been training and tries to fight off an attacker, she may find herself in a worse situation because her attempts will be ineffective and may anger the assailant.

Moore suggests women should avoid getting themselves into vulnerable, dangerous situations by paying attention to their surroundings.

"Take note and be aware of what is happening around you," Moore said. "Wherever you are, take a few minutes to look around. Where are hiding places, where are exits, what can you use as a weapon."

Moore doesn't advocate paranoia ("That's the worst thing you can do.") just cautious awareness. Neither does he advocate carrying guns or knives, even if a woman is trained to use them. A gun could be taken away and used against a woman, Moore said.

Women may be able to save themselves from rape or assault if they keep their cool and use their heads, Moore said. If a man attacks a woman, she should be aware of his vulnerable points, the places he least expects attack.

"Don't try to hit him in the stomach because that will make him mad," Moore said. "A hard kick can break a leg. If you slap a man in the face with a heavy book, I guarantee he's going to be startled a few seconds and that's to your advantage."

An assailant doesn't expect a woman to use a set of keys or a pen as a weapon, but they can also be effective weapons.

"Use as many keys as possible and scrape them across a guy's forehead," Moore said. "The scratch will draw blood and it will hurt but the guy will also be momentarily startled, wondering where the blood came

from and whether he's hurt. A few seconds is all you need."

If a man has a weapon, Moore suggests a woman worry more about the "line of attack" rather than the size of person wielding the weapon. Too many women panic at the size of a man and end up running right into a knife or right in front of a gun barrel.

In a quick demonstration, Moore explained that most women react to a gun by backing up, their bodies still in line with the gun barrel.

"Look at where the weapon is heading and move to the side," Moore said. "That bullet is not going to chase you around once it's been fired. The threat is only as big as a man's hand."

Moore suggests women making "quick exits" whenever possible but if a woman succeeds in knocking a gun out of a man's hand, she shouldn't try to grab it herself.

"Don't go for the gun, just make like a rabbit," he said.

Blocking a gun or a knife with your hands probably won't work either, Moore says because the man is stronger.

"When you're pushing down the hand with the knife, your hands may slip and that knife will slip right into your stomach," he said.

Quick-thinking can also save a woman, Moore told a story about a man who walked up to a woman in a parking lot, jumped into her car and demanded she drive off.

"She took her keys and threw them out the window and told him she wasn't going anywhere," Moore said. "He said, 'What did you do that for?' and got out and left."

If a man grabs a woman on the street, she should not begin kicking and screaming but instead, should

take a few seconds to figure out what's going on and what she can do about it.

"Timing is very important. Most men aren't used to dealing with women in a fight and it's easy to throw them off guard," Moore said. "Pick your moment and do something unexpected with your keys or books and it will work to your advantage."

Although Moore's advice went over well with the members of the Rape Crisis advisory board, Shelbee Matis, head of the center, said it is difficult to teach women to stay cool in a crisis. "People are basically lazy and I know that most women aren't going to go to self-defense classes consistently," Ms. Matis said. "The problem is that women aren't trained for violence and they're not aware of their potential for self-defense. Fear overwhelms them."

One dead, one injured in shootings

A man apparently committed suicide outside a Santa Fe restaurant and another man was wounded outside a downtown business in two separate shooting cases Friday afternoon.

Jose R. Lazalde, 38, of Idaho, was found dead of a gunshot wound to the head about 2:30 p.m. His body was found in his car, which was parked next to Carrow's Hickory Chip Restaurant on St. Michael's Drive.

About three hours later, Santa Fean Eloy Romero, also 38, was shot in the upper thigh while outside the Santa Fe Motor Co., 418 Cerrillos Road. Romero is an auto mechanic with the firm and police suspect a co-worker in the case.

Suicide is suspected in Lazalde's death both because of a .22-caliber gun found next to his body and a note left in the car. The note, written in Spanish, complained that Lazalde had come to New Mexico "to make a lot of money" but had been unable to do so, police investigators said. His wife, contacted in Rigby, Idaho, Friday night, said her husband had left their home recently to seek work in New Mexico, police said.

Lazalde's body was discovered by persons going to eat at Carrow's, police said. He was believed to have been dead about 30 minutes before the discovery, police said.

Romero, the auto mechanic, was

shot while standing in an alley on the north side of Santa Fe Motor Co., police said.

Other workers at the business said that moments before the shooting, Romero had gone outside to have a discussion with another employee.

Police said a small-caliber bullet went into Romero's right upper thigh, exited, and then lodged next to the bone of his left thigh.

Romero was listed in satisfactory condition Saturday night by hospital officials.

Police said Romero's suspected assailant immediately fled the scene Friday. The suspect was still being sought Saturday night.

GOP asks U.S. attorney office to study voting malfunctions

ALBUQUERQUE (AP) — Republican Party officials said they asked the U.S. attorney's office to look into possible violations regarding the operation of voting machines in Bernalillo County.

The party's allegations of possible irregularities during Tuesday's election also were investigated by the FBI, an official said Friday.

"We, the FBI, have conducted a preliminary investigation and the results were forwarded to the Department of Justice in Washington and to the U.S. attorney's office," Special Agent Forrest Putman said. State Republican Party Chairman

Garrey Carruthers said party officials are "eagerly awaiting" the findings of the U.S. attorney's office. He said the FBI did not reveal the results of its preliminary investigation.

Carruthers mentioned the party's request following a meeting Friday of party officials and attorney Steve ReVeal.

"We will continue to discuss with them (the U.S. attorney's office) and provide them whatever information necessary for the investigation into civil rights violations," Carruthers said.

He said the party also plans to ask persons in Bernalillo County to report to ReVeal or to the district attorney suspected voting machine violations.

Carruthers said challenges to any election in Bernalillo County will not be made until the voter canvass is complete.

"We are waiting for the results of the canvass so we can see if we feel a challenge is available to us," Carruthers said.

Voting machine malfunctions at a number of polling places in Albuquerque's Northeast Heights prompted the allegations of irregularities.

Anatomy of a swindle: Los Alamosans bilked

By SUE TESTER
The New Mexican Staff

LOS ALAMOS—Only country bumpkins would jump at the chance to buy the Brooklyn Bridge, right?

And only senile old ladies would willingly hand over their money to a stranger selling shares in a faraway oil and gas well, right?

Wrong, says Hill resident Jim Trout. "What I did is like buying the Brooklyn Bridge."

Trout is one of 10 Los Alamosans who invested nearly \$30,000 in an Oklahoma oil and gas corporation five years ago—a corporation which turned out to be a one-man show. And that one man disappeared with the cash.

Trout freely admits he was taken in by a seemingly prosperous businessman, Russell Perry, who charmed the women, knew a lot about oil and gas production, and flashed pictures of himself and Jordan's King Hussein living it up on Hussein's yacht.

The way Trout tells it, Perry could probably give Robert Redford lessons in how to work "the sting." Besides Trout and other prominent Los Alamos residents, Perry allegedly sold more than \$1 million of questionable oil and gas securities to the elite of Orlando, Fla., including a prosperous orthopedic surgeon and

the former president of the Florida Bar Association.

But of all the people who invested money with Perry and never saw the promised returns, only Trout and fellow-investor Frank Guy spent five years and hundreds of dollars tracking Perry from continent to continent.

And it was Trout and Guy who finally tipped off the FBI as to Perry's New York address, where he was apprehended one year ago.

"The search for Perry became a strange sort of hobby for Frank and me," Trout said. "We decided to see how far two energetic private citizens could get, with or without help from law enforcement agencies, in tracking down someone who had been indicted on many counts of fraud but had disappeared."

Guy and Trout finally got their man—more or less—Friday afternoon, when Perry reimbursed them and six other Los Alamos residents in exchange for their promise not to prosecute.

But the settlement is the anticlimactic result of delays, difficulties and coincidences which would have led less determined men to call it quits long ago.

From the beginning, Perry's modus operandi, both in Los Alamos and Florida, was masterful, Trout said.

Perry first gained acceptance as a legitimate businessman among the town's prominent citizens. In Los Alamos, a relative of Perry's, who was also taken in by the oil and gas deal, inadvertently played into his hands by introducing him to likely investors while Perry was visiting on the Hill.

"We all met together one evening in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere," Trout recalled. "But we had already heard we might have a chance to invest in something which would bring us a nice supplementary income—greed was already at work."

"Perry played it cool. He talked of his recent travels in the Mideast, his work for King Hussein, his plans for developing oil and gas in Australia—everything tantalizing except his Oklahoma gas wells."

"Finally, when one of us couldn't stand it any longer, Perry was asked about the possibility of our buying some shares of a well. Perry then talked at length—and very impressively—about drilling costs, royalties, shipping costs, production capability—everything. We were hooked."

Trout said he acted "stupidly." But he did not rush blindly into the investment. He and others checked with Oklahoma officials to confirm all the information Perry had given them

about the well-location, depth, productivity.

"The only thing we didn't check—now the obvious thing—was whether Perry in fact owned the well," Trout said ruefully.

According to Trout, Perry was in fact a "borderline" owner of the well, a situation which would later lead officials to doubt whether fraud could ever be proved. Perry apparently at one time held an option with the actual owner of the field to buy half-interest, but he never performed the required actions to exercise his option and become an owner.

"And according to our figures, even if he had ever become a half owner, he sold more than 80 percent of the well here and in Florida," Trout said.

Perry returned to Orlando after clinching his Los Alamos deal. Hill investors expected royalties to start appearing in about six months.

Several months later, Trout first became suspicious when phone calls to Perry's Florida "corporation" office were suddenly handled by an answering service. Perry had disappeared.

Although other Los Alamos investors still had confidence and were willing to wait for the promised returns, Trout and Guy began a series of phone calls all over Florida, seeking information on Perry.

"Finally, we located a 'secret informer' who tried to keep track of Perry. The Orlando district attorney was looking for him too, and we soon had reason to believe he was in Australia, making trips back and forth to New York City," Trout said.

Trout and Guy immediately looked into the extradition procedures between Australia and the United States.

At the same time, they presented the information they had painstakingly gathered about Perry's Florida activities and indictments and their own investments to the district attorney's office in Santa Fe.

In March 1975 a Los Alamos grand jury indicted Perry on six counts of fraud, and a warrant was issued for his arrest.

At this point, Trout and Guy began to realize that, in their case at least, official channels move slowly, and sometimes not at all. For months nothing happened.

As months, then years passed, Perry's trail led from Australia to New York City to Reno, back to New York City, with an occasional jaunt to Austria—but Trout and Guy and the officials were always one step behind.

Then their informant learned of a new corporation—the "National Crude Oil Co."—Perry was starting in New York City, and even obtained its unlisted phone number.

At this point, desperate because their quarry might again flee to parts unknown, Guy and Trout contacted the office of U.S. Sen. Jack Schmitt, R-N.M.

"His aide, Wayne Ciddio, listened to our evidence, then arranged through the Santa Fe DA for the issuance of a federal 'unlawful flight to avoid prosecution' warrant—and within 36 hours Perry was picked up," Trout said.

Perry was extradited to Florida where, after pleading no contest to fraud charges there, he last week settled out of court for \$31,200.

Perry was supposed to be extradited to New Mexico immediately after settling the Florida charges, but because of poor communications in officialdom, Trout and Guy came within hours of losing him again.

But on Friday afternoon, repayment was made and all charges were dropped.

Why? "Because fraud is one of the hardest crimes to prove. You have to prove intent to deceive, not just a broken promise. And with Perry's quasi-legitimate connection with the actual owner of the well, the district attorney felt we might not be able to prove fraud," Trout said.

"I feel con artists are getting away with millions of dollars every year in swindles like this," Trout added.