

Welfare fraud expensive, but rare

By Marv Balousek
 County reporter

Last September, a Madison woman was charged with receiving overpayments of more than \$10,000 in Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and food stamps while she also collected worker's compensation.

In mid-1987, a mail drop was discovered at an apartment building on West Doty Street where four men who didn't live there collected welfare checks. The men, who also collected welfare in Minneapolis, Minn., were cut off but never caught.

While such stories have etched the notion of welfare cheating into the public consciousness, the director of Dane County's welfare fraud division says cheaters are less common and less glamorous than the stereo-

types. "There's a feeling in the community that many persons receiving public assistance are doing so fraudulently," said division director Alice Lee. "The majority of the people we serve are very honest people and let us know about changes in circumstances." She said the vast majority of fraud cases involve changes in household composition, such as an absent parent who returns home causing the family income to increase. Lee said total fraud cases referred to the division represent only a fraction of the county's total caseload. In January 1988, for example, the total county caseload was 5,823. Thirteen cases were referred that month to the fraud division and, of those, seven turned out to be actual fraud cases. The dollars can add up quickly, though,

despite the small number. The total overpayment was \$107,983 for those seven fraud cases referred in January 1988. Projected savings was \$9 million for all cases exposed by the fraud unit last year. That figure is calculated by assuming fraudulent recipients would have continued to receive public aid for another six months. Despite Madison's off-and-on reputation as a "welfare magnet," where people allegedly flock to take advantage of easy welfare benefits, the county apparently isn't an easy place for welfare cheaters. "If you're a real pro, you probably can get away with it," Lee said. "It will be easier in larger cities where possibly the staff isn't as well trained or they have overwhelmingly large caseloads." Welfare fraud has its own euphemisms.

The fraud division is known as the "Front-End Investigation Unit." Investigators are sometimes called "verification specialists" and exposing cheaters is known as "error reduction." Most referrals to the welfare fraud division come from caseworkers who suspect something is awry. Others come from neighbors of someone who they think may be violating welfare rules. The effort to combat welfare fraud began nationally about eight years ago, when the federal Agriculture Department made money available to expose illegal use of Food Stamps. Dane County's fraud division began in April 1987. The county is one of 47 in Wisconsin with a fraud division. The division receives state and federal

funding. Federal money pays for 75 percent of the work on AFDC and Food Stamp fraud while the state pays for 25 percent. Besides Lee, the division includes three investigators, Donna FitzGibbon, Patti Okey and Linda Szczepkowski. Dane County Sheriff's Deputy David Cochens and Assistant District Attorney Ann Sayles assist with arrests and prosecution of fraud cases. Although those caught abusing the system are expected to pay back the money and could face fines or jail terms, those found guilty of welfare fraud aren't automatically cut off from public aid if they're still eligible. An exception is the Food Stamp program, where people who use the benefits illegally may be declared ineligible for up to two years. "We're certainly not out to get poor people who have no resources," Lee said.

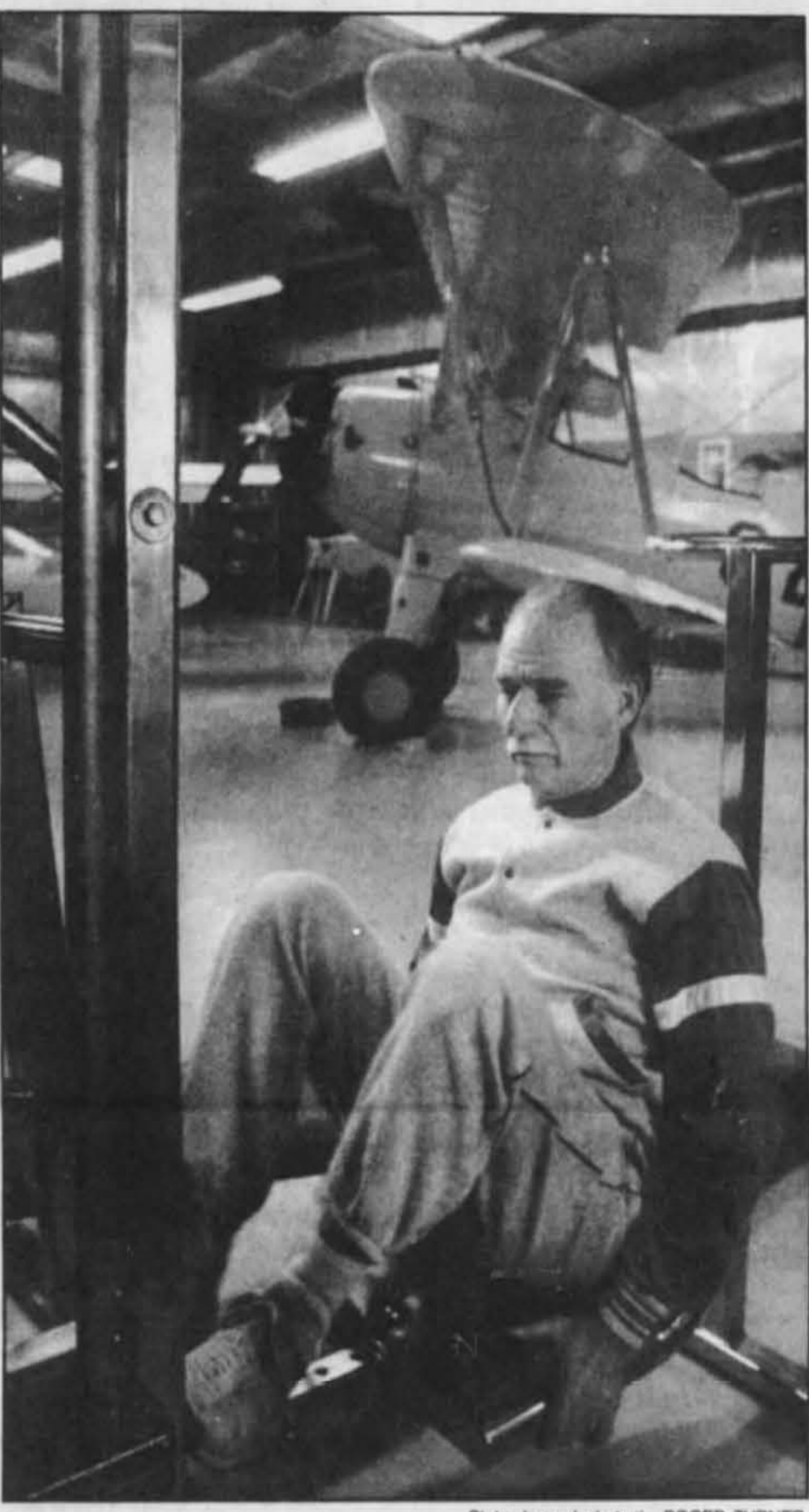
McManus back on job

Billboards to herald maverick lawyer's return

By Richard W. Jaeger
 Regional reporter

OREGON — After more than a year of agonizing recovery from an auto accident, noted Madison-area attorney Jack McManus is back on the job. And in his usual flamboyant fashion, McManus is making his re-entry in an unorthodox way. He has plans to plaster the county with billboards advertising his business — a first for lawyers in Wisconsin. Although lawyers are allowed to advertise in newspapers and on television, advertising has been frowned upon as "unprofessional" by many attorneys. Somehow there is the feeling that barristers and Budweiser don't mix. Leave it to Jack. He may be taking a little poke at that proposition. He is putting a picture of his dog on the billboard. While the dog is not "Spuds MacKenzie," it is the same breed as that party animal. Of course, Jack's beaming face, cowboy hat included, will be up there too. On the serious side, the road to recovery for the veteran trial lawyer has been a painful one that is not yet finished. He is still experiencing pain that he likens to "a toothache in my foot." And he walks with a slight limp. "I have another 18 months to make a full recovery before they declare it permanent damage," McManus said, puffing on a cigar as he sat in his log cabin office on his sprawling ranch near Oregon. McManus recalled the vivid details of Dec. 3, 1987, when his jeep truck was struck broadside and pushed into a utility pole, pinning him inside. "Thank God I am alive," he said. Along with multiple bruises and cuts to his hands and face, McManus suffered multiple fractures to his hip and upper leg. That was the real crippler. "They put a lag screw in there along with a 10-inch stainless steel plate," McManus said, slapping his hip with his hand. "That will be in there until I die," he added. After 12 days in the hospital following surgery, McManus spent another eight months in a hospital bed in his living room. He was unable to walk for nearly six months and had to undergo extensive physical therapy. He still has to do weekly exercises on gym and weight equipment set up in an airplane hangar near his office. To the energetic McManus, being bedridden was the most devastating part of the accident. He is used to trekking up mountains, dodging bullets in Tibet or roaring

about in one of his six airplanes over Arctic tundra or Belizian jungles. At age 60, he fashioned himself into a soldier of fortune. After his wife Dorothy died in 1984, McManus wrapped himself in a variety of off-beat, challenging adventures. He volunteered his expertise as a pilot to fly medical rescue missions for the Wings of Hope Inc. in Belize in Central America. He transported the injured from remote jungle villages in a single-engine plane for several months as a volunteer. In October 1987, less than two months before his auto accident, he crossed China in the company of professional adventurer and freedom fighter Jack Wheeler, who is better known as the "Indiana Jones of the wheel." During that expedition, McManus found himself in the middle of a Tibetan uprising in Lhasa as Chinese soldiers stormed the city under machine gun fire. "You don't argue with the Red Chinese army, I'll tell you that much — you just go," McManus said. Just days before his accident on Highway M, less than six miles from his home, McManus had confirmed plans for another venture with Wheeler. The trip, to the North Pole, was to have taken place last April. "Jack (Wheeler) and I should be crossing the South Pole right now," McManus said, referring to a second trip he had booked with the nationally known adventurer to the opposite end of the world this January. That thrill of adventure is not lost, McManus quickly assures. "As soon as I get my doctor's approval I will be back on the trail," he said, gleefully rubbing his leathery hands together. "I will be back in Central America with the Wings of Hope and Jack Wheeler and I will venture somewhere, sometime again." McManus has been flying the past couple of months, working his way up from his smallest plane to his biggest, a DeHavilland Beaver. In the meantime, he has plans for a summer trip to Alaska for fishing. "I used to fly that trip sometimes by the seat of my pants. Now I will just have to take my time and take a little longer at getting there." That is the attitude McManus has taken in his return to the courtroom. He has already tried some cases and his first jury trial is set for next fall. As for the pain in his foot and his limp, McManus boasts. "Heck, I'll get myself a gold-handled cane — you know, the kind used by gentlemen and soldiers of fortune."



Surrounded by airplanes and weight machines, Jack McManus works on strengthening his injured leg.

Jury clears doctor in birth negligence case

By Monette M. Goodrich
 Wisconsin State Journal

Jurors in a Dane County circuit court cleared a former Meriter-Methodist emergency room doctor of negligence charges in connection with an infant who suffered brain damage at birth in 1982. A Madison couple claimed that Dr. Thomas Anderson, an orthopedic resident who worked in the emergency room in 1982, neglected their child after an abnormal birth, said Brad Liddle, the attorney who represented Anderson. After three weeks of emotional testimony and more than seven hours of deliberation, the jury in Circuit Judge Michael Nowakowski's court found that Anderson was not responsible for the child's health problems. The boy, now seven, weighs 35 pounds and has cerebral palsy. The blind child is expected to live about 13 more years, Liddle said. The family planned to sue Anderson for \$3 million although they estimated as much as \$7 million would be needed to cover health care costs. According to Liddle, the mother experienced an unusual birthing process known as fast labor. Since her regular obstetrician was unavailable, Anderson was called from the emergency room to assist. The infant had difficulty breathing shortly after birth and Anderson instructed nurses to use an oxygen mask. He was then called back to the emergency room to revive an accident victim. However, Liddle said he proved that the baby's brain damage occurred between four and six hours before birth. The umbilical cord was wrapped around the baby's neck, cutting off the flow of oxygen to the brain, he said. Other complications resulted after neurological functions ceased.



Associated Press

Cold feet?
 Cheryl Curry and Darrell Klompaker were married while standing atop a wedding cake made of snow. The event on Saturday was one of the features of Icebreaker, Milwaukee's new winter festival.

Dems turn up volume on education

Governor's budget stance roundly criticized

By Doug Mell
 State government reporter

Gov. Tommy Thompson's 1989-91 budget isn't even out yet — it will be delivered to the Legislature Tuesday — but Democrats are already criticizing the governor for ignoring the real needs of education. "Thompson wants to compete with the Japanese (in education) but on the cheap and it's not going to work," said Assembly Speaker Thomas Loftus, D-Sun Prairie. "This stuff (Thompson's proposals) is here because it doesn't cost any money," Loftus said.

Other Democratic legislators involved in education issues agreed that Thompson so far hasn't proposed any programs to tackle the major needs of local education: reducing class size, beefing up remedial-education efforts and helping districts build better schools. But Thomas Fonfara, the governor's education adviser, said Democrats should wait until the budget is out before they start clamoring for more money. "When they (Democrats) see the budget and put it all together, it's going to be a good budget" for education, Fonfara said. "We think there are things that the governor will be announcing which will put the final pieces together." But Democrats clearly want to see more educational initiatives and money to pay for them from Thompson. Thompson's proposal to ease restrictions on students transferring to districts outside where they live has received the most attention. Loftus has labeled the idea "ideological claptrap," and he and other leaders say it is unlikely to gain legislative support. "I think we could get more (bene-

fit) out of lower class sizes," said Rep. Calvin Potter, D-Sheboygan, chairman of the Assembly's Education Committee. Potter, a former teacher, also said Thompson would do well to address such issues as full-day kindergarten, remedial education and dangerous schools. "Kids have to learn to read," Potter said, and many need remedial work to do that. "Window dressing is exactly the way to describe it (Thompson's plan)," said Sen. Charles Chvala, D-Madison, a member of the Joint Fi-

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Memory loss can be unforgettable problem

By William R. Wineke
 Medical reporter

One of the first clients of the Memory Disorders Clinic, a new program sponsored by St. Mary's Hospital and the Dean Medical Center, refused to pay her bill. She had no recollection of ever visiting the clinic and wasn't about to pay for services she didn't remember receiving. Recounting the story seems funny, but the tragedy of memory loss to intelligent, active people isn't, noted Barbara Quirk, a geriatric nurse practitioner who, with Dr. Mark Sager, staffs the clinic. "Fortunately, we're able to help a surprising number of people," Quirk said. "There are diseases that destroy memory — Alzheimer's Disease, obviously, is one, but there are things we can do to help some people and there is help we can offer the families of persons who do suffer from memory loss." Quirk said changes in memory are common to

most people as they age — but those changes may not be debilitating. "We had one patient who was in his 50s and was concerned that his memory was going. Actually, there didn't appear to be anything wrong with him, which he found to be a relief. "What happens as we age isn't that our memory disappears, but we sometimes slow down. I tell people that 'you aren't going to lose your memory — but it might take you longer to retrieve parts of it.' " The Memory Disorders Clinic is open to persons 45 years of age and older. Services include physical and neuropsychological examinations, diagnostic services and home assessments. "What we try to do first is to sort out what the problems are and what we can do to reverse them," Quirk said. One common cause of memory loss among the elderly is alcohol and drug abuse. As people age, they lose their ability to metabolize alcohol, Quirk said, adding that many

older people take prescription or even over-the-counter drugs that may, especially when taken in combinations, harm their thinking processes. "Alcohol does destroy brain cells, that's not just a joke," Quirk said. "We had one patient who was about 80 years old and who was thought to be totally demented. We got her into a treatment program and, within three months, her memory had returned." Not all stories are so successful, of course, and Quirk said one problem is that the persons who care for invalids, particularly persons with Alzheimer's Disease, sometimes develop alcohol dependency problems of their own. "When people start to drink is when they become full-time care-givers," she said. "That's not true of everyone, of course, but I've seen people who got into trouble because the only way they could calm a spouse down was to give him a drink — and, then, the caregiver had one, too." The clinic — Quirk said it is the only one of its kind in Southern Wisconsin — is housed at the Dean Medical Center, 1313 Fish Hatchery Road.