

### Chaplain asks that Americans forgive McVeigh

OAK BLUFFS, Mass. (AP) — With President Clinton paying rapt attention in the audience, a prison chaplain asked Sunday that Americans perform a difficult act of faith: Forgive Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.

"Considering what he did, that may be a formidable task. But it is the one that we as Christians are asked to do," the Rev. John Miller said in a sermon during a nondenominational service at an open-air tabernacle.

The Protestant chaplain for the Rhode Island Department of Corrections said McVeigh's case prompted him to reassess his own stance against the death penalty and made him realize that rejecting capital punishment is hard because it "requires that we forgive the murderer."

"When the state supports execution, it invites an ongoing cycle of violence," Miller said. "I invite you to look at a picture of Timothy McVeigh and forgive him. I have."

Clinton, seated in front with first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, did not react to Miller's comments. He also didn't answer reporters' questions about it as he and the first lady strolled to the nearby Sweet Life Cafe for brunch with Miller and his wife. There was no word what the couples discussed during the meal.

McVeigh was convicted and sentenced to die for setting a truck bomb that blew up the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in April 1995. The explosion killed 168 people, including 19 children at a day care center.

Before McVeigh's arrest, Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno vowed to seek the death penalty for those responsible for the bombing. Clinton has not commented specifically about McVeigh's sentence.

# Addict gambles away \$40,000 Social Security benefit check

JANESVILLE, Wis. (AP) — Joe Murphy fought red tape for two years to get more than \$40,000 in federal disability benefits owed him for being mildly mentally retarded. He needed only a few weeks to blow it all gambling.

"I was going to the moon," he recalls. "Gambling, gambling, gambling, all the way from video poker to the blackjack table."

The Social Security Administration hadn't intended to give the money directly to Murphy, a manic depressive with an IQ of about 70 who admits to a gambling problem.

It was supposed to go to a "representative payee," a relative, friend or other party who helps a beneficiary manage funds.

One in 10 people getting Social Security have payees, mostly minor children. One in four people on Supplementary Social Security, such as the disabled or those 65 or older, have payees. The two groups total more than 6 million people.

Now Murphy's case has prompted regional officials to re-evaluate their use of the payee system.

Murphy learned after his father died in 1992 that he was entitled to disabled adult child benefits dating back to 1984, when he was 18. By the time Social Security agreed to award the benefits, he was due \$40,945.

It was an enormous amount of money for a man who'd never held a job for more than a few weeks, who'd earned just \$6,210 from 1984 to 1992

working factory or kitchen jobs. The manic depression took its toll, and he says he was suicidal for years. At the same time, he was raising three children with his live-in girlfriend.

Social Security recommended the benefits go to a payee, according to a July 22, 1996, memo filed at the agency's Chicago regional center. The memo cited a report from Murphy's therapist, passed along by his attorney, saying Murphy acknowledged a gambling problem and needed help with financial matters.

Two days later, Social Security district manager John Burr sent Murphy a letter telling him to "bring someone with you who can serve as your payee for benefits, as the evidence in file strongly suggests that you need help managing your benefits."

But Murphy showed up at the Janesville office alone, demanding his money.

"I said, 'Just gimme the money, gimme the money, gimme the money,'" Murphy said.

So the local office agreed to send him the money directly.

Janesville officials refused to comment on the meeting, but John Trollinger, press officer at SSA's Baltimore headquarters, said he was informed Murphy was "incensed" at the Janesville office.

"He was outraged that we would even consider paying benefits to anyone other than him. He said he could handle his own income. He said he had been receiving benefits for his children for

"I said, 'Just gimme the money, gimme the money, gimme the money,'"

**JOE MURPHY**  
Social Security Recipient

many years and had no problem," Trollinger said.

Murphy's demeanor can obscure his limitations. With intense aqua eyes, neatly combed brown hair, clean, pressed clothing and a persuasive vocabulary, psychiatric reports say he "presents well" but his ability to comprehend is well below average.

Soon the money was flowing through Murphy's hands and into the Ho-Chunk Nation's casino at Baraboo.

"I was just like a roller coaster without brakes. I would do anything I could just to feel good for an hour," Murphy said.

He said he would tell his girlfriend he was going to the store, then vanish for days on a gambling spree. She finally kicked him out, and they remain apart.

"He blew it. A week or two later he was broke," said Murphy's sister, Janet Gelacio of Janesville, who has since been named Murphy's payee.

"Social Security let him have it and they shouldn't have. It was like nothing for him to get it. He asked for it."

Murphy found himself penniless and living month-to-month in a board-

ing house. He sold all his furniture and couldn't fix his broken-down car. He says he had intended all that money to go toward buying a house and setting up savings accounts for his children, ages 6, 5 and 2.

"What they did was give me a loaded gun and said 'shoot (yourself),'"

Murphy said. After his experience, the Chicago office, which oversees Janesville, reviewed its interviewing procedures, focusing on how to determine whether someone with mental disabilities is capable of handling his or her own benefits.

"It's very unusual for Social Security to pay benefits to someone when it's clear they have a problem with money," Trollinger said. "It clearly would not be appropriate for the agency to pay large retroactive benefits to someone where that history was known."

"At the time the local office in Janesville talked to him, there was no record of his being incapable from a medical source. He presented a convincing argument that he was quite capable of managing his own affairs," Trollinger said.

## Coliseum climate control faces summer dilemmas

(AP) — Still fuming over a decision to lease the State Fair Coliseum to the city's new hockey team, horse owners at the Nebraska State Fair are literally hot under the collar because of an air-conditioning problem caused by the need to make ice for hockey.

The coliseum's climate control crunch came to a boil over the weekend as temperatures climbed into the mid-90s.

As many as 2,000 horses will be shown inside the building over the 11 days of the fair, and strained relations between some of the horse owners and the state fair board are heating up.

The same air-conditioning system that pumps cool air through overhead ducts also activates ground-level coils that freeze water into ice during the hockey season, said John Skold, state fair director.

One part of the system cannot operate independently of the other, he said.

"It's true that there's no air conditioning in the arena part because of the system that makes the ice in the floor cools the arena," Skold said. "Obviously, we don't want a frozen-dirt surface for the horses to run on."

Complicating matters is that the 1996 remodeling of the coliseum

for hockey use left the building without the windows that used to provide some ventilation.

The problem accents a decision last year by the fair board to lease the coliseum — site of horse shows for many years — to the Lincoln Stars semi-professional hockey team. The lease was not a popular one among those who care more about Arabians and Appaloosas than hockey pucks.

"The horse people have been jerked around by John (Skold) and the state fair board, and I would have to say that this is nothing more than icing on the cake for us," said Kipp Scott, a Lincoln farrier and

horse lover, who was upset Saturday over the air-conditioning problem.

Scott said it would be hard to hold an audience if the seating area gets hot this week. The climate-control problems should have been worked out before the state fair, he said.

"This is the first year and it's a major change," Skold said. "Tell them to give the facility a fair chance."

Using the same building as both a hockey arena and a horse arena is a compromise, Skold said.

"It's not perfect for hockey. It's not perfect for horses, but we make it work," he said.



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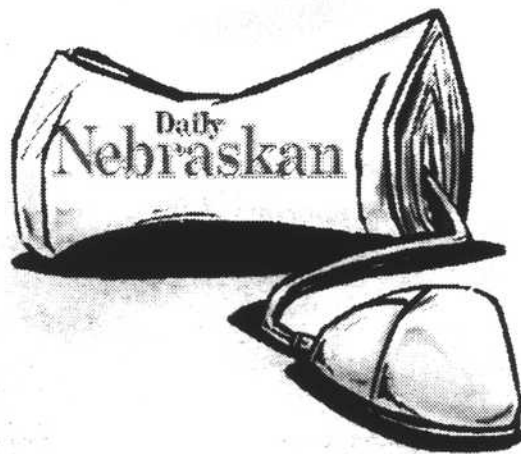
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