

Patterson, who put her in touch with Paralee Broughton, a 9th and 10th grade teacher at the high school. Ms. Broughton told Susan that since "To Kill a Mockingbird" would serve as the central link between the two schools, she should get in touch with Mrs. Sarah Dyess, whose eighth-grade students were reading the book.

With the help of Ms. Broughton, Mrs. Dyess, and other teachers, educators, and administrators in Monroeville, Ms. Ross established a truly unique and stimulating cultural exchange program which she hoped would teach respect for each other's cultural differences and individuality and give students an understanding of basic universal human rights that are vital to democratic society. The project came to be known as Understanding and Appreciating Cultural Diversity, and was to help create cultural awareness and understanding through letters, tapes, pictures, and interviews. As part of the program, Ms. Ross' students would create all these materials and exchange them with students from the other school. The program is special because it was the first time that a project of this nature and scope had been done between any schools from the North and South.

Ms. Ross had high hopes for her program, the key to which was overcoming stereotypes. It was not to be simply a pen-pal correspondence exercise. Instead, each class was to communicate with the other class as a group, each serving as a microcosm of its community. To get the exchange underway, the students at Yorktown compiled a written and visual profile of their community, including its history and information gathered through interviews with local officials. They provided an analysis of the town's transportation, entertainment, and shopping facilities.

The Alabama students, under the guidance of their teacher Mrs. Dyess, compiled a videotape of their community which they sent to their friends in New York. Monroeville sent Yorktown an autographed copy of "To Kill a Mockingbird," while Yorktown in turn sent Monroeville books set in the Hudson Valley, including Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

Their teacher watched as the students' misconceptions began to crumble. She saw lackadaisical youngsters grow interested in reading when they began believing that the South was a real and multidimensional place. They learned that there are many different Souths, just as there are Norths, and both groups learned that it is dangerous to generalize about any region.

While learning of each others' differences, the exchange also made obvious the similarities between Yorktown Heights and Monroeville. Both are a mix of suburban and small town. Both have many working farms in the community. The two schools are about the same size, 900 or so students. In both

places, the school is a vital link in the community and there are strong family values present.

The program has had its lighthearted movements along the way. Yorktown students were surprised to discover upon receiving a copy of Monroe County's yearbook that the students did not wear overalls. On the other side of the connection, one Yorktown student, Guy Gentile, was surprised to be asked by one of his Monroeville counterparts "If I walk out the street—in Yorktown—will I be shot?"

Soon, other schools learned of Ms. Ross' innovative program and expressed an interest in becoming involved. Her students eventually began an exchange with a school in Louisiana to gain a better understanding and awareness of the influence of French culture on the United States. On November 14 of this year, Ms. Ross called to let me know that two of her current students were visiting Monroeville as part of the Bridging the Miles program, as it is now called.

Overall, the program has served as a bridge for students who would otherwise depend on often inaccurate and shallow media stereotypes. Ms. Ross said that a typical Yorktown student's opinions of Southerners were formed by movies such as "My Cousin Vinny" and television shows like "The Beverly Hillbillies." The students were surprised to learn of the extent to which the racial climate in the South has changed since the 1930's, when "To Kill a Mockingbird" was set. They had not expected students who were so open about race and who participated in school activities together regardless of race.

In Monroeville, the students realized we have a tendency to cluster everyone in one stereotypical unit and mark them as being nondescript people. The sharing of poetry and letters has given the students a whole new perspective on the relationship between North and South.

The program begun by Ms. Ross has gained a great amount of attention all over the country, having been spotlighted by The New York Times, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and the CBS television network. So far, most of its funding has come directly from Ms. Ross; this is how strongly she believes in what she is doing. Hopefully, the program will continue to expand and promote further understanding among the many diverse areas of the United States.

Just as programs such as the one between Yorktown and Monroeville demonstrate that it is wrong to generalize and stereotype about regions of the country, the energy, drive, and example of Susan Ross prove that it is also harmful to generalize about the health of our public schools and the commitment of public school teachers. I congratulate her for her broad-mindedness and innovativeness in educating young people.

It is my hope that others interested in ways of improving American edu-

cation will see the great benefits that can be realized through projects such as this. One thing that makes us unique as Americans is our diverse cultural heritages that bind us together even as we maintain our regionally distinct traditions and customs. We tend to think of exchange programs only in terms of those between citizens of different nations, and these are indeed important and valuable tools for learning about our world. But as Ms. Ross and students of Yorktown High School and their counterparts at Monroe County High School have demonstrated, we have so much to draw from different regions within the United States itself that it is not necessary to go out of our own country to experience a cultural exchange. I commend her and wish her every continued success for her programs.

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Mr. Kalbaugh, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

As in executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting a withdrawal and sundry nominations which were referred to the appropriate committees.

(The nominations received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE

ENROLLED BILLS SIGNED

At 12:10 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Ms. Goetz, one of its reading clerks, announced that the Speaker has signed the following enrolled bills:

H.R. 395. An act to designate the United States courthouse and Federal building to be constructed at the southeastern corner of Liberty and South Virginia Streets in Reno, Nevada, as the "Bruce R. Thompson United States Courthouse and Federal Building."

S. 369. An act to designate the Federal Courthouse in Decatur, Alabama, as the "Seybourn H. Lynne Federal Courthouse," and for other purposes.

S. 965. An act to designate the United States Courthouse for the Eastern District of Virginia in Alexandria, Virginia, as the "Albert V. Bryan United States Courthouse."

S. 1465. An act to extend au pair programs.

The enrolled bills were signed subsequently by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following measure was read the second time and placed on the calendar:

H.J. Res. 132. Joint resolution affirming that budget negotiations shall be based on the most recent technical and economic assumptions of the Congressional Budget Office and shall achieve a balanced budget by fiscal year 2002 based on those assumptions.