

THE NEWS FROM FT. BURLINGAME

Charlie Hinton edition

Well, it has been a quiet week in Ft. Burlingame, the home office.

Autumn has arrived. We know this because the leaves in the Campaign 96 Handbooks are changing colors. Some of the leaves have a reddish tinge from blood, sweat and tears. Others are brown from coffee spills. A few leaves are yellow ... stained from a considerable height.

Inside the moat, a lot of attention is being focused on the imminent renovation of and addition to the fort. Architects were called in to hear how CTA sees itself doing business over the next few years — presumably to get ideas for design. After listening to managers, officers, and staff, the architects are as befogged as before. To date they have but four ideas:

1. Build the right wing at least as high as the left.
2. Connect the left wing to the right wing with a wailing wall.
3. Increase the number of female bathrooms.
4. Move the paper shredder further from the staff activity report files.

There is a good deal of dialog about technology for the new fort. The recent survey by the Information Technology Department produced the following response which was forwarded to the architects:

Give me a WAN where lines intersect,
where microchips REACH OUT and connect,
where the P drive's unsevered 'til Email's delivered
and viruses don't ever infect.

The Executive Director is a bit impatient with the fort renovation. She put in a call Charlie Hinton the other day. She disguised her voice so that he wouldn't hang up. He refers to her as Columbo Doggett because she's always saying, "Just one more thing...."

She suggested into the phone, "Charlie, you are known to be a master carpenter, plumber, electrician, welder, and mason. Might you be interested in a construction project as a 20% contract.?"

But Charlie demurred. He's not a deconstructionist by any means, but he was reminded of his epithet against a superintendent from the halls of Jurupa many years ago.

He's not for students, teachers, or their necks.
"Build!" is his motto even if the budget wrecks.
Of walls, we've a plenty —
But of books, hardly any,
Cause the super has an edifice complex.

And besides, Charlie already has a 100% project underway. He is building a home away from home, at home. It's a house; it's a train; it's SUPERVAN, the sequel.

Charlie's got his welder at full blaze;
His latest project's in its final phase.
One look-see reveals
A Westin on wheels;
Transport for his emeritus days.

Building is a serious matter with Charlie. He is fanatic about having proper tools for the task at hand. Gordon Bittle was his soul mate in that regard. Their builder conversations were inspirational, even provocative.

When Gordon and Charlie debated
Which tool to which job should be mated,
Their fervor made wonder,
And the double entendre
Caused onlookers to be stimulated.

Charlie recently took his mobile mansion for a first drive. He had been working on the chassis all day. His jeans and his shirt were stained. He was sweaty. He looked a little like he had just come off a shift at the docks. But he had agreed to pick up Mable who was at choir practice. It was time to go and the pickup truck was blocked in. So, Charlie climbed into the cockpit, fired up his portable penthouse, and took to the street.

Now, unknown to Charlie, a police cruiser was parked at the donut shop he would pass on his way to the church. The cruiser's radio was barking out an all-points bulletin to be on the lookout for a man who had just robbed the Wal Mart and had escaped on foot. It was assumed that the criminal would steal the first set of easy wheels to facilitate his getaway.

The officer in the cruiser looked up from his coffee just in time to see this affluent Autocar cruising along being driven by an apparent ne'er-do-well. He hitched up his seat belt and set out in hot pursuit.

Charlie was just settling into enjoying the drive. Ahh, she was running fine. (Charlie's sexism is pretty much limited to inanimate objects.) He had the radio tuned to a country and western station which was playing one of his golden oldie favorites — *I get tears in my ears from lyin' on my back cryin' over you.*

"Life is good," he thought to himself as he gave her a bit more throttle. So, he was taken aback when he heard the siren and saw the red light in the side mirror. He glanced quickly at the dash, but he hadn't yet hooked up the speedometer, and he was in a school zone. Feeling contrite, Charlie eased the bus to the curb and slid open the side window. He tried to remember where he had put the registration.

The officer walked up warily alongside the bus, looking up at Charlie. Charlie looked down on the officer from the cockpit several feet above the roadway.

"Where are you headed?"

"Picking up my wife from choir practice,"

"In a bus?"

"It's not a bus; it's a restorational vehicle."

"Where have you been?"

"Trying to get this baby to run."

"I'm gonna need to see your license and registration."

"I think they're back in the den, why don't you come inside?"

It was a violation of PD Regulation 2483.5, section 8, but the officer was curious. He had never seen anything quite like this rolling estate. So, he unsnapped the guard on his .45 holster, walked around the front, and climbed aboard. He followed Charlie back into the den. While Charlie rifled through his desk, the officer spied a collection of shotguns on the wall with what appeared to be sharpshooter medals. He wished he had called for back-up.

Charlie noticed his unease. "I do a little trap shooting once in a while."

If the officer had been more observant, he would have recognized the competition shotguns by their slightly upward curved barrels.

At clay pigeons, Charlie does shoot.
His skill earns him plenteous loot.
 Since the barrel is bent,
 When a cartridge is spent,
He's not shot himself in the boot.

If the officer had known that Charlie was a karate teacher, he might have been even more upset.

If a bully talks out of school,
Or plays you for patsy or fool,
 Breathe in and "Aiieeee!"
 Chop sharp to the knee,
And walk away calm, dry and cool.

(Karate probably ought to be a mandatory qualification for field staff.)

"Where do you work?"

"I just re-retired."

"What did you do?"

"Union organizer."

"Which union?"

"Teachers."

The officer relaxed a little. "My Mother was a teacher. Taught biology. I wanted to be a teacher myself once – P.E."

"What changed your mind?"

"Injured a knee and couldn't compete in the field, so I dropped out of college."

Straightaway, the officer was introduced to his first "Hintonism."

Reality does limit one's range
But each bar is another's exchange
 It is what it is
 And it ain't any 'isier.'
So, lets focus on what you can change.

“Well, I couldn’t finish college without a scholarship and after this election, I don’t expect there’ll be any for my kind.”

Now Charlie never intellectualized about affirmative action; he just lived it, and he encouraged others to do likewise.

If you’re handed, as fate’s little trick
The odiferous end of the stick,
Cover your nose,
See to your pose,
And position it back smart and quick.

“Do you really think I could ... become a teacher?”

Now when it comes to thinking, Charlie is a pioneer. Early in his career with CTA, he challenged willing colleagues to join him at breakfast meetings to forge a proactive future for the company. They called themselves the *Can Openers* because silos were still confined to farms.

As a teacher, he learned as he taught;
A proponent of lateral thought — He was
outside the box
Ere most picked at locks
His ideas respectfully sought.

Over the next little while, the officer (who didn't care that much about Wal Mart anyway) forgot about larceny. Charlie listened, encouraged, questioned, advised, and, in areas where he knew others excelled, made referrals. He learned the names of the officer's wife, their kids, and their dog.

The officer, his self-esteem fortified, began an action plan. He enrolled in Student NEA. He has a CTA scholarship application. He focused on his objective with renewed resolve. And he got an invitation to join Charlie on his next prospecting trip to the desert.

Now some may charge that the news is fiction. But many of us here at some time found ourselves in a situation where we expected and feared the worst. And because Charlie Hinton cared, challenged, and encouraged us, we not only persevered — we prospered. We are better people for that. CTA is a stronger union for that.

Well, Charlie was a little late getting to the church; but Mable was a little late getting out of practice because the choir had to learn a new hymn. *Come Find the Quiet Center* has replaced *The Old Rugged Cross* after a denominational focus group deemed the later to be ageist. The next thing you know, the hymnals will have a new logo. .

And Charlie himself? When last seen, he was under the bus again — surveying the chassis to find a place for a wine cellar.

And that's the news from Ft. Burlingame where all the campaigns are targeted, all the endorsements are balanced, and all the priorities are number one.

This edition of the news had special help from reporters June Stanford Clark, Mike Ford, and Cloyd Masengill.