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COMMENTS: Green Oaks Fundamental School

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Green Oaks Fundamental School
7145 Filbert Avenue
Orangevale 988-5148

Part of San Juan Unified School District. K through 6th grade. Same curriculum as other schools in district. Requires parents to sign an agreement to go along with the school's rules and regulations. Homework every night, signed off by parents. There is a discipline code resulting in more controlled classrooms. Parents are urged to participate in the classroom, at school functions, and in maintaining the school.

There is a waiting list, and students are chosen through a lottery system. This school began operating about 13 years ago. There are two other grade schools such as this in the San Juan Unified District, one junior high, and two high schools.

Family Support Programs
5000 Auburn Boulevard
Citrus Heights 339-0242

This organization has been in operation for 13 years, and prior to that time was a part of the County of Sacramento. It is privately funded and provides its services free of charge to its clients and is manned by volunteers. Clients must want to participate and are sometimes referred by the Child Protective Services.

Two programs are offered:

Parent Support Program--for parents who show a tendency towards child abuse. Help is offered on a one-on-one basis.

Parent-Child Enrichment Program--six weeks class offering parenting styles and discipline alternatives for clients who have parenting problems; designed to prevent the abuse before it happens.

20 volunteers now w/ 14 in training.

SLAVERY: A SPECIAL REPORT
How an Ancient Evil Survives

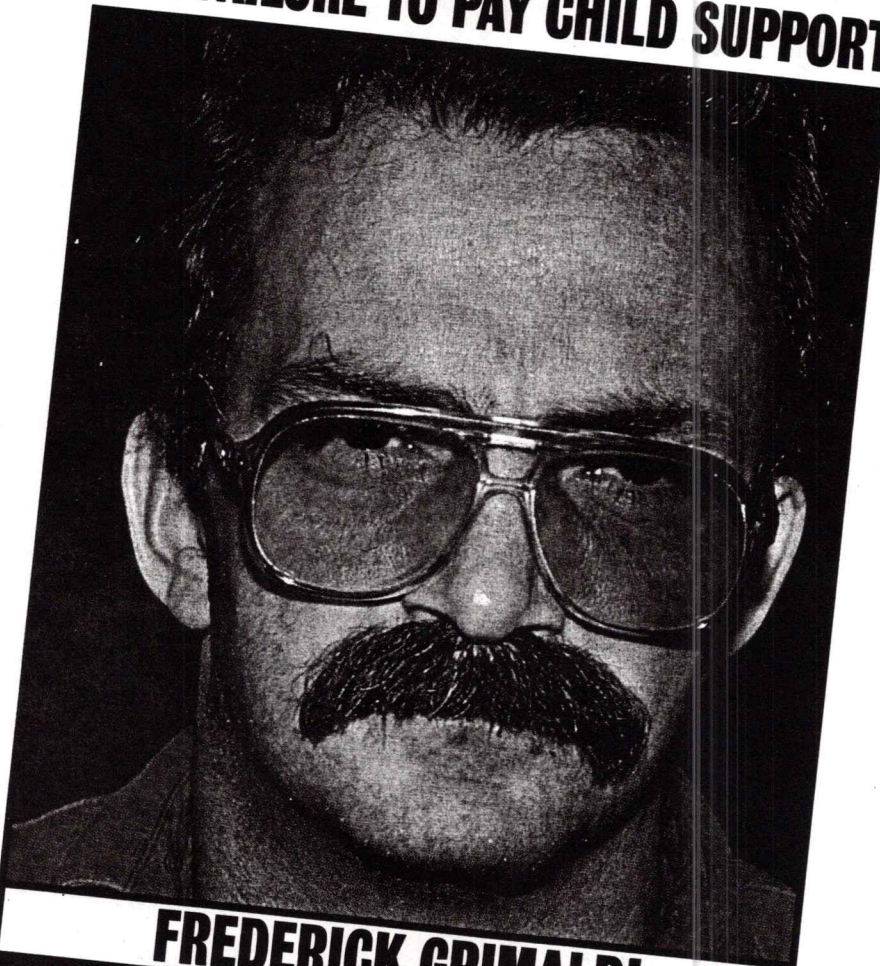
Newsweek

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
PRESIDENT LIAISON
Room 500-0500
Washington, DC 20000

May 4, 1992 : \$2.95

DEADBEAT DADS

WANTED
FOR FAILURE TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT



FREDERICK GRIMALDI
OWES: \$22,144



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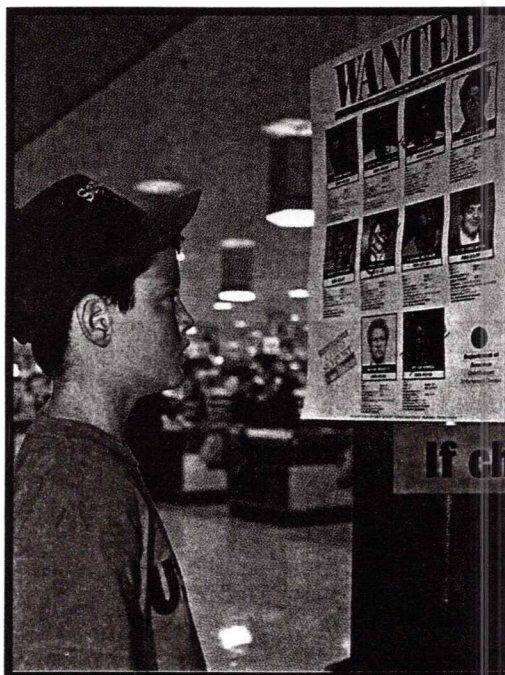
Deadbeat Dads

BY STEVEN WALDMAN

John Lock goes to court in Chicago next week to explain why he owes back child support, but his ex-wife Esther isn't expecting much. They have, after all, been through more than 100 court hearings about child support and their divorce over the past 19 years. And, according to the state of Illinois, he still owes more than \$160,000 for his four children. She's feeling needy now because she lost her job as a social worker 17 months ago, but she remembers more desperate times, like February 1977. "Our electricity was being turned off," she recalls. "We were lighting the house with candles. We were on what we called the 'white diet'—a lot of rice and cereal. No medical coverage, no dental." Her ex-husband, then a dentist, was living in the affluent suburb of Highland Park with his new family. "I knew he didn't want the kids so I figured I'd use it as a scare tactic," says Esther. She gave their two teenage sons overnight packs and dropped them off in front of their father's house in subzero weather. He called the police. "He told the Highland Park police that there were two boys outside trespassing," she says. "I'm not proud of it, but I was desperate."

John Lock admits he called the police but says he had to because one of his sons was on the verge of "kicking the door down." He concedes he didn't pay the \$1,100 monthly child support for nine years, and admits he fled to Costa Rica for three years because he was "physically, emotionally, financially devastated." But he says he had paid regularly prior to 1977, owes "significantly less" than the state claims and thinks that his ex-wife and the state of Illinois are obsessed with trying to put him in jail. He no longer practices dentistry and works part time delivering flowers in Ida, Mich. "The kids were my world," he wrote in a recent letter to *Newsweek*. "I did my best to give them a nice life." In an interview, he added, "This has gone on to a point where there's no hope." His oldest son, Byron, now 32, agrees. He says he still can't comprehend his father's behavior. "We were his *children*," he says. "Why would he want to hurt us? That's what was so confusing about the whole deal—why would a father turn his back on a child?"

In battles like these, nobody ever comes out a winner. Fierce struggles over child support pit parent against parent and inevitably spray the children with emotional shrapnel. Increasingly, the private family traumas are spilling into public view. Posters of most-wanted deadbeat dads began peppering subways and bulletin boards in Massachusetts this month, and police quickly arrested five of the fathers. They also hauled in Frederick Grimaldi, who



IRA WYMAN FOR NEWSWEEK

Checking out delinquent dads in Saugus, Mass. (above), Rose

Brown and son Tony in Louisville, Ky. (right), and a Baltimore city sheriff arrests a man for nonpayment of support

owes \$22,144 and was working in Florida as, of all things, a deputy sheriff, according to Massachusetts officials. Grimaldi has pleaded not guilty to charges of criminal nonpayment, and his lawyer says he owes just \$19,000, some of which accumulated while Grimaldi was unemployed. Next month an association of state child-support enforcement agencies will release its second annual national Wanted list, which will include a Louisiana attorney who owes \$123,000 and a Tennessee man who

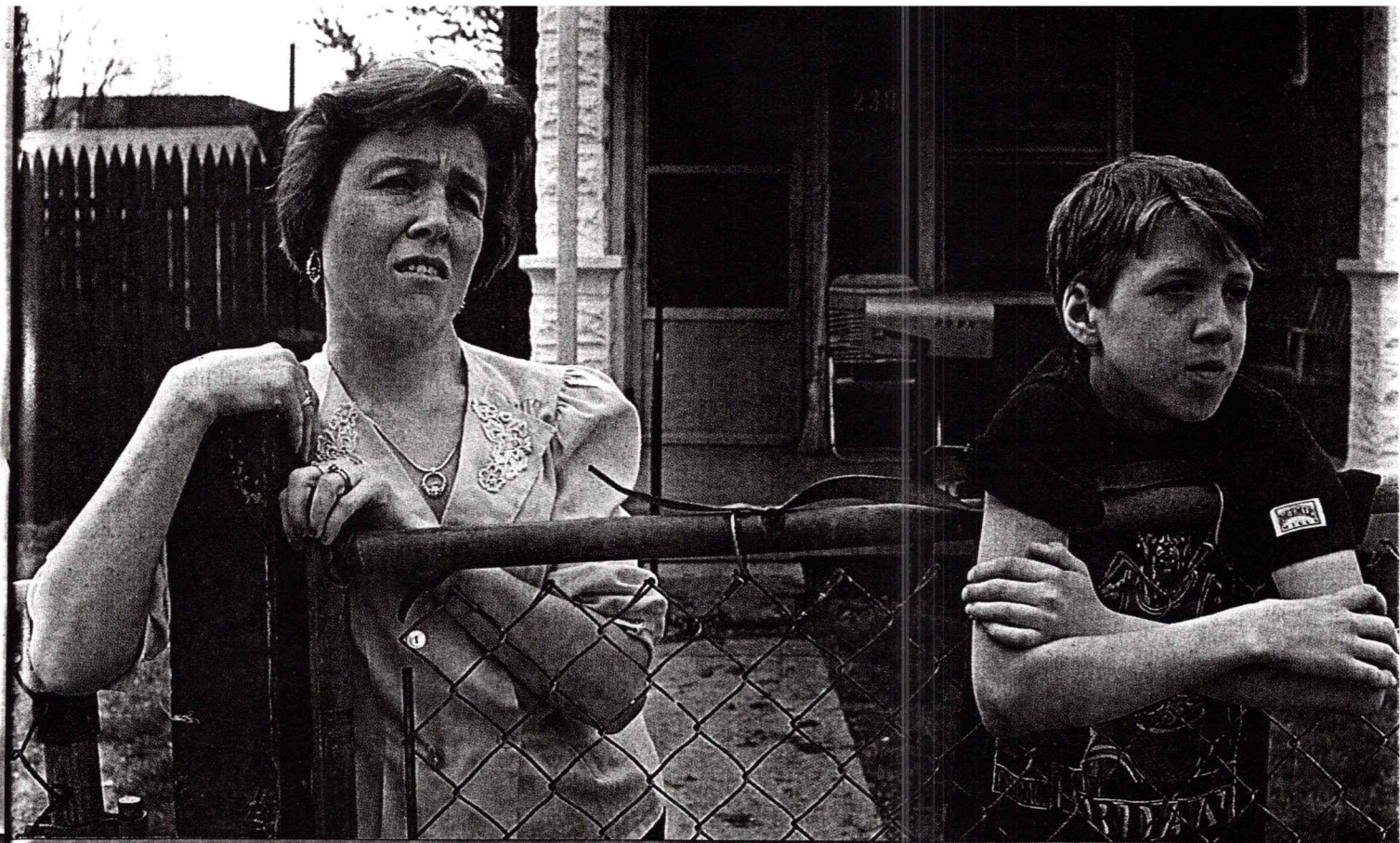
If child support is the key to

owes his quadriplegic daughter \$21,500. These small steps reflect a growing awareness on the part of public officials of just how potent an issue this has become. Consultants for former Louisiana governor Buddy Roemer were surprised to discover that in focus groups during the 1991 campaign, middle-class voters spontaneously mentioned child support as one of their most important concerns. Bill Clinton, in campaign speeches, regularly urges tougher enforcement.

It's easy to understand why: of the 5 million women who are supposed to receive child support, only half reported receiving full payment, according to a 1990 U.S. Census Bureau study. One quarter of the women got partial payment, and one quarter got nothing. An additional 2.7 million women said they wanted support but were never able to obtain an award. Deadbeatedness cuts across income groups: college graduates are about as likely to have a negligent ex-spouse or ex-boyfriend as high-school grads. It even spans gender lines. Fifteen percent of custodial parents are now men, and mothers in those cases have an equally dismal record of supporting their children. The consequences of nonpayment are staggering. On average, the family income of the mother retaining custody drops 23 percent after divorce or separation—a disparity that could be wiped out for many families if full child-support payments were made. Families headed by a mother alone are six times as likely to be poor as those with two parents.

These dreary statistics have recently led social-policy thinkers of many ideological stripes to the same conclusion: child support is key both to fighting poverty and to sustaining middle-class fam-

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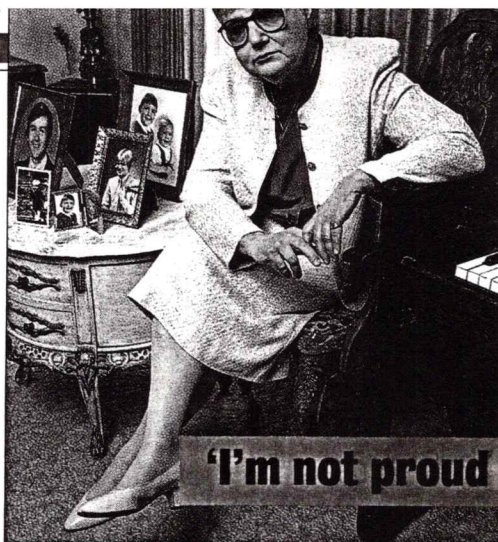


to keeping kids out of poverty, why do so many fathers refuse to pay?

l. 3 s - a l 3 s t



**Esther Lock of
Wheeling, Ill.,
once dropped off
her sons at her
ex-husband's house.
He called
the police.**



'I'm not proud of it, but I was desperate'

ALICE Q. HARGRAVE

ilies. The government's role in child support has already undergone a little-noticed revolution. In 1984, Congress passed one of the most sweeping pieces of social legislation in decades, requiring local governments to help any custodial parent—not just the poor—to collect child support. Since then, nonwelfare mothers have flooded government offices asking for help in collecting money. These agencies have garnished paychecks, seized tax returns and devised innovative solutions to enforcement problems (page 49). Despite the increased vigor, though, the government seems to be running in place. In 1990, state agencies reported they were collecting money in only 17.9 percent of the 12 million cases they were then handling.

But while society moves to confront the child-support problem, one question has received relatively little attention: who are these deadbeat dads, and why would they refuse to support the human beings they helped create? It's hard to look at such behavior as anything but simple irresponsibility. But a closer look reveals a group of men with a wide range of emotionally complex motives.

For a father, child support often becomes not a helping hand to a child, but a lethal weapon in the battle against his ex-wife. Kenneth Marcelles of Schiller Park, Ill., fell about \$6,000 behind on paying support to the two children he had with Donna Caliendo. Partly because of that, she says, the family went on welfare and their daughter had to get eyeglasses donated by the Lions Club. She wasn't shy about telling the kids the source of the deprivation. "In the summer," she says, "I'd say, 'If your father would send money maybe we could go to Kiddieland or buy a new bathing suit.'" Marcelles offers several explanations for not paying. "I don't know what she does with the money," he says. "I had a chance meeting with her in the grocery store and my daughter was wearing some raggedy-looking Levi jacket and [Donna's] got a brand new coat on." Caliendo denies that claim, and in any event, such complaints have a logical flaw: if the kids suffer from poverty, cutting off child support will only make it worse. It's when Marcelles talks about his fractured relationship with his children that his explanations strike a deeper chord. "When you get into a

situation where you don't see them and they blatantly slam the door in your face, it becomes an emotional thing," he says. "I know that [withholding payment] was not quite the thing to do, but . . . I reacted in an emotional way." He says that he's paid more than \$17,000 over the years, mostly fell behind due to financial hardship and now has child support deducted from his paycheck regularly. But finally, he adds a simple comment about his ex-wife that cuts to the heart of many child-support battles. Withholding money, he says, "was the only way I could hurt her."

How does a father come to see withholding child

support in terms of what it does to the former spouse instead of what it does to the children? Several studies have shown that fathers who retain close contact with their children are more likely to pay child support. Some fathers' rights groups cite these data in arguing that most child-support problems stem from mothers cutting off access to the children. That definitely does happen. But fathers are quite capable of becoming alienated from children without help from mothers. "Fathers tend to see their relationships with their children as being mediated by the wife," says Frank Furstenberg, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania and author of "Divided Families." "[It's] a package deal. When the relationship is damaged, it severs the direct connection between fathers and their children." In a survey conducted in central Pennsylvania, close to half the children from broken families had not even seen their fathers in the previous year. Many nonpaying dads ask, in essence, "What's in it for me?"—a statement that is strikingly crass on one level but quite poignant on another. If they have grown distant from their children, fathers come to view child support like making payments on a car they no longer own. Child support becomes a debt competing with all others. "My bills, my car payments were taking all that money up," said Walter Forde, an unemployed father in Riverdale, Md., explaining in court in January why he had fallen \$8,500 behind. Joel Worshtil, the hearing officer at the Prince Georges County circuit court, responded: "If the child had been living with you, you would have found a way to find the \$500 to clothe the child." "What if your wife and kids just leave you?" Forde asked. "I can't speak to the equity of the relationship," Worshtil replied, with sympathy.

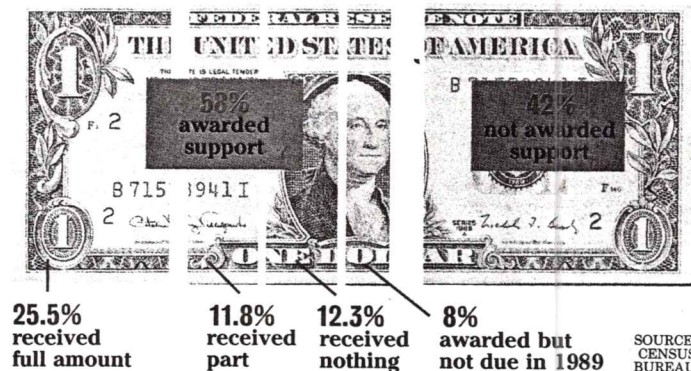
"But we certainly know the child wasn't at fault."

Clearly, the failure to pay often sprouts from the initial rupture in the relationship. Fathers who felt humiliated by the breakup may be particularly eager to cut ties with the family. Deanna Willis moved her family to Eugene, Ore., in 1979 while her husband, Drew Itschner, was in the Marines in Okinawa, because she believed he was neglecting them. Itschner paid hardly any child support over the next 12 years and didn't visit his children at all. He says that the state of Oregon treated him unfairly and that the money wouldn't have gone to the kids anyway because she was "going out partying." But Willis has another explanation. "I think

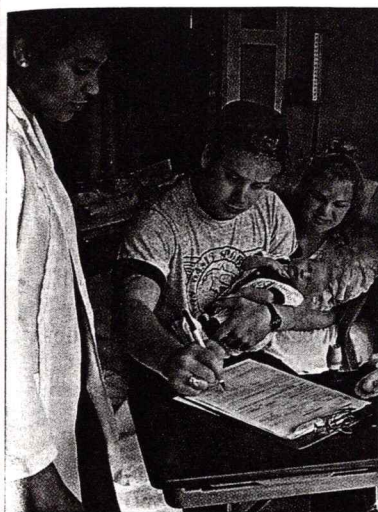
Where the Money Doesn't Go

Only a small percentage of children in broken homes actually receive support from fathers following divorce or separation.

Of women with children under age 21, with no father present in household (1989):



SEEKING NEW SOLUTIONS



RICH FRISHMAN

As Leslie Fernen and Jeffrey Smith took turns holding their newborn baby boy last week at Swedish Hospital Medical Center in Seattle, staffer Dorothy Mitchell handed them a brochure. Because they are not married, Mitchell explained, Smith would have to sign a paternity statement if he wanted his name on the birth certificate. This enables the state to "go after you if you were to break up," she added—"but we don't even want to think about that now."

The proud parents may not want to think about it, but the state of Washington sure does. About one in every four children is born outside a marriage, and enforcing child support is most difficult in cases where paternity has not been established. So Washington decided to get men on the hook while they're most proud of fatherhood. In about 40 percent of out-of-wedlock births the father is now acknowledging paternity at the hospital. Smith was one who gladly signed.

Washington's program is one of many innovative approaches states have devised to beef up collections. Taken as a whole, the record of the government's network of locally run, federally financed agencies is pathetic. But prodded by major laws passed by Congress in 1984 and 1988, the agencies have pursued several avenues of reform:

Hit 'Em Where They Work. Government officials thought they had the magic bullet in the mid-1980s: take the child support directly out of the father's paycheck. But this approach loses track of people like

Kent Patterson of Seattle, who switched construction jobs 24 times in 11 months. In 1990, Washington state began requiring many employers to give the names and social-security numbers of all hires to the child-support agency so it could track them. By 1994 all states are also supposed to garnish paychecks automatically, without waiting for the father to become delinquent.

Putting Blood in the Stone. You can lead a deadbeat to court, but you can't make him pay if he doesn't have any money. So several states have begun requiring fathers to join job-search programs. A Grand Rapids, Mich., program found jobs for 432 of 1,077 employees during an eight-month period—and their child-support payments jumped by more than 300 percent.

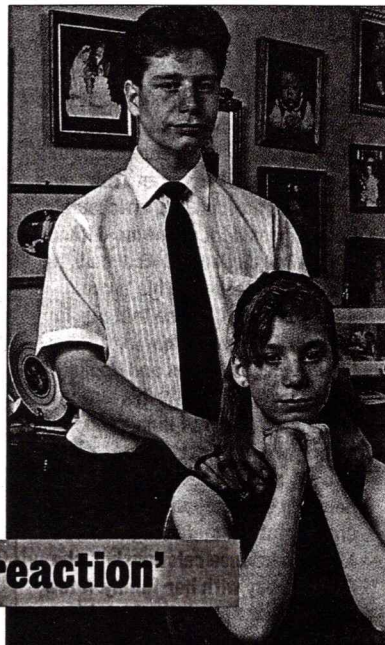
Private Eyes. Agency workers juggling 1,000 cases can often spend only a few minutes on each case. So some states, and increasing numbers of desperate mothers, are turning to private collection services for help. They are often quite effective, but firms can take a big cut of whatever they collect, while the government collects it all (in theory) for free. Parents can increase their odds by consulting groups like the Association for Children for Enforcement of Support (1-800-537-7072) and the National Child Support Advocacy Coalition (P.O. Box 420, Hendersonville, Tenn. 37077). Noncustodial parents can try the National Council for Children's Rights (202-547-NGCR).

The Big Fix. Some child-support experts believe the state-by-state enforcement system is too bureaucratic to ever work well. One proposed solution: turn it over to the IRS. Some advocates go further with a proposal called child-support assurance. The government steps up enforcement, but if the father doesn't pay fully, the state fills the gap. States could then eliminate one of the counterproductive parts of the current law: when poor men do pay support, the state keeps most of it to help finance its welfare operation. Like many of these reforms, the goal here is somewhat unusual for the government: forcing parents, instead of the state, to take care of kids.

S.W. with LORRAINE IANNELLO

in the beginning he was just hurt because I left him," Willis says. "He didn't want to go back into it and bring back up that hurt." Despite his long absence, Itschner carried his kids' pictures in his wallet for more than a decade and on a few occasions drove by their house or to a nearby park and watched them from a distance. His daughter Jewel, who has for several years kept Itschner's service medals in a box by her night stand, recently started a correspondence with him. During a recent interview he pulled out photographs of the girls at the ages of 4 and 2. "You look at those pictures," Itschner says. His eyes well up. "And you look at these," he points to pictures of them at 13 and 15. "How much have they gone through? How much have I missed? How much have they missed from not being with me? All three of us have lost out on the deal, and now we're trying to get it back."

In truth, some men never really develop any relationship with their children, so not paying child support doesn't arouse guilty feelings. Roger Hollenbeck of Des Plaines, Ill., met Rose Brown at a pig roast in Louisville, Ky., in 1980. He describes the relationship as a brief fling (she says they lived together seven months) and was furious to learn she was pregnant because she had told him that a medical condition made that impossible. He left town a few months later and over the next 10 years missed \$21,000 in payments. Hollenbeck's explanation for why he didn't pay: he didn't realize he owed any child support. (This seems unlikely, since the IRS in 1985 intercepted his tax refund for nonpayment of child support.) Under threat of a jail sentence, Hollenbeck recently paid \$10,000 of back support and spoke with his son. "Do you hate my mother?" the boy asked, according to Hollenbeck. "I said, 'No. We were friends, and I moved away.'"



DAVID WALBERG

'An emotional reaction'

But asked later what kind of relationship he expects he will have with his son, Hollenbeck says, "absolutely nothing. I know that sounds cold to say, but facts are facts."

Some fathers make so little money that their child-support payments feel like an enormous burden. Since payments are usually based on a percentage of parental income, however, even wealthy fathers can feel the pinch. Washington, D.C., lawyer Grier Raclin currently pays \$4,150 per month to his ex-wife Victoria Reggie, a well-paid Washington lawyer who is about to marry Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. Despite their lucrative jobs, the parents regularly bickered over child support, according to correspondence filed in court. Raclin tried to get reimbursed for camping gear he had bought for a trip with his son. "I absolutely refuse," Reggie replied in October 1990. "I have already paid \$100 for Cub Scouts—an activity for which you said you would be responsible—and I will not pay for the gear you decided you need to take Curran camping... If you try to deduct anything from the

The father of Eric and Alisa Marcelles of Melrose Park, Ill., fell thousands of dollars behind in support. He says his wife kept him away from the kids.

support payments you are contractually obligated to pay, I will not hesitate to take you to court for contempt." Last Friday, Raclin asked the court to eliminate his child-support payments because both of their financial situations have changed and he says he's spending, roughly, equal time with his son.

The growing number of cases in which the father gains custody has focused attention on a special group of absent parents: deadbeat moms. The fact that their record is no better than absent fathers' suggests that nonpayment doesn't stem from a uniquely male sense of irresponsibility. Dolores Podhorn of Springfield, Mo., owes her ex-husband Gordon Long of Delavan, Wis., \$72,395 in payments for their four children. "She could never understand that I was paying the light and gas and the rent and child care," says Long, an assistant professor of English at the University of Wisconsin. Podhorn says that at first she didn't pay because she was so devastated over losing custody. The court had decided that because Long was home with the kids so much, giving him custody would be less

disruptive. "I really fell apart," she says. Later she couldn't pay, she adds, because she was a full-time student, but now that she's earning good money conducting health exams for insurance companies, she gives thousands of dollars in gifts to the children. Asked what, in retrospect, she would have done differently, Podhorn pauses and says, "I'll tell you what I would have done. I'd shoot the s.o.b. It would have relieved the emotional-abuse situation."

Knowing why absent parents don't want to pay child support does not, of course, excuse their behavior. It also leaves an essential question unanswered: how do they get away with not paying? Ultimately, many parents do not pay because no one makes them. A parent who is having trouble collecting child support has two main choices. She can hire a private lawyer who will try to bring the husband into court. But any real conflict will quickly push the legal fees into the thousands of dollars, outstripping the amount of support the custodial parent is seeking. Or, the

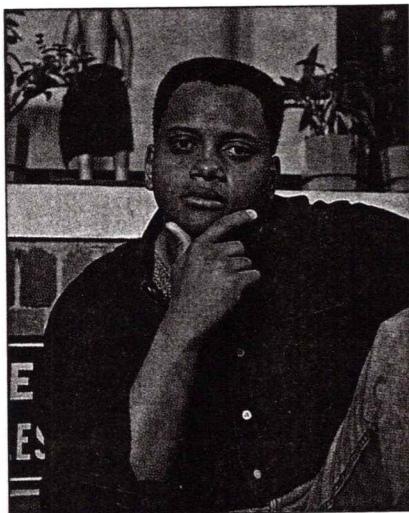
NO FATHER, AND NO ANSWERS

BY MARCUS MABRY

My father was not the sort of guy who comes to mind when most people think of a deadbeat dad. He was an attorney, a judge and a respected civic leader. He was president of the local NAACP and a church deacon. Above all, he was a good father to his three daughters. As he once told me, he was not "some little boy in the ghetto who makes babies and doesn't take responsibility for his actions."

Yet for 20 years I didn't see my father or know what he looked like. And my mother never received a penny in child support. My mother and my father met in high school. After an intense relationship, she moved away with her family. A few months after she left, she told my father she was pregnant. When I was 10, my mother wanted to send me to Florida to meet my father. He demanded a blood test. Insulted and hurt, she hung up and never spoke to him again. The state of New Jersey required her to sue for child support when she applied for welfare. My mother says she got an order for a token amount, but my father was a penniless college student at the time, and the state never pursued him. My mother often thought about "going after him," but never did. She couldn't afford a lawyer, didn't think she could win and, she says, she didn't want to hurt me.

Even though he was absent I grew up in my father's shadow. My mother told me his name, his occupation, his alma mater and how every time she looked at me, she saw him. But



LARRY DOWNING—NEWSWEEK

NEWSWEEK writer Mabry at home

we were very different. While we were on welfare, he was climbing the corporate ladder to become a successful attorney. While we lived in a run-down house with relatives, he lived in a big house with his wife and three daughters. While I had no male role models until I went to an all-boys school on scholarship, he was president of a local NAACP chapter, a role model to boys he hardly knew. I never knew how affluent he was. And I never thought I cared. I never connected poverty and my absentee father.

I never thought I would meet him. Then my mother called one day while she was vacationing in Florida. In a joyous tone, she told me she had visited my father's mother. My grandmother had given her a picture of my father in his judge's robes. I was angry. All the feelings I

had repressed for 20 years came flooding back. I decided that confronting the unknown was the best therapy. I called my grandmother. She gave me his number. In a cold, scientific voice I told him I wanted to resolve the issue of his paternity. He asked for a test. I agreed.

Weeks later a handsome professional couple walked into the lobby of the Center for Blood Research. After a cordial greeting, pained small talk and a tortured silence, my father asked me to step outside. On the sidewalk in front of the building, in a tone of admirable dignity, he told me that he and my

mother had been very much in love as teenagers and that whatever the results of this test today, I should feel free to call on him when I needed a man's advice. I felt like one of the Bowery Boys being counseled by Father Flanagan. Several months later we received the results. These things don't come out 100 percent positive, because they test genes and two men—say, twins—could have identical genes. But it was 99.78 percent probable that this man was my father. And he didn't have a twin.

Over the next two years, my father and I tried to establish a relationship. After the first year, it was clear that I was making most of the telephone calls. I even visited his hometown several times. When I did, I stayed with my grandmother. He never got around to visiting me.

When I first called him that summer night, I thought I had nothing to lose. But I was wrong. Once I found him I wanted to know who he was and where I came from. Most of all I wanted to know how he could stand a child of his wandering around somewhere in the world and not know if it was sick or well or starving. I realized that the gravity of the void he had left in my life had influenced my relationships and my perspectives, like an uncharted planet affects the bodies around it. Knowing he knew where I was and didn't care had led me to trust friends more than family, to praise the strength and loyalty of women more than men and to promise myself that I would be a better father. After we met, despite my anger, I still wanted his approval and his admiration. But I never felt like I had it. Our relationship is hardly more developed today than it was the day we met.

The nagging question for those of us abandoned by our fathers—however good their reasons—is "How could you?" My father has never given me a satisfactory answer. When I compared him to my brother, who will have to take financial responsibility for his illegitimate daughter or face jail under New Jersey law, he said I could not compare him to some little boy in the ghetto who rejects responsibility. The truth is I don't compare my father to my brother, or other deadbeat dads. I want to think his reasons for not supporting me are better than theirs. He called me two weeks in a row this month. I felt lucky, even grateful. Really. I know I have every reason to be angry and bitter for what he has not given me. But even now, and maybe forever, what I really want is a father.

mother can turn to the local government for free—and enter a surreal world where social workers juggle 1,000 cases at a time, a prosecutor might handle 100 cases a week and fathers evade pursuit for years by merely moving a few miles away across state lines. "There's a fiction that we're working everybody's cases," says Darryll Grubbs, until recently a top official of the Texas child-support-enforcement division. "Good Lord. We're not coming close." Jim Harrelston, until last November an investigator in Ft. Worth, Texas, was supposed to look through his 2,800 cases and chase the most delinquent parents. In fact, he usually ended up responding to whichever irate mother called the most, and he got 30 to 40 calls a day. The squeaky-wheel system pays little attention to which mother is neediest, and the caseload can push overwhelmed employees to the edge. "There's nothing I can do!" one fuming caseworker yelled at a parent on the phone in Prince Georges County, Md. "I can't make him a good person!"

Among the many difficulties caseworkers face, one is frighteningly basic: figuring out who the father is. A startling 27 percent of all American children are born out of wedlock; two thirds of all black kids are. Identifying the father is much easier now than 10 years ago because blood tests show, with 98 or 99 percent certainty, whether a man fathered a child. Yet the system solves fewer than half its paternity cases. Many welfare mothers

the court denied the request out of fear that doing so would taint the child with the "implication of illegitimacy." He paid \$100 a month in child support sporadically, falling about \$5,500 behind at one point. He saw the girl a total of four or five weeks over the next 10 years and shifted between feeling defiant and guilty. "I never treated her like a real father treats a real daughter," he says. "You see dads all bright and aglow; I never had that. I kept thinking I was a bad dad." Finally, at the prompting of his new wife, he tricked his daughter into taking a blood test while she was visiting him in Las Vegas—and the test showed he was not her father.

Despite the many examples of governmental foul-ups, the system works much better than it did 10 years ago. Although the average support award is just \$57.59 per week, most courts have increased payment levels because Congress in 1984 required states to write specific child-support guidelines. As the issue has become politically

hot, it has even seeped into electoral politics, in sometimes troubling ways. A fathers'-rights group in Las Vegas is running a slate of candidates in the elections for family-court judges, backing only those who, the group thinks, will lean more toward fathers in custody and support cases.

Reforming child-support policy may prevent a few families from entering into the war zone inhabited by people like John Chappell of Port St. Lucie, Fla., and his ex-wife Linda Place of Springfield, Va. She says he owes his three children more than \$20,000 in child support and reimbursement of medical expenses. Eleven-year-old Matthew spends weeks at a time in a hospital with a serious immune disorder; Place has so far been unable to afford specialized treatment at Duke University. Chappell used to earn \$26,000 a year as a medical-bill collector, but he was, until last Friday, unemployed. Place believes he was intentionally not working to avoid paying the \$540 a month and medical expenses. "There's

nothing wrong with him that he could not maintain a job," says Place, who works 32 hours a week as a nurse and often sleeps in a cot by Matthew's bed. "He's removed himself from the situation so it's not real anymore. He doesn't go to the hospital every day and see Matthew with IVs and needles."

Chappell complains bitterly that his ex-wife is pursuing him out of "raw hate" and turning the children against him. He says his new job in a convenience store will enable him to pay more. "To me, this is a battle between her and me—not the kids," he says. He's right that the parents are the combatants, but he shouldn't delude himself about the names of the casualties. Matthew is growing up thinking that his debilitating illness might be better treated if only his father would pay more in child support. Chappell's oldest son, Chris, speaks in more emotional terms. "Not getting stuff hurts," says 14-year-old Chris, "but thinking that Dad doesn't care enough to support you—that really hurts. I don't think I'm ever going to forgive him. It's just too hard." Chris visited his father in Florida just last summer, and Chappell brought him on a special afternoon outing—to court. There, Chris got to watch the judge chastise his father for failure to pay child support, put him in handcuffs and lead him off to jail. ■



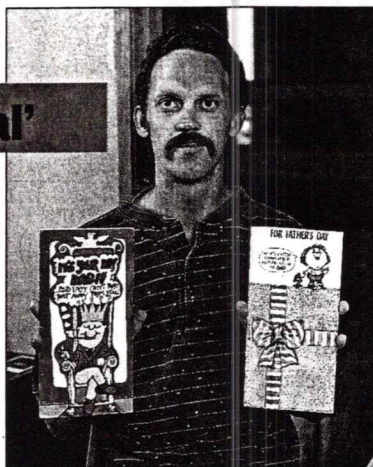
'All three of us lost out on the deal'

don't cooperate, fearing they'll lose benefits if the father is found, but even when they do identify the man, states must find him and get him into court, a process that can take years. Sometimes the results are ghoulish: a Maryland judge decided that a man who had fathered a child through a sexual assault should legally be considered the father, paying child support—and getting visitation rights.

Knowing who the father is doesn't mean knowing where he is, how much he earns or how to collect from him. Roughly one third of all child-support cases involve parents living in different states—and women in such cases were twice as likely to get nothing as those with the father nearby, according to a 1990 General Accounting Office study.

The system is routinely maddening for women, but can sometimes be merciless to men, too. Fathers who want to have visitation orders enforced or who've hit hard times and want to have their support payments reduced will have to hire their own lawyers, even if they have no money; most states represent mothers for free in collection cases, fathers not at all. One Las Vegas man ended up paying for a judicial mistake for a decade. He had been dating a woman in Derry, N.H., for just about two months when she announced she was pregnant. He married her, but a year later, he says, he came home to discover she had cleaned out the house and left. Bitter and suspicious about the experience, he asked the court for a blood test to see if he was actually the father of the baby girl, but

**Carolyn and Jewel Itschner
have kept the service
medals of their father,
Drew (right), even though
they haven't seen him
for 12 years**



WILSON—NEWSWEEK (TOP), SLOAN—NEWSWEEK