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America is a powerful great country. It contains lots, and it can be hard to get a feel, sitting in, say, Montana, of what's happening thousands of miles away in Maine. The Real State of America Atlas by Cynthia Enloe and Joni Seager, released last week, is full of maps and graphics that can help quantify some of how we do as a country. For example, how is our driving? Driving is, as you can see, down from last year, as the recession and high gas prices pinch transportation plans. (Maybe everyone takes their bikes and public transport?) As you can see, states with larger metropolitan areas tend to have less driving. In Oklahoma, the non-car options are probably quite worse. It's an interesting contrast between states that run smaller and states that are fatter. The authors have also included a map of fruit consumption to contrast with this map of obesity. It seems that both running less and eating more fruit can be related to weighing less. What is potentially most surprising is how many people in Washington, D.C. eat fruit, beating even California, where much of the fruit in Washington, D.C. This also certainly plays into some stereotypes about New England and the Northeast, given how concentrated fruit consumption is. Make your own judgments. It's easy to read stories in the paper about trends and statistics (or simply extrapolate from your own anecdotal experience), but maps like the ones in the book are the best way to see how that information actually plays out. In such a big country- there's no way to really know what's going on without looking at the data Reprinted by agreement with Penguin, a member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc., from THE REAL STATE OF AMERICA ATLAS: Mapping the Myths and Truths of the United States by Cynthia Enloe and Joni Seacopyrighteager © 2011 by Cynthia Enloe and Joni Seacopyrighteager can be reached by email or on Twitter. The 2016 election made many Americans feel, at least philosophically, that the distances that divide us are wider than ever before. Spatially speaking, however, the web that knits us all together gets harder every year, like the megaregions where we live--clusters of interconnected cities--getting bigger and closer together. You don't believe me? Just look at this map. It's not just color codes America's distinct megaregions, it shows exactly how they are interconnected. And it can only be fairer to say that everything, we are not the United States-we are the United States. M.A., or United Megaregions of America. The concept of megaregions is nothing new. The influential urban planner Sir Patrick Geddes first defined the term in 1915--though he called these regions megalopolises--and there are many variations on the term. By a few definitions, everything from Boston to Washington, D.C. is a great megaregion; other definitions see that chain of tightly connected cities consisting of five different megaregions, including Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C.Whatever the way, given the fact that so much of our country's population and economy is centered in these cosmopolitan corridors, megaregions are more than just an academic concern--they are a matter of national imports. So Garrett Nelson from Dartmouth College and Alasdair Rae of the University of Sheffield began to wonder if there was a more scientific way to define and visualize them. Nelson and Rae used census data to come up with a map of 4 million distinct commuter train routes, tracking a person's door to their office--data points they call nodes. When these paths were drawn, the researchers turned to MIT's Senseable City Lab, which used an algorithm to divide the nation into different megaregions based on the strength of the connections between all its nodes. They then limited themselves to 50 megaregions--about one per state, although some states like California have more, and other states like Wyoming have none--making the finished map visually coherent. The colored candy floss map of the entire nation is, perhaps, the most visually interesting. But it is the simple black-and-white map, which names all the country's megaregions, that really makes an impression. What this map makes clear is that megaregions usually expand across several states, and that there are far more reasonable ways of dividing the country into 50 sections than the arbitrary boundaries of government--namely, using the organic economic and cultural zones that have evolved around cities. It makes you wonder how different the results of the last election would have looked if America were divided into megaregions, not states. You can read more about Nelson and Rae's research here. From 2,000 feet in the air, Rocky Mount, N.C., is a dusty stretch of asphalt and tanned buildings sitting amid a patchwork of fertile green fields and stands of southern pine. The muddy Tar River, its waters with legendary amounts of shade and striped bass, meanders across the countryside. Tobacco, soybeans, country roads, you'd expect. Some general stores and a bank. You don't expect Fast Food, USA And yet, Rocky Mount, a quiet backwater of about 40,000 souls, is in all likelihood the fast food franchise capital of the United States. It is home to Hardee's Food Systems Inc., the fourth largest hamburger concept franchisor in the country after McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's. It is also home to no less than five growth-oriented franchises, companies that operate not one or two but dozens or hundreds of giants' outlets (see sidebar, page 108). And then, of course, there are outlets themselves: Howard Johnsons, Pizza Huts, and Taco Bells, in addition to the hamburger sky. There's no doubt about it, draws a local businessman. Fast food is the largest generator of wealth in Nash County. Hardee's, with 2,038 restaurants in 37 states and nine foreign countries, is the largest company around, and the precursor to many of the others. But if there is a company in Rocky Mount that is considered a model, an ideal that everyone would do well to strive, it is the company Boddie-Noell Enterprises Inc. (BNEI). They've been dedicated to business in a unique way since day one, notes Sprull Bunn, president of Hardee's, and other citizens voice similar sentiments. The consensus among local business folks, in fact, is that if Tom Peters and Bob Waterman had come to Rocky Mount, they would no longer be searching for excellence. In 22 years, the Boddie brothers have turned a single Hardee's restaurant into a sophisticated franchise that operates 208 Hardee's restaurants in five states, earning more than \$210 million a year. In this way, they have mastered what Peters and Waterman describe as one of the most difficult of leading feats: maintaining the domestic entrepreneurial spirit and style that triggered a company's creation, while building it into a large, complex organization. As you head back north, a waitress suggests, tell them about Nick and Mayo Boddie. Nick and Mayo sit at a table at Carleton House - the only non-fast food restaurant the Boddies own - and attack their fried chicken with unabashed enthusiasm. Today, both men are in their fifties, casual Southern gentlemen in sharp pants and beautiful V-neck sweaters who also happen to be millionaires. But they grew up during the Great Depression, and remember its teachings well. This, mayo says, holding up a wing that has gnawed clean, is the way we were taught to eat chicken. Heck, says Nick, I have a sister who eats half her leg. Their father, Nicholas Bunn Boddie, was a farmer - tobacco, corn and cotton - in Nash County, but he lost his land in 1933. The family plantation, once large property on 10,000 acres that by then had shrunk to 700, was sold. We moved into a small house owned by our mother, Mayo recalls. We had a cow and some chickens, and our mom and dad used to go to a farmer's market to sell chickens or eggs. If it hadn't been for that, and relatives who fed us, I don't know what we would have done. Mayo, president of BNEI, and Nick, its vice president, eked out about a year's worth of college each, but then went to work in small family businesses: Nick in a hotel that an aunt ran, Mayo for a Texaco distributorship that his father had received. By 1961, they had parlayed their interests and diligence into a motel and restaurant of their own, Carleton House; three independent petrol stations, and two laundromats. We've always worked hard -- my used to cut mass wood in the winters, and I pumped gas and changed tires, Mayo explains, because we were always looking for something better. That year, a combination of old friends and a new company seemed to provide exactly what they had been looking for. Leonard Rawls, who had attended Rocky Mount Senior High School with Boddies and had since become Mayo's accountant, was also keeping books for a restaurant in Greenville, N.C., owned by a man named Wilbur Hardee. He and another high-school buddy, Jim Gardner, had made a deal with Hardee to franchise the latter's carbon-broiled-burger concept. Together, the three harde built restaurant in Rocky Mount, which to this day is handing out cheeseburgers and cokes at329 N. Church St. Rawls tried to interest Boddies in a franchise. At first, the brothers turned it down. My God, Leonard, how on earth are you going to make money selling hamburgers for 15 cents? Mayo remembers asking. Then they saw how well the first Hardee's did. So Nick, Mayo, and an uncle, Carleton Noell, a tobacco executive who had helped fund Carleton House, bought four franchises for \$1,000 to \$1,500 each. (Today, a similar franchise can cost \$10,000.) The first Boddie-Noell Hardee's opened in Fayetteville, N.C., on January 22, 1962.On the first day, it sold \$167 worth of burgers, fries and shakes. Course we opened that afternoon Mayo is quick to point out. The store thrived for about six months, until a McDonald's opened on the road. We made \$20,000 to \$22,000 a month -- it was great at the time -- and then, whammo! They cut us in half. But Boddies persisted, recovered their market, and soon added a second unit, in Kingston, N.C, and a third back in Fayetteville. We were really hungry, said Mayo, hungry to do something, and we thought, if anyone else could do it, then we could do it too. Soon a simple but successful strategy developed: Open one restaurant, get it up and running properly, then borrow money for another. Mr. Noell, he loved to borrow money from banks, Mayo says with a laugh. Sometimes, to keep the growth going, the landowners talked into expanding other mortgages on property. We never had a goal about how many units we wanted, Mayo notes. I'm not against goals - I think they're good - but they're somewhat limiting. Because Hardee's corporation itself was so young, BNEI was guilty, as was inclined, of making much of its earnin' and learnin on its own. That and the close personal ties between the two companies' founders made for a relationship with more give-and-take than most franchisees arrangements. In fact, the two companies grew up together, relying on each other for support and innovation. (Mayo points with pride, for example, to a biscuit breakfast program introduced by BNEI and eventually adopted by And And And has secured its niche in the marketplace. We have divided into pitfalls and in rewards, notes Bunn, an observation that Nick agrees. It's been a two-way street, he says, and it's been good for both of us. Good, no doubt, is an understatement. As Boddie-Noell Enterprises grew, it seemed to become practically a legend around Rocky Mount -- a company with a reputation for excellence that extended to its founders, its products, and the quality of its management. They are wonderful people who have earned everything they have, is the tribute of Jim Gardner's brother Gerry, head of one of Boddie-Noell's competitors. In part, the Boddie brothers' success is a celebration of personal choice, relentless attention to detail, and a paternal commitment to their employees -- in short, to the practical leadership style that almost always characterizes the best entrepreneurial companies. Even now, when every business feature behind the counter continues to be regarded as a prerequisite for a leading position in the business, and once the first-hand understanding has been cultivated, the company is loathed to let it subside. Every year, many of BNEI's 140 headquarters staff -- accountants, engineers, vice presidents, and so on -- put on a brown Hardee uniform and return to the field for a week. It's our way of reminding ourselves of what's really important, says someone who has done it. The person standing in front of the counter is our chairman of the board. Nick and I have always had a strong sense of people, to treat them fairly and treat them right, mayo said. It came from our upbringing, our parents. It is a simple philosophy, the company's equivalent of the golden rule - requires that produce and perform as you want them to, and reward them in kind. And it has served everyone well. A generous benefits package, corporate excursions and free trips for star employees that plague everyone's enthusiasm. Area managers, some of whom don't have more than eighth grade trainings, can earn as much as \$35,000 a year. And Jenkins, like others, are symbols of the fact that hard work and ambition can ultimately pay off with a role in management. The brothers, even adventurous, have been conservative economically, until the late 1960s, for example, BNEI headquarters was a converted laundry room at Carleton House. And the fact is that in its 22 years, the company has only had two months lost, in 1974. Mr. Noell like to have a tizzy. Nick recalls, pausing for a moment to define North Carolinian's words for a fit. He never came to operational meetings, but he started coming then. Only recently did the company receive a \$40-million line of revolving credit, making it an unsecured corporate borrower, until then, it only borrowed on mortgages. We never grew beyond our organization, notes Nick. But grow they did. BNEI is now the largest privately owned franchise company in Hardee's system. It consistently surpasses both other franchisees and most of the parents' owned and operated stores: In fiscal year '83, it averages \$979,000 per store in sales, as opposed to an average of \$700,000 for other Hardee businesses. (Franchise Enterprises Inc., the

closest local competitor, averages \$875,000). It has a five-year compound annual growth rate of 22.4% in sales, 29.6% in assets, and 22.3% in net income. Franchisees often plateau on about 10 franchises, a size that many bright, hard-working businessmen can handle themselves. Growing BNEI to 208 restaurants has required a range of disciplines and a depth of expertise beyond the boddies alone could provide. They are the founders, the inspirers, the paternal figures that employees model their attitude to; they are men who discovered the thrills and possibilities of entrepreneurship long before the word swelled to mythical proportions. But they also felt the contractor's limits. We knew how to buy places, get buildings built and sell burgers, Mayo explains, but as we got bigger, we knew we'd have to buy some refinement. Computers have come in in recent years, he continues, and we still don't know what it's about. We're entrepreneurial - we just go out and bust our ass. Both, however, were safe and commonsensical enough to share the management of BNEI with others. Nick and Mayo acknowledged that their children grew into a large organization, notes Jim Waters, who was director of Planters National Bank & Trust Co. in Rocky Mount before becoming BNEI's Vice President of Administration in 1976. They didn't want to suffocate entrepreneurial spirit, but they wanted to get certain disciplines to carry on the company. In recent years, contributions from Waters and other executives have ranged from the mundane and the practical (job classifications of new departments, financial planning) to the inspired ones. In the latter category is BNEI's new \$3.6 million headquarters, a breathtaking building of Alabama limestone; and a management information system that is considered by many to be the most important in the country. Headquarters, a 45,000 square foot celebration of modern office design, occupied at the end of '82, is the result of five years of planning, and by the imagination and expertise of Dove-Knight & Associates, a Rocky Mount architectural firm. Boddie-Noell is a unique organization, says architect Dan Knight. They are relaxed but hard working, with a very open management - an ideal company. We tried to capture some of the features of our design. The building, which sits on top of a small hill at the end of a grove of pecan trees (the grove is all that remains of the plantation that once stood in place), spans a diamond-shaped atrium of dark tinted glass. We wanted the building to look as if it was firmly rooted, but at the same time moving, dynamic, explains public relations manager Ray Leister. The first floor, although located below ground level, looks out on sunken patios; it houses bnei's business and development teams, along with a luxurious gym for employees (who get a day off for every 25 miles they log on to an outdoor track). Ground floor, a flight up, holding training and marketing group offices, a cafeteria, a test kitchen, and downtown, data processing the heartbeat of the building, which Waters refers to, quite tellingly, as The Machine. Upstairs there are accounting offices and executive suites, all of which open onto a central reception with floors in full-bodied heart pine. This openness in the executive area says a lot about Boddie-Noell, Knight notes. But the aesthetic appeal of the building - with its plants, objets d'art, and walls covered with blue suede - is only half the story. The other half is its effectiveness. It recirculates atrium heat, and zone-manages heating and air conditioning automatically via a 20-year-old computer calendar (which among other things knows when daylight saving time begins in 1994). If I want to get in on a Saturday morning, notes Waters, I can call my sector number on the computer, and it will instruct the building to bring up the temperature of my office. Everything is also designed with tomorrow in mind. Waters talks with enthusiasm about stages two and three, new wings to be added here and there, moving walls shifting with precision and purpose. We have already arranged to get limestone in the same part of the same quarry for the new façade, he information management system is equally impressive. The 40 megabyte IBM mainframe, 80 terminals, and three miles of coaxial cable in The Machine are attached to each restaurant's own computer, and thus to each cash register in the BNEI system. I can tell you exactly what happened in a unit, Waters points out. I can tell you how many customers hit, what went through the drive-in window, who did the best job of suggestive selling, how many coupons we collected, who's over the payroll . . . Waters, a short, fat man whose energy belies his strong gray hair, taps some keys on his computer and pulls up the daily numbers of Unit 1441, located in the Tower Shopping Center in Raleigh, N.C. Number of transactions, nonfood sales, net sales, paid insurance, total cash, marketing, eating in, eating out, running through, cash cards, tax - every measure of the unit's life is in glowing green. Shortages, missing stocks, how many BPU's or gallons of water a unit uses - we're on top of it every day, he claims. So detailed is the information that Waters can tell you, in an instant, how much it costs BNEI to put ketchup on a single burger. Roger Maloch, product-marketing director of Management Science America Inc., who wrote BNEI's software, calls it a very, very sophisticated system . . . that requires 100,000 lines of code. They are among the more informed companies we have dealt with, he adds. They have everything under control, and know exactly what they are doing and don't need in terms of numbers. In June, the company began installing personal computers in its six district offices, a process it expects to complete by the end of this year. Then, Waters explains, he will be able to turn the information over to the district's vice president overnight. I want them to know what they did yesterday, today. Managers will then be in an even better position to watch over and improve the performance of the devices they monitor. When you look at our type of company, Waters notes philosophically, you think, well,, it's not that hard to flip a hamburger, throw it on the bread, put it on the counter, and sell it. But then you look at the overall package, and you see an amazing diversity of disciplines. The business, he explains, is simultaneously capital-intensive (\$850,000 to open a unit), labor-intensive (how do you train and retain all these people?), and marketing-intensive. You spend \$2 million to \$3 million on an ad campaign, and you hold your breath . . . and then you find that McDonald's is spending \$300 million in ad dollars. He shakes his head with mocking dismay. Now I don't mind getting into the ring with Ali, he adds, and I'm going to do it . . . but I will wear a two-by-four. It may be simply a matter of pride or exaggerated expectations, but Waters claims BNEI may soon catch McDonald's in terms of unit volume. Bve Bve as it may, the issues of capital, work and marketing that Waters raises with such concern sound almost academic. Nick and Mayo Boddie have turned their native talent and Nash County intelligence into these subjects for more than two decades, and now a group of bright and dedicated professionals are fine-tuning their performance. It seems unlikely that the apathy that often accompanies success will ever shortchange them. You can't say we can't do what we did today a little better tomorrow, Waters said with conviction. BNEI opened four new Hardee's in the Memphis market in June, and will probably cut ties on another five by the end of the year. However, Hardee's outlets are unlikely to define the company's future growth. We want to grow with Hardee's as much as we can, avers Mayo, but after a while, it's going to be a matter of not having enough territory. BNEI is now developing two own restaurant concepts - Mama Jean's Pizza (named after Mayo's wife) and Annie Lou's Country Cooking (named after her aunt, Annie Lou Noell) - which it hopes to franchise. All this has meant a hectic, productive, and ultimately rewarding career for Nick and Mayo. In 1979, the brothers bought back their ancestral home, Rose Hill, and have since renovated the royal 1790s mansion that was once the crown of the old plantation. Corn once puts up its thin green shoots in those Southern field, Black Angus beta of the place with quiet dignity. In a way, it seems that poetic justice of an exquisite kind, a case of lost riches found, of southern glory is finally restored. The fact that everything was accomplished through fast food franchising makes it even more extraordinary. Unless you happen to live in Rocky Mount, N.C.C.

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