

# "I'm Not Handicapped, I'm Handicapable"

By Loretta Manago  
Post Staff Writer

To an eagerly listening crowd of youngsters, some handicapped, some stricken with cerebral palsy, and some quite normal, Kater Cornwell utters the words that have become his motto: "I'm not handicapped, but handicapable, not disabled, but able and not in a wheelchair, but with a wheelchair."

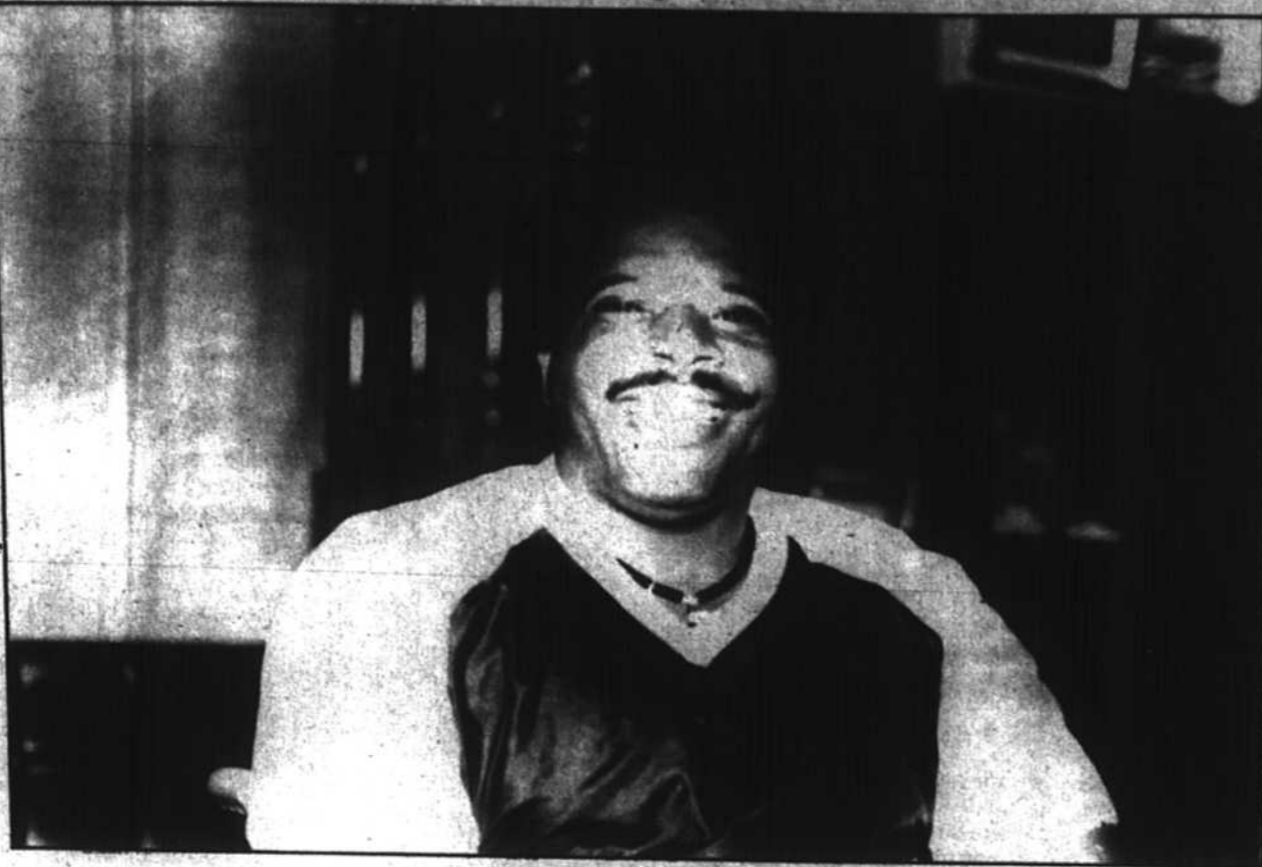
Somewhere in between the pep talks Cornwell lifts weights, not to show off his athletic prowess, but to put into action what he means when he tells children of all ages that they can be the best they can be, that they are not limited by their circumstances.

Throughout the year Cornwell visits and speaks at all the elementary schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, the physically handicapped schools, Randolph, East Mecklenburg and Billingsville, the Charlotte Rehabilitation Hospital, Health Fairs, Alexander's Children's Home and the Veterans Hospital spreading his message of inspiration and faith. His many commitments keeps him on a tight schedule, but for Cornwell, what he is doing today merely reflects an extension of a deep involvement he has had with children throughout his life.

"I devoted a lot of my time to children before I contracted transverse myelitis, (a rare virus that left Cornwell paralyzed) and I didn't see any reason why I couldn't live as normal a life as possible. I just wanted to do what I had been doing before."

And that's exactly what Cornwell has been doing for the past 16 months. "I didn't wait until I was dismissed from the hospital before I started talking to others. I started while I was in the hospital and told people that they could make it. I felt that if you have the determination, you will go forward," responded Cornwell.

To say that Cornwell has faith is an understatement. His faith and belief in God is tremendous. "My



KATER CORNWELL

## A living inspiration

inspiration comes from God, family and friends. And every day I walk by faith, not by sight." This is the same faith that gives Cornwell the energy to go forth and be an example to all of those who have ever said that they can't. "I don't get tired. I'm so excited about helping others, I don't think about getting tired."

It's a good thing that Cornwell doesn't tire easily. For if he did, he could never be as competitive of an athlete as he is. This weekend, for example, Cornwell participated in the Southern State Wheelchair Competition, bringing home one gold medal in shot put, another one in weightlifting and three bronze medals in the 100, 400 and 1,500 meter races. He has now qualified to

enter the National Wheelchair Competition to be held in Pittsburgh, Pa., in June.

In this year alone Cornwell has participated in the Charlotte Observer Marathon, the March of Dimes' "Running For Those Who Can't," the Sunday Sprint and the Charlotte Orthopaedic Hospital Foot Race. Since Cornwell traded his old wheelchair for a new one, he knocked over an hour off his old time of two hours in the 10,000 meter race.

Aside from participating in sports, Cornwell is a Junior League football and baseball coach. He coaches the West Mecklenburg Mighty Mites. When he was asked by some curious people as to how he was going to coach, Cornwell aptly re-

plied, "It's in your head, not your leg." As a coach Cornwell stresses the fact that all of his players are valuable. "At the end of each season I take the guys to Red Lobster."

As concerned as Cornwell is about today's youth he is also equally concerned about the activity of the physically disabled. "Although I think the perception of the handicapped is changing there's still a lot more that could be done. I would like to see a Charlotte classic wheelchair game where the physically disabled would compete against the physically able in wheelchairs. We could have some type of athletic event, perhaps three to four times a year. It's important that those who have some sort of handicap get out of the house and have something to look forward to. What they need more than anything else is an outlet and to be made felt a part of society. Because of people and organizations like WBTV, The Charlotte Char-Wheels, and Cindy Teal of Metrolina Independent Living Association, and Joe Russel, the image of handicapped people is taking a more positive image," reflected Cornwell.

A 1985 WBTV Jefferson Award winner, Cornwell is a former employee of Delta Airlines and a Vietnam veteran. While in battle he was shot in the arm and has since had his entire right arm reconstructed. He is married to Margaret Cornwell and they are the parents of three sons.

## Department Of Commerce To Hold Buyers-Supplier Conference

Want a chance to market your products and services? Or maybe you're in the market for what others want to sell? If so, Charlotte is the right place, and the right time is 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., May 22. Just come to the Holiday Inn at I-77 and Woodlawn. That's the site of a "Buyer-Supplier Conference," held semi-annually by the N.C. Department of Commerce.

This event is the latest in a series of successful meetings held across the state for small companies to have a chance to make their sales pitch to purchasing agents from North Carolina's largest new and expanding industries. The event also provides a unique opportunity for industries of all sizes to locate in-state sources and markets for a range of goods and services.

"The Buyer-Supplier Conference works and I would miss it for anything. As a result of one event, I picked up a \$250,000 contract," said Jerry Herndon, presi-

dent of Metroliner Mills.

Purchasing agents from such major companies as Philip Morris, Glaxo, Outboard Marine, Northern Telecom, Allied Bendix, Mitsubishi, IBM, American Honda, Volvo White and more than three dozen other companies will be eager to talk to suppliers.

Conference guests will be able to attend workshops with representatives of the State's Community Colleges, Department of Labor, Employment Security, NCSU Industrial Extension Service and the Small Business Action Council-Greater Charlotte Chamber of Commerce covering important topics of concern to the business community.

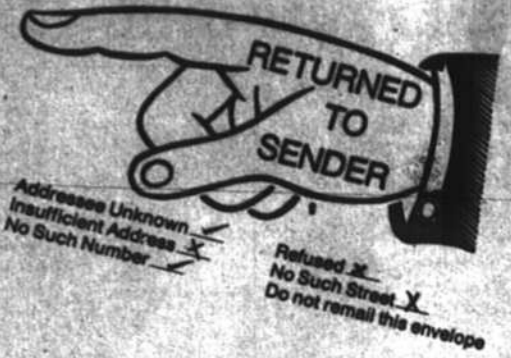
A luncheon from 12:15-1:30 p.m. for participants will feature Ronald J. Terpak, general manager, IBM. Mr. Terpak will share his first-hand knowledge of business conditions and opportunities for growth.

The event is part of the ongoing program of the N.C. Department of Commerce to match markets with products - to locate new sources of goods, products and services and to broaden product bases of operation.

Co-sponsors will be the Greater Charlotte Chamber of Commerce-Small Business Action Council, Central Piedmont Community College-Small Business Center, N.C. State University Industrial Extension Service, Department of Labor, Community Colleges & Employment Security and Purchasing Management Association of Carolinas-Virginia, Inc.

Registration fee is \$15 including luncheon. For further information, call Frank Holman, Department of Commerce in Raleigh, 919-733-6254, or Lawrence J. Toliver, Charlotte Chamber of Commerce, 704-377-6911.

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