

Opinions

Stun guns sparking questions



Watching
By Paul T.
O'Connor

RALEIGH -- Late at night, a young man enters a 24-hour convenience store. With a quick move, he knocks the store clerk silly with a 50,000 volt electrical shock from a stun gun. He empties the cash register and flees. Three or four minutes later, the clerk is able to call police.

In that hypothetical situation, North Carolina criminal law fails to answer two important questions. Did the young man commit first degree armed robbery? Does he face a mandatory seven-year prison term if convicted?

The answer to both questions is probably no, says an Alamance County legislator who wants the legislature to study stun guns. Although a court might interpret the current armed robbery statute to include stun guns, state law doesn't address the new devices.

A stun gun is powered by a nine volt battery. It has two probes extending from the front. When pressed to a person's body and fired, it will deliver a 50,000-volt shock that will interrupt a person's neurological impulses. It all means you fall to the ground, incapacitated for several minutes, but generally without long term injuries.

The General Assembly failed to address stun guns in any major way in 1985 because it didn't know the direction in which to head.

Even North Carolina law enforcement officials have mixed feelings about the weapons, says Rep. Tim McDowell, D-Alamance.

"Some think we ought to ban them altogether," McDowell said. "Some want to handle them the same way as handguns, with a permit, and then others want to encourage their use because they're safer than a pistol if you're to have one around the house." With the exception of an amendment to a pocket knife bill that added stun guns to the list of weapons one cannot carry concealed, no stun gun legislation passed in 1985.

At McDowell's urging, the legislature decided, instead, to study the stun gun question. Because a bill banning stun guns on school property passed the House, any legislation the study commission might recommend could, according to legislative rules, come before the 1986 short session.

As it tries to develop a stun gun strategy for North Carolina, the commission will have the ex-

periences of several other states to consider. That experience shows the same kind of mixed feelings, however, that North Carolina law enforcement express.

Michigan, Hawaii and New Jersey, according to a study by the National Conference of State Legislatures, ban all electronic weapons. A Michigan State Police captain, quoted in the NCSL study, said there are too many unknowns to allow the stun guns to get into circulation. They can be fatal, the captain said, if used against people with heart conditions or other ailments.

As many as a half-dozen states have banned all private use of stun guns but make an exception for law enforcement officials. The weapons are considered very useful for police. McDowell first got interested in stun guns after the Burlington police, which use the weapon, became concerned about growing private use.

Georgia, the only North Carolina neighbor to address the question, has simply added stun guns to the legal definition of firearms. A stun gun is therefore subject to the same restrictions and penalties for misuse as a handgun.

Finally, Indiana and South Dakota allow its citizens to carry stun guns. Crimes committed with stun guns carry tougher sentences, however, than those in which no weapon was used.

Advice on what to eat plentiful

By W.B. Jenkins
N.C. Farm Bureau Federation

Every day Americans are bombarded with advice about what to eat and what not to eat.

Things were simpler and less confusing when mother was the ultimate authority on what to eat. Now, we get most of our nutritional information through the media. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean we are getting advice any better than mother's.

According to Lyn Konstant, University of Missouri foods and nutrition specialist, anyone can

call himself or herself a nutritionist, write a book and call it nutrition advice. To improve your chances of getting sound nutritional advice, Konstant has a few suggestions.

He suggests that if you're really concerned about your diet ask your physician to put you in touch with a registered dietician. The registered dietician degree is granted by the American Dietetic Association to candidates who have at least a bachelor's degree in foods and nutrition from an accredited school.

One thing to be cautious about is the nutritional advice contained in popular magazines, even those purported to be health publications. A survey of 30 periodicals conducted by the American Council on Science and Health, found that one-third of the publications' articles on health were inconsistent or unreliable.

Konstant reminds all of us that there are no absolutes in human nutrition except for this one: We have a need for many different nutrients.

Kay Kyser is hard to forget

Back in the 30's when the big band was in its heyday, one of the top band leaders was Kay Kyser, like Sammy Kaye, he did things differently.

I remember Kay Kyser, he played before the North Carolina General Assembly one evening. I was a freshman in the General Assembly that year which was 1947. He and his group were tops.

His music group was the "Kollege of Musical Knowledge." It was good music and in 1940 Kyser was the top money earner for one of the major recorders.

But he gave up show biz, turned to religion and returned to North Carolina shortly after the war. He was missed in the music field but fulfilled a greater dream for over 30 years with church work.

Cliff
Blue



People and Issues

His recent death made many remember he is hard to forget.

AGREEMENT ... Last minute agreement by Senate and House conferees to cut the 1985-86 budget about \$55 billion next year and perhaps \$200 plus billion in three was welcomed by investors and brokers.

The congressional budget-cutting wasn't enough but the feeling in financial centers was that if

some reduction hadn't been agreed on, confidence in the U.S. economy and the dollar would have suffered badly, here and abroad.

The suspicion among many, however, is that the slower economy of recent months is going to lower estimated revenues. So the deficit will remain very high.

The president served notice the week Congress recessed that more savings would be realized after members return to Capitol Hill.

FARM PRICES ... Prices farmers get for raw products dropped 0.8 percent in July, the fifth consecutive decline in the monthly indicator and 12 percent below a year ago, the Agriculture Department said recently.

NOTICE TO ALL Alert Cable T.V. Subscribers

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Harrison Daniels
System Manager



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