

Opinions

OUR VIEW

Bad Examples

Open almost any newspaper nowadays and chances are that, within the span of a child's hand, you can find more than one item about drug or alcohol abuse, gambling or something equally illegal in the world of sports. Televised news programs zap us every evening with the sordid details.

Just recently, American League Most Valuable Player Jose Canseco was charged with carrying a loaded pistol. This past winter Canseco was booked for speeding over 100 miles per hour in Florida. A football coach was ticketed for DWI in the Midwest. Pete Rose is under investigation for alleged gambling activities. And everybody in these parts knows of David Thompson's troubles.

National Basketball Association players by the dozens have been in and out of institutions in the past few years drying out or kicking drug habits--Roy Tarpley, Walter Davis, George Gervin, Michael Ray Richardson and Chris Mullin, to name a few.

What can these young men be thinking? Or are they thinking at all? Their employers shell out millions of dollars for their services and they continue to abuse themselves and their professions. But their worst offense is to the children who idolize them. When a sports figure takes his salary he should understand that a certain amount of responsibility to the public goes along with it.

A youngster will try to emulate his heroes. Perhaps it is time we adults teach our children that ballplayers are mere humans and unworthy of their trust and adulation.

Not Good Idea

The N.C. State Senate has taken a step that will limit the vote in this state. On May 5, that august body voted to discontinue the practice of split-ticket voting for Governor and Lt. Governor.

In the future, when you make your choice for Governor you must vote for the party's choice for the second post should this charade become law. What this means is the Senate wants the electorate to select political philosophy rather than a candidate of choice. Presumably, team ticket voting would also eliminate a write-in vote for Lt. Governor as well. Further, it opens the door for political parties to repay favors to PAC's or individual contributors.

We see this as another infringement on the rights of the citizens in this state.

Senators Rauch and Marvin voted for the bill, but Senator Ollie Harris of Kings Mountain was one of two courageous lawmakers to vote against it. In this case, Senator Harris and his confederate cast a vote for the people.

Team In KM?

Pro football in Kings Mountain? A dream, you may say, but it could happen.

As you have known for sometime, two groups of businessmen--one headed by George Shinn of Charlotte and the other by Jerry Richardson of Greenville, S.C.--have been trying to convince the NFL that the Charlotte area would be the ideal spot for an expansion team. If NFL owners had not thought seriously about it before, they must have noted the success of the Charlotte Hornets and should be giving serious thought to this area now.

Of course, if George Shinn wins the franchise he will locate the team in Charlotte, or possibly just over the South Carolina line near Carowinds. But Shinn has had some problems lately trying to purchase Cy Bahakel's share of the Hornets, and if that situation isn't resolved soon, it could help give the inside track to an NFL franchise to Richardson's group.

Richardson has indicated that if he gets the franchise he'll try to locate it halfway between Spartanburg and Charlotte, and he has already contacted owners of a large tract of land in Kings Mountain about locating a stadium on their property on I-85 just inside the Gaston County line.

We wish both Shinn and Richardson well in their efforts. An NFL team anywhere in the area would be great, but it would really be nice if it were in Kings Mountain.

Don't think this is impossible. Kings Mountain's not too small for an NFL franchise. Ever heard of Green Bay, Wisconsin?

TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE

Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. Proverbs 31:10-12

Your Right To Say It



Jim Heffner

There's Good In Everyone

His name was Dennis, and at age 17 he was a handsome, muscular youngster who could throw a baseball through a brick wall. The New York Yankees were interested in him, but so was Uncle Sam and Uncle Sam took precedence because he had a war going on in Europe. So Dennis entered the U.S. Army.

He became a member of an elite group of fighting men known as Darby's Rangers, and saw combat in Bastogne, St. Lo, Czechoslovakia. On D-Day, his unit landed on Omaha Beach at Normandy.

I don't know how many men Dennis killed during WWII, if any at all. But he certainly saw a lot of men die and it haunted him for the rest of his life. After the war, Dennis came home carrying an armload of chocolate bars, a .45 automatic, a leather jacket he said he had taken from a dead German and enough memories to last an eternity.

He had a difficult time adjusting to civilian life, as do many warriors, and later he turned to drink. Dennis evolved into a bona fide two-fisted drinker -- an alcoholic.

He had a hard time holding a job, trying his hand at many trades; and eventually, becoming a skilled carpenter. I remember a time when my father and I visited him at a new home-site he was helping to build. We stood and watched as he erected the chimney. He laid the bricks without using a level of any kind, and when he had finished, he stepped back to admire his handiwork. My dad asked, "How in the world did you build that chimney so straight without using a level?" With a twinkle and a boyish grin he said, "That's the first time I've ever tried my hand at laying bricks. I guess you might say I have a good eye."

Dennis married a beautiful girl, but it didn't work out because of his drinking. Mostly, he just drifted here and there, always staying within the confines of North and South Carolina, pursuing odd jobs and hooking on with construction crews from time to time, and, of course, drinking.

He never played baseball again except pick-up games among neighborhood people. He could still throw a baseball, and a softball as well, and he could hit. But he never took anything seriously other than alcohol.

As far as I know, Dennis was never sick a day in his life, I mean bed-ridden sick.

There were periods of time when he gave up the booze, once for two years. Other times he attended church regularly. Everybody liked Dennis.

He joined the National Guard around 1949, and his unit was activated during the Korean conflict. But Dennis managed to get discharged before they shipped out.

He became one of those lost souls that end up wandering aimlessly through life.

Dennis refused to talk about the war. On one rare occasion, he did tell me about St. Lo, France describing it as a living hell. "That was the worst," he said. "It was bloody slaughter. I saw many people -- friends acquaintances and any number of young American soldiers -- lose limbs and lives all around me. I have no idea why I was spared." His eyes became moist and distant.

One fateful day, I got that inevitable call. Dennis had been found dead in his apartment. I visited the little town where he was living at the time and was told he had worked the day before. It was a bitterly cold February day. An onlooker told me that when the medics brought him out of his home, one of Dennis' arms was frozen above his head. The apartment was unheated, but I don't know whether he froze to death or died of natural causes. The uplifted arm could have been caused by rigor-mortise. Some say he died of a heart attack.

The funeral was held at a small, neat church. I went to that service, preached by an elderly fundamentalist minister. I was curious to hear what he could say about Dennis, but, in fact, he preached a touching funeral. Afterwards, I stopped him outside the church to tell him his words had been kind and comforting. I wondered how he knew so much about Dennis.

His reply was, "Dennis was an unusually extraordinary man."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Why, didn't you know? He gave us the land on which to build this church, and he actually built the biggest part of it."

I hadn't known, and I was somewhat shocked. But upon reflection, Dennis had worked at times and I knew he was not one to waste money, except on liquor. Obviously, a portion of his earnings went somewhere other than the local ABC store.

I went away from that funeral feeling pretty good about my Mom's baby brother.



Guest Column

Thanks From Exchange Teacher

(ED. NOTE - Barbara Turner, a teacher from England, has been teaching at North School this year in the Fulbright Teaching Exchange Program. North teacher Connie Phifer has been teaching Ms. Turner's class in England. Mrs. Turner wrote the following letter to Kings Mountain school personnel).

At the end of the school year, I will travel across the States, before I return to England, so...

The PTA meeting, a few weeks ago, was a good opportunity to speak to my colleagues about my year in Kings Mountain. Here is a transcript of my address, which reviewed my experiences, and I hope, conveyed pleasure, and gratitude, to the many people and organizations with whom I have worked and conversed this academic year.

I'll try not to speak about education, because I wouldn't know when to stop. But I will speak about the students we teach.

And I won't draw comparisons, because they are meaningless, unless we all share the experience and learn from it. Miss Phifer and I have been the lucky ones. But I will speak about what the Exchange has meant to me.

And I won't tell you about the beautiful places I have visited, because you have already been there, long ago. But I will speak about Kings Mountain, and what it has meant to me.

First...the students. I hope they have benefitted as much as I have. You get to know 22 young people very well in 10 months, and establish a great rapport if you work well together.

And I think we did...through lessons and school events, field days and trips, and visits to our classroom from those who like talking with students as much as I do.

We participated in principal days, terrific kids days, talent shows, recitals and symphonies, and filled our days with learning...from and about one another, which is what education is all about.

Thank you, students, for a whole year of pleasure in your company.

I look back to the day, last August, when Miss Phifer and I exchanged commemorative plaques, from our respective cities and education departments, at the teacher lunch.

We embarked on an almost total exchange of roles, both professionally and socially, writing frequently and communicating with our respective schools, teacher colleagues and friends. And that's not all. Two classes in each school on each side of the Atlantic are conducting pen friendships, which are going strong, but need a little nurturing next year by loving parents, when the student writes to the home instead of the school. Who knows, there may be, in a few years, a little commuting each way between friends who can stand the test of time and distance.

It was from a pen friend of mine, when I was a third grader, that I first heard about the Fulbright Scholarship. Her father, a principal in Wellington, New Zealand, himself a Fulbright Scholar, visited me, while teaching in England, thus cementing the friendship.

I can't resist telling you that my feet have hardly touched the ground this year. At least, pressed very hard on the accelerator! When you consider that my country would fit neatly into your state of Oregon, you can imagine how I have had to change gears, so to speak, mentally as well as physically.

I have had the pleasure of speaking to many groups here, ranging from Rotarians, Kiwanis, Phi Delta Kappa, librarians, school secretaries, book and study groups, luncheon groups, to American veterans. Wonderful opportunities to communicate in all ways!

Communicating isn't always easy when two differing cultures meet. It has to be worked at. I want to thank my assistant, Mrs. Maxine Bennett, for her positive approach to our working relationship and the help she has given me. We have been blessed with a wonderful group of students, which does help, considerably.

I am grateful for the help given by third grade staff, all other staff, KM administrative staff, NCAE officials, and principals and staff of other schools, where I have observed and talked with students, and been welcomed most kindly.

To the Supt. of Schools, Dr. Bob McRae, and Mrs. Jane King, Director of Instruction and former principal of North School, who supported Miss Phifer's application and our exchange, thank you for putting it into operation.

And to Joey Hopper, principal of North School, most sincere thanks

Flowers Reflected Lillian Mitchem's Beauty

You may not have known Lillian Mitchem, but you knew her yard. It was on the corner of King Street and Railroad Avenue--the one across from the overhead bridge with the flowers from spring until fall.

The first thing she did every morning was to open her front door and look out at the purple, yellow, blue, red, orange and green landscape. The yard was always full of pansies, petunias and what "Mitchem", as she liked her friends to call her, a flower called "blue flock."

Mitchem flowers delighted passers-by for most of the year. Motorists would stop and say thank you to the petite great-grandmother and often when she came home from church at St. Matthew's Lutheran Lillian would find a note pinned to the door from someone in Asheville, New York, Charleston, Charlotte, Gastonia, or Shelby who enjoyed her flowers so much that they stopped to admire them closer.

Before she left Kings Mountain and went to live at Lutheran Nursing Home in Hickory, Lillian told us at



Lib Stewart

an American Legion Auxiliary meeting that she felt closest to God working in her garden. She said she appreciated people telling her they enjoyed the beautiful yard because most people don't take the time to stop and smell flowers let alone grow them. When Lillian was 75 she had a pacemaker put in but that didn't slow her down. "Every time I got down in the dumps I'd just keep on digging that much harder in the yard," she said.

Mitchem was one of the first residents to ask for an

apartment when Kings Mountain Housing Authority built the first senior apartments in town. She asked for the corner apartment on King Street because it was close to town and she could walk. She said she promised, in turn, to make the city proud of the yard. Lillian planted her garden at night and every morning got her little digger out and went to work. The garden was never the same two years in a row. It got prettier and prettier.

Lillian Mitchem died Monday at age 83. She gave up gardening and her "green thumb" when she entered the nursing home several years ago but the love of flowers was in her blood. She told me one day, "You know if you get me to talking about my flowers, there's no stopping me and you'll never get home."

The secret of her green thumb was the love she put into her garden.

Lillian's corner of town was never the same when she moved away but the memory of the beauty she created has remained.

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