

Opinions

JIM HEFFNER

Columnist



# Deception all around

Did you ever read "Catcher in the Rye," by J.D. Salinger? I got hold of a copy about three years back and read it, after hearing about the book all my life. It is a classic.

The theme examined by Salinger in his best selling novel is deception, or, as described by Holden Caulfield in the book, phoniness.

Well, I gotta tell you folks, there's a lot of that going around these days.

I was attending a basketball game recently, and a guy was smoking three rows down and considerably to the left of me. I wouldn't have noticed had it not been for the lady sitting beside me. She started up with a hacking put-on cough and elbowed me in the ribs. Don't you think that's terrible?" she said, pointing to the criminal offender.

"What's terrible?" I asked.

"That guy down there smoking. Doesn't it bother you?"

"No, ma'am," I replied, "not a bit."

She turned up her nose and had nothing more to say, which suited me fine.

If that isn't phony, I don't know what is. I don't smoke cigarettes--never have. I do smoke a pipe occasionally. I believe in live and let live. If a person chooses not to smoke that's fine with me, and if someone wants to smoke that's ok with me also. I am, however, offended by people who go out of their way in an effort to deny anyone the right to smoke if he or she elects to do so.

This smoke/no smoke situation is getting out of hand. The Texas state legislature recently voted to increase the state tobacco tax to \$4.10 per carton, ignoring warnings that cigarette thefts would increase, and sure as shooting that problem is already on the rise in Texas. Not only that, according to the Dallas Times Herald, the tax hike has increased the value of cigarettes to such an extent that black market tobacco is becoming a problem in that state. I just don't understand why government can't leave well enough alone.

**FALLEN WOMAN** - A few years back, my wife, Ann, fell down some steps in a building in town. She didn't get hurt badly but she did suffer a few scrapes and bruises. Last week she went to a local funeral home to pay respects to the family of a relative who had passed away. As she started up the steps of the funeral home, she took another spill, and this time came away with a split knee and a sprained wrist. Still, she wasn't hurt too badly but she did encounter some pain.

Anyway, last Sunday, she took part in the Easter Cantata at church. As she was leaving decked out in her costume, in my best show biz voice I chirped, "break a leg!"

Needless to say, I had plenty of second thoughts after she left. I hoped she wouldn't take me seriously.

**IN THE NEWS** - I travel quite a bit and I always try to read the local newspapers wherever I find myself. The last couple of weeks I've been in Charleston, Savannah and Raleigh.

I came across a story in one of the papers that was interesting to me.

There's a town in Texas called Chrystal City. A farming community, Chrystal City's chief agricultural product is spinach. They grow so much of the green, leafy vegetable in fact they bill their town as the "Spinach Capitol of the World." To prove they are serious, local citizens point to a statue of Popeye prominently displayed in the town square. It's been there since 1937.

Another item I came across tells about how LensCrafters, a \$600 million chain of eyeglass stores, goes out of their way to increase morale among their employees. It seems that field managers routinely challenge stores to meet sales goals. When those goals are accomplished, a store representative gets to throw a pie in the field manager's face. LensCrafters says it does wonders for morale. I wonder how high the turnover rate is among field managers?

How about it Gary Stewart? Can we work something out.

(ED. NOTE - Yeah, and you've just been promoted to field manager).

## Cartoonitorial



## Crunch time for schools

It is now "crunch time" for the public schools of North Carolina. In a year where the economic situation of the state has the General Assembly searching for ways to balance its budget schools are facing the possibility of having to substantially change offerings to their students.

The debate in the legislature focuses on whether the budget should be balanced by reducing expenditures, raising revenues, or a combination of both. Most people seem to think that there will be some of both, but even with that option being pursued, it appears that allotments to public schools will decrease somewhat, perhaps considerably. Projections are tentative at this point in time. However, as the cutting process begins, it appears our continuation budget for 1991-92 may be reduced by as much as \$130 per pupil. That would mean that we could have our state budget cut by more than \$500,000.

Cutting over a half million dollars, even from a large budget, is a very difficult process. At this point I am not prepared to make firm recommendations to the Board of Education as to where those cuts would be made. Those recommendations will have to come after a more careful study of our programs and services. This budget debate must cause citizens to focus very clearly on one specific question. "What is it that we expect our public schools to accomplish?"

In recent years the schools of this state have greatly expanded their services to children. Society seems to expect its schools to deal not only with the academic preparation of its youth but also with the results of a myriad of social/legal problems which confront those youth in today's world. No one should hope that the schools can accept all of these tasks without adequate resources.

Consider some of the new programs state funds have allowed us to implement in recent years. We have had a very successful tuition-free summer school program for students in grades 1-12. Participation in the program has allowed many students to avoid failure and stay on track with their age group in school. If funds are cut substantially, the summer school program may have to be cut back to only deal with grades 3, 6 and 8 as where law requires summer school. Recent increases have also given us more money with which to purchase instructional supplies and equipment and textbooks, all of which cost significantly more than they did a few years ago.

By far the largest portion of recent increases has been for new offerings due to the Basic Education Program. We have substantially expanded and improved our programs to children in a number of ways. Examples of offerings expanded or begun through

BOB McRAE

Superintendent  
Kings Mountain Schools



BEP funding are elementary physical education, foreign language, art, and music and K-12 dance. We have also been able to expand our guidance services to children through the BEP, a move that was sorely needed as our children face more and more societal problems in today's world. Were it not for increased funding in recent years, we would be nowhere near where we are today in the services we can provide the children of our school system.

I know the economy is struggling. I also know that across this state, including in our own county, bond issues and tax referendums to support the schools have been passing far more often than they have been defeated. Public opinion polls consistently show that the citizens of North Carolina are willing to foot the bill for better schools. Our ability to continue the level of service we are now offering is at risk. If you are interested in that not happening, I would encourage you to contact our legislative delegation and make your feelings known. It is only through a strong voice from the citizens of this state that we can come through this debate with minimal damage.

I do not pretend that there is the potential for large increases for schools even if new revenues are found. I realize that some cuts are inevitable. What I am interested in is minimizing the effect. If we are unable to accomplish that, we will have to take a serious look at people and programs for reductions. Your children and grandchildren will be affected as will our employees. Where those reductions will fall remains to be determined, but their effect will be substantial.

I saw a sign the other day that said, "When you stop looking up, you start looking down." We have too much left to do. The existence of adequate funding will not guarantee success, however the lack of it may indeed guarantee the lack of success. I plan to let my legislators know how I feel. If you agree that we must keep the momentum built for public education going forward, even if that means new revenues, I encourage you to contact them as well - and do it quickly.

## Your Right To Say It

# Aspartame safe to use

(ED. NOTE - The following letter was written to Amy Morris of King Mountain in reply to a letter to the editor which she wrote in the December 6, 1990 edition of the Herald).

I am writing to you about your article titled "Sugar substitutes harmful to health" which appeared in the December 6, 1990 issue of the Kings Mountain Herald. Specifically, I would like to take issue with your comments about aspartame (which is sold under the trade name NutraSweet brand sweetener).

Aspartame has been reviewed and found safe for the general population, including children, by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the World Health Organization, the Council on Scientific Affairs of the American Medical Association, and regulatory agencies of more than 90 other nations. Prior to FDA approval of aspartame in 1981, more than 100 studies were conducted in animals and humans. The safety of aspartame has been well-documented by numerous controlled studies in both adults and children, as well as special subpopulations: obese persons, diabetic persons, lactating women, those suffering from chronic renal failure, and those heterozygous for phenylketonuria (PKU).

With more than 150 million regular aspartame consumers in the United States alone, it is statistically inevitable that some individuals who experience symptoms will also consume products containing aspartame. The NutraSweet Company investigates and voluntarily reports all such complaints to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). These reports have been extensively reviewed by the FDA and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC examined 500 complaints and found it was not possible to identify any "specific constellation of symptoms clearly related to aspartame consumption."

The FDA also conducted an exhaustive review of more than 4,000 complaints, which incidentally represents a small fraction of the 150 million aspartame consumers, and arrived at the same conclusion. The FDA has stated periodically that the adverse reactions allegedly related to aspartame "...do not establish reasonable evidence of possible public health harm. There is not consistent or unique pattern of symptoms reported with respect to aspartame that can be casually linked to its use."

In addition, a controlled study of 108 normal adults by Leon, et al. at the University of Minnesota further confirmed aspartame's safety. The authors concluded that daily consumption of aspartame at 1.5 times the government Allowable Daily Intake (which is 50 mg/kg body weight/day) is safe.

We are all aware of the power of the printed word. All those who read the Kings Mountain Herald deserve a solid, balanced report. It is for this reason that I write to you.

Sincerely,  
Robert H. Moser, M.D.  
Vice President, Medical Affairs  
The NutraSweet Company

## News Deadlines

The Kings Mountain Herald welcomes your news items for publication in each Thursday's paper. We ask that you follow these deadlines when submitting material.

The deadline for social news including weddings, anniversaries, reunions, engagements, birthdays, club news, church news, etc., is Friday at 5 p.m.

The deadline for A section news, including community and school activities, sports news, etc., is Tuesday at 5 p.m. News of Tuesday night meetings and other activities will be accepted until 10 a.m. on Wednesdays.

Call your items of interest into the Herald at 739-7496 or bring them by our office on East King Street at Canterbury Road.

## Kings Mountain People

Do you know someone who is special. Maybe he or she has worked the same job for many years, or volunteers time to help others, or has a hobby that others would like to read about.

If so, give us a call at 739-7496 and recommend that we do a story on your friend for our weekly Kings Mountain People feature.

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## Sidewalk Survey

Do you think UNC Coach Dean Smith should have been ousted from Saturday's basketball game?



**KEN LAIL**  
NO. His action didn't warrant being thrown out of the game.



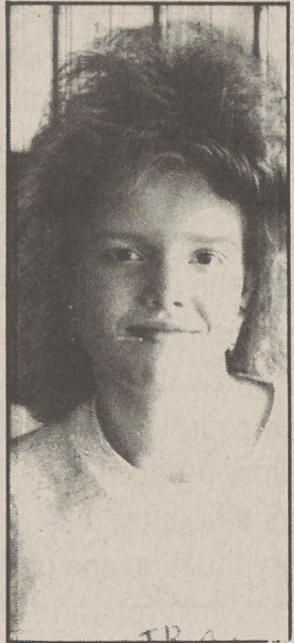
**SHERRY WILSON**  
No. Their ruling was too harsh.



**JACK SIMS**  
No. The action of the officials was petty.



**JOYCE WHEELER**  
No. Coach Smith didn't do a thing wrong.



**TERESA HINSON**  
No. Carolina had lost and it served no purpose.



**RICK LAWS**  
Yes. I'm a die-hard Duke fan.