

Opinions

Jim Heffner

Columnist

1 ringy dingy, 2 ringy dingy

There I was, sitting alone in my den nursing the first cup of morning coffee. This was my first day of vacation and I fully intended to spend it doing whatever I wanted, which was just about nothing.

The telephone rang and I picked it up. Here's how the conversation went:

"Hello!" I said.

"Whir-r-r-r," was the reply.

"Hello!" I said again.

A mechanical, monotone voice answered, "This is the opportunity you've been looking for. If you act today you can be the recipient of a..."

I hung up. Actually, it was more like I slammed the receiver down, which was silly, because all the metal monster did was just dial the next number in sequence.

There is nothing more irritating to me than those calls made by automatic dialers and computers. Thank the Lord, Congress is in the process of passing laws that govern these nuisance calls. There are over 18 million of them every day. Some states have laws against them already. I guess the people who run these mechanized boiler room operations are making money, though, or they wouldn't continue the practice.

Ironically, two days earlier, a Kings Mountain business man had mentioned a telephone experience he had. It seems he had received a pamphlet from the phone company that informed him of new services that might lower his telephone costs.

This gentleman called the phone company to inquire about the service, because what businessman doesn't want to lower his operating costs?

He was greeted by one of those messages that said something like, "by using your touch-tone phone you can help us give you better service. If you're calling about your residential bill, press one; if you're calling about a business bill, press 2..." and nausea.

Anyway, after he had finally pressed the proper button, a lady came on and immediately put him on hold, where he remained for several minutes. He didn't get to discuss lowering his business telephone costs, but he did get a promise that someone would call him later.

This guy was irritated to say the least. After his experience, then mine, I began to wonder if we aren't becoming slaves to the burgeoning telephone industry.

Have you tried calling any state office in Raleigh? Forget it. You could get transferred around from department to department all day. Try one of your local government offices.

Telephones are everywhere. In almost every room in the home, on every street corner, in automobiles. You name it.

A few years back, my wife and I went to the Virgin Islands. Since it was our second trip to that paradise we decided against spending all our time shopping in St. Thomas. We would visit some of the outer islands and our first choice was St. John, which is one of the least inhabited islands in the chain, but with great snorkeling spots.

We were unable to rent a car, so we hitched on one of the lorries that operate from the docks to some of the beaches and snorkeling areas. After several bumpy miles, many 180 degree switchover points and more than a few close brushes with 200 foot drops, the primitive conveyance arrived at a place called Trunk Bay. To get to the beach, we had to blaze a trail through a pretty thick stand of jungle. As we hacked our way through the trees and undergrowth, we came upon a clearing and there, mounted on a post, was a telephone. Unbelievable.

"This must be some kind of joke," I said.

"Try it," said Ann.

I picked up the receiver and there was a dial tone. I called a friend in Gastonia, just to see if the call would go through. It did.

Can't you just see it? When it comes time for some of us to go to that great phone booth in the sky, we're standing outside the pearly gates, there will be a line of telephones. You'll pick one up and an angelic voice will croon, "you can help us by using your touch-tone phone and following directions. If you have committed just a few minor sins, press one. If you are a convicted felon, press 2. If you've committed no sins at all..."

Alexander Graham Bell can't be resting comfortably these days.

Cartoonitorial

CAN'T YOU WAIT 'TIL THE HOLIDAYS?



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Schools becoming more effective

I've begun to conduct performance observations on the principals in our system. I do this each year, and while I try to visit our schools frequently, these lengthier visits give me the opportunity to observe the schools themselves more closely than shorter visits. I want you to know that I am really proud of what I am seeing. I sense a real dedication to teaching our children and a real commitment to squeezing every possible instructional minute out of the school day. This is no small accomplishment given the many responsibilities our school personnel have.

While our employees have always given a great effort to their jobs, I think our emphasis on effective schools has helped us to renew our commitment. As the year began, each of our schools had lengthy discussions about what its mission was to be. These discussions resulted in a mission statement being adopted by each school to complement the school district's mission statement which was developed at the end of last year. I want to share these mission statements, which state the real purpose of the school as determined by its employees, with you in today's column.

**Kings Mountain District Schools:** Kings Mountain District Schools is committed to teaching for learning for all. As partners for excellence, our schools and community will assure each student's success in school and in our rapidly changing society.

**Bethware Elementary School:** The Bethware staff is committed to working with students and parents to assure successful learning for all.

**East Elementary School:** East School is dedicated to working with students, parents, and community to ensure that all children learn.

**Grover Elementary School:** Grover Elementary is committed to prepare all students to become productive, responsible citizens who achieve a sense of personal fulfillment intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally.

**Kings Mountain High School:** Kings Mountain High School is committed to the concept that all students can master the skills and acquire the knowledge necessary to graduate and to become responsible, pro-

BOB McRAE  
Superintendent  
Kings Mountain Schools



ductive citizens. Kings Mountain Middle School: The faculty and staff of Kings Mountain Middle School are dedicated to providing a caring environment to promote and ensure teaching for learning for all. North Elementary School: North School is committed to meet the needs of all students. We feel that the climate will be conducive to learning, providing security, motivation, independent growth, exploration, challenge, and mastery of basic skills. Teaching for learning for all makes North a great place to grow. West Elementary School: West is committed to teaching children to learn how to learn for a lifetime. I am proud of our folks for coming to grips with the issue of developing a mission statement. This "raises the stakes," so to speak, as they publicly commit to what their main business should be. As you visit the schools, I invite you to see if we are living up to our missions. I think you will be pleased. Effective schools is not a passing fad, a bandwagon to get on for the short haul. We are committed to making the "all children can learn" effort a continuing goal for the Kings Mountain District Schools. Please remember that, in order to be successful, we will need your patience and support. I think we all should be able to agree on the value of the effort. I want you to know that the people to whom you entrust this work are capable, caring, and dedicated. Thank them whenever you get the opportunity for you are giving them the most important task a community can give to anyone - the education of its children.

GARY STEWART  
Editor



Just put me in the dog house

The warm fall weather has felt good. It, and the fact that until last night we were between sports seasons, has allowed me to get to the creek once or twice to wet a line, get in a couple of rounds of golf, which I lost, and believe it or not, do some things that needed to be done around the house.

Monday, it was so nice it was really miserable being inside. I was so thankful when Calvin and Tony Crawford called and said they had caught a state record 61.02-pound Buffalo Carp and wanted me to come out to Midway Lake and take a picture of it. Riding out Highway 74 with the window down made me think of a warming spring afternoon and high school baseball.

When I came to work Tuesday morning it was still nice and comfortable even though it was threatening rain. By the time I left Tuesday night the temperature had dropped substantially and it was cold, had been raining most of the day and felt like winter.

Just to make sure it's winter, I went to three old-time methods of predicting the weather. Well, actually, two.

Growing up I learned from the older generation that you could count the number of fogs in August and that's how many times it would snow in the winter. The late Herman Blalock, who along with his brother George ran a grocery store on Grover Road for many years, used to arise early in the morning and open his store about 5:30. Each August he would count the fogs and mark them on the calendar.

Three flurries, he said, equalled a snow. And, come winter, the snowfalls and the fogs would match-up pretty closely.

Needless to say, I don't get up at 5:30 so I miss a lot of the August fogs. So, that method's out.

Old-timers also used to say you could forecast the weather by splitting open a persimmon seed and looking at the design in the center of it. The inside of a persimmon seed is always shaped like a kitchen utensil, either a fork, spoon, or knife. You may think I'm shooting you some bull, but if you don't believe me split open a persimmon seed and see for yourself.

The tale is that if the inside of the seed has the shape of a knife you'll have a lot of cutting winds come winter. If it's shaped like a fork, it will be a mild winter. If it's shaped like a spoon, you'll shovel a lot of snow.

My parents used to have a persimmon seed in their back yard but I slipped and slid so many times while cutting grass that I slipped out there one day and cut it down. By the way, persimmon wood is some of the hottest-burning firewood you can get. But that's another story.

Since our persimmon tree was long ago turned into heat I asked our neighbor Ralph Cline to bring me a handful of persimmons off his tree. I cut one of the seeds open and inside it was a spoon. So, get ready to shovel some snow.

Take this for what it's worth: The Clines live just across the South Carolina line. Maybe the snow will stop at the line, maybe not. If I don't shovel snow this year the people over on Huffman Hill will.

The third weather-predicting method, which most mountain folk swear by, is the wooly worm. I don't put as much stock in the worm as I do the persimmon seed, but I checked him out also.

I've been told that you look at the wooly worm's coat. If it is a light shade of brown, it means the winter will be mild. If it's big and real dark brown it's going to be a really cold winter.

I went out into the front yard and found a great big wooly worm crawling across the driveway. He was really putting on a coat and it was dark brown all over. So, I figured we're in for a rough winter.

Then, I went out into back yard and found a middle-sized wooly worm in the wood pile. He was light brown on each end and dark brown right in the middle. Well, that indicates winter will be mild at the beginning, then turn very cold, and then turn mild again.

Then, I went down to feed the dog and crawling across the front of his house was a smaller wooly worm, and it was light brown all over. That indicates a mild winter.

It also means I'm going to be staying away from the driveway and woodpile and spend a lot of time in the dog house this winter.

Magic is not a hero

Earvin "Magic" Johnson's recent disclosure that he had tested positive for the HIV virus that causes AIDS came as a shock to all of us who still label great athletes as heroes.

He has been hailed as a "hero" by many, but he is not a model, an ideal, or a hero to anyone with a sense of sexual morality.

In explaining why he recently tested positive for the human immunodeficiency virus, Magic acknowledges that he can't be specific.

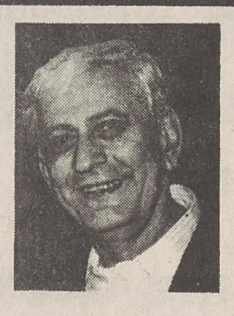
In a Sports Illustrated article, he writes, "I am certain that I was infected by having unprotected sex with a woman who has the virus. The problem is that I can't pinpoint the time, the place or the woman."

It's a matter of numbers. Before I was married, I truly lived the bachelor's life. I'm not Wilt Chamberlain (I claim to have had 20,000 sexual encounters), but I traveled around the NBA cities, I was never at home for female companionship.

Magic, who has enough money to run a small country, said there were just some bachelors that almost every woman in Los Angeles wanted to be with, men like Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall and...Magic.

Guest Column

Dwight Frady, Editor Belmont Banner



"I confess that after I arrived in L.A. in 1979, I did my best to accommodate as many women as I could - most of them through unprotected sex."

Thus magic is not a hero, but a victim. He was hailed for his "courage" for going public with his announcement. It didn't take courage. He had no choice. He knew that the truth would have risen to the surface.

His announcement made it sound as if he had signed a multimillion dollar deal to promote what he calls "safe sex." If anything, Magic is a sexist, having had so many affairs with so many women in so many

cities. But the activists haven't said anything, so maybe he isn't sexist.

Magic is a likable 32 year old superstar who should be applauded for being not only a great athlete, but for using his wealth to help many charitable causes.

The tragedy of Magic is his lack of understanding of basic values. His message fails to address the problem of sexual promiscuity. Our values are too often unspecified and we deny the standards of common morality.

Magic has not spoken about immorality or irresponsibility. In today's sex crazed society, we hear practically nothing about abstinence until married.

Magic, with that charming smile, says that having contracted the HIV virus is God's way of directing him "to become a teacher, to carry the message about the dangers of AIDS to everyone" after he educates himself about the disease.

He writes in Sports Illustrated, "Everything I've done, He's directed me." God may have directed Magic in many things, but certainly not...in everything.

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