

Happy New Year

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LOOKING BACK AT 1991



Good and bad news in '91

Kings Mountain made some progress in 1991, but for many citizens the year may not have held happy memories.

Many citizens suffered the loss of jobs as several plants closed in the city and county. Plant closings were particularly heavy early in the year and persons who lost jobs welcomed Congressional action late in the year which allowed them to receive extended unemployment benefits.

Kinmont Mills and Glen Raven Mills closed in January, costing 270 people their jobs. That figure rose to over 500 in the county as other major industries, including PPG, Anvil Knit and Thermacote Welco announced lay-offs. At PPG alone, 290 people were laid off. Tultex Outlet Store also closed after 13 years of business at the KM Plaza.

1991 was a year for building. The city completed most of its major utility expansions, giving the

city the capacity to handle industrial growth when the economy turns around. The school system also completed some major building programs with new school buildings being occupied at Groves, East and Bethware, and a major \$1.4 million project getting underway at West.

"Redistricting" was a big word in Kings Mountain in '91. The city feared that its election would have to be delayed because it had to redraw its voting lines. The plan was approved by the Justice Department and the election went on as scheduled. Kings Mountain citizens elected Scott Neisler as mayor to replace Kyle Smith, who did not seek reelection, and Philip Hager became the city's first black councilman, representing the new minority Ward One.

Many parents voiced their displeasure with the school board for re-drawing elementary attendance

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'92 has to be better

Looking ahead to 1992, local business leaders agree that the economy has got to get better.

Optimistic that the Kings Mountain economy will show steady growth in the new year, some local businessmen, however, are wary that the first half of the new year may not be as good but they expect strong growth in the second half of the year, despite a negative outlook being held by some economists and financial experts.

"It's got to get better," says Chamber of Commerce President-Elect Ruby M. Alexander and Baucom Chevrolet and Wade Ford executives Homer Baucom and Wade Tyner.

"Signs point to the fact that it has to be better because people have gone so many years without doing something about their transportation. They're going to be forced to do something this year. The economy is leveling off. It's not great but we look forward to doing better than last year," says Baucom.

Alexander says the economy will benefit from increased consumer spending and an increase in new home sales. "Now is the time to buy a house with the lower interest rates," she says.

Active in the Kings Mountain Board of Realtors and its charter president, Alexander sees job security more stable and says local realtors are confident that more growth in the area will result in more home con-

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Murder suspect commits suicide in east KM home

A 37-year-old Grover man wanted for four murders in Alexander County took his own life after holding police at bay for nearly five hours in East Kings Mountain Monday night.

For Dean Hamrick, 24 hours of terror ended with violence at 9:30 p.m. when he walked backwards off the back porch of his stepgrandmother's house on Groves Street, placed a military style shotgun under his chin and pulled the trigger.

"He said it had to be that way," said Kings Mountain Police Chief Warren Goforth, who along with Cleveland County Sheriff Buddy McKinney and agents from the Special Bureau of Investigation had appealed to him over a telephone to come out of the house and lay his weapon down. Police detained relatives trying to enter the house but Hamrick's mother, Sarah Carpenter, pleaded with her son by telephone to give himself up. "He said he won't be taken alive," said the distraught mother. John Carpenter, stepfather of Hamrick, was detained by sheriff's deputies as he tried to enter the one-story red brick home owned by Hamrick's stepgrandmother, Mrs. Helen Jennings.

"We didn't know if anyone was with the suspect in the darkened house and we could take no chances and would allow no one to get close to the house," said Goforth, who said the police SWAT Team was stationed about three feet from the back porch.

Four streets were barricaded, neighbors were evacuated and residents in the area turned off their lights and waited behind locked windows and doors as police and dogs swarmed the area.

Goforth credited Sheriff Buddy McKinney, the Sheriff's Department, KMPD, SBI, SWAT teams and highway patrol for containing what could have been a very dangerous situation.

Kings Mountain Police got the call at 4:50 p.m. that Hamrick's van had been spotted on Groves Street. The Special Response Team identified the suspect exit the Groves Street home, turn and reenter the house. Police said the man was wounded in the right arm.

By 5:15 p.m. police had set up a perimeter around the house and sealed off the neighborhood, evacuated people and made phone connections with the suspect inside the house.

The suspect said he wanted to talk with both the Alexander County and Cleveland County Sheriffs, according to Goforth, and negotiations were turned over to McKinney who knew the suspect, described by county officers as a "career criminal" who was last arrested in this county in June 1990 on charges of assault with deadly weapon and first degree kidnaping.

"We decided the best thing to do was to keep up communications with the suspect. Our concern was

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Dean Hamrick's mother, Sarah Carpenter, left, and brother, Buren Hamrick, right, wait in the street for a chance to try to talk Dean into surrendering to police in Kings Mountain Monday night.

Stocking fund gets \$4,176

The generosity and caring of local citizens made for a happy and merry Christmas for 79 children and 49 families in the Kings Mountain area.

The Empty Stocking Fund raised a record \$4,176.14 as \$1,066.14 was donated in the final days before Christmas.

The money was used to purchase food, toys and other necessities for needy children and their families in the Greater Kings Mountain area.

Contributions included:

Mr. and Mrs. Howard M. Broadwater, \$100.
Dixon Presbyterian Church, \$100.

Adult Sunday School Class, Dixon Presbyterian Church, \$100.
Julie G. Durham, \$75.
Mr. and Mrs. William F. Davis, \$35.

Ben T. Goforth Plumbing, \$50.
Mary Lee Bridgeman, in memory of Walter Bridgeman, \$30.

East School Penny Harvest, \$91.14.

Anonymous, \$115.
Geraldine Hayes, \$5.
Sandy Jones, \$5.
Judy Kelly, \$5.
Survilla Kithcart, \$10.
Terry Putnam, \$10.
Joy Wheeler, \$10.
Barbara Fitch, \$10.

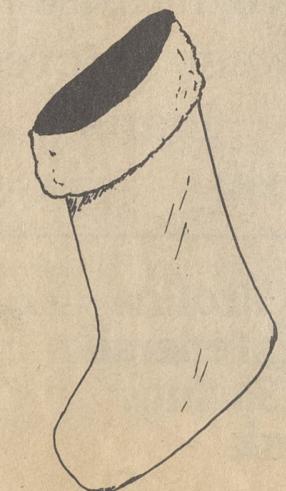
Leatha Lockhart, \$10.
Jean McAbee, \$10.
Gail Brown, \$15.
Rita Lawing, \$15.
Sandra Ray, \$15.
Bill G. Hughes, \$50.
Doris Bridges, in memory of G.W. Hancock Sr., \$10.

Julie Phillips, in memory of Jack Avery, \$10.
Daphne Adams, in memory of Jerther Thomas Adams, \$10.
Jimmy and Cathy Mancy, in memory of Gary, Betty and Cheryl Mancy, \$10.
Sharon Eaker, in memory of Frances Thornburg, \$20.
Sandie Young, in memory of

Diane Jaulette, \$30.
Penny Anthony, in memory of Lydia Anthony, \$10.
Gloria Slycord, in honor of Josh and Travis Slycord, \$10.
Gloria Grigg, in memory of Doris Dunn, \$20.
Betty Ingle, \$10.
Barbara Jones, \$10.

Friendship Class, Temple Baptist Church, Janet Walker, teacher, \$30.
WMU of Temple Baptist Church, \$20.

Received this week: \$1,066.14
Previous total: \$3,110.00
Grand Total: \$4,176.14.



New mayor sets goals

New Mayor Scott Neisler spent his first full week in the mayor's office chatting with visitors and going over goals for the new year with City Manager George Wood.

Neisler, who succeeded Kyle Smith as mayor on December 17, said he will make few changes in his administration, keeping the "status quo" as far as mayoral appointments are concerned. He said the council would be filling vacancies on committees as they occur after recommendations from the seven council members.

"We get caught up in so many 'have tos' in government that I want commissioners to bring their con-

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