

Opinions

Nostalgia Corner

Your Right To Say It

Jim Heffner

Columnist



They call it fine tuning

Today was the day. After 26 years, three months and two weeks, he was cut loose. Not laid off, mind you. That would mean he had recall rights for future openings, and this very large company doesn't want to be obligated to anybody.

He wasn't given any reason except his job was no longer justifiable, the same job he had performed for 15 years. The same job that is still in place but broken up in smaller pieces and handed out to several different people.

Here's how it happened.

He went to work for a large airline in 1965 after knocking around in several lesser jobs upon his release from the U.S. Navy. Starting at the bottom of the ladder, he steadily progressed until he became a regional manager in the communications department. At one time he was responsible for the airline's communications equipment in all of Canada and down the East coast to Savannah, Georgia, including dozens of travel agencies and several airline reservations offices. Twenty-one people reported to him. He executed his duties well and was rewarded with merit raises every year.

When 1986 rolled around the airline industry was in deep trouble, and this particular communications department was split off into a separate company so that its services and expertise could be offered to other clients. This worked so well that a large electronic conglomerate swallowed the company up in May of 1991.

"We don't want your equipment," the smaller company was told. "We want your people, who know the transportation business and have built so many fine automated reservations systems."

Oral promises were made, but nothing in writing. There was talk of guaranteeing all salaries for a minimum of three years and that no employee should be concerned about losing his or her job. That lasted about three months, then the lay-offs, excuse me, separations, began.

He was told not to worry, his job was secure, and, in November, he spent a week in Dallas, getting familiar with new managers from the parent organization.

In late November, 60 people from the smaller company were separated. During December, he noticed that he was being assigned less and less work. One of his friends, and an excellent employee who used to work for him, was told in January he was no longer needed. Two of his peers were told, at the same time, they would have to relocate or take a twenty percent pay cut.

The fateful day for him was February 7, when he was told his job was being phased out. He was called to Atlanta to talk to an internal placement specialist, Boston, Detroit or Dallas. He had made it clear to them that he wouldn't leave this area, but now he decided that he might relocate elsewhere in the Carolinas or perhaps Tampa. He has two grandchildren and another on the way. He had to try to reach an accommodation as both he and his wife have health problems that require medication and would need insurance.

They did not place him. One job in Tampa was discussed, but it meant a \$20,000 pay cut and no relocation help. He owns a house here, so that was not a viable alternative.

So, he was told, he would have to leave on February 28. His only alternative was early retirement, but the bulk of his retirement pay would come from the airline, since that's where he worked the longest. The airline, by now, was out of business, although some retirement benefits were due him - not enough to live on and pay the medical bills, but some.

In effect, he was forced into early retirement, at the age of 55, because he must have insurance, which would cost him a full forty percent of his retirement pay.

Now he must seek other employment to supplement his retirement benefits. Luckily, he has friends that have provided him with a job, but he is starting over at an age when most people are getting ready to enjoy the autumn of their years.

There is nothing unusual about this story. It is a scenario that is played out every day, a microcosm of present-day America.

The lesson to be learned here is that large companies are devouring small companies, skimming off the cream, and getting rid of the people who built the smaller companies.

The government of the United States should take notice and put a stop to this repulsive practice. It's a big factor in the high unemployment rate.

Conglomerates, of course, don't call it repulsive. They call it "fine tuning."



OPTIMIST LITTLE LEAGUERS IN '60 - Here's a picture of the Optimist Club's Little League baseball team in 1960. Front row, left to right, Mack Lefevers, Ronnie Payne, Kenny Bridges, Dana Sarvis, Jerry Elmore and Corky Fulton. Second row, David Bolin, Barry Rikard, Mickey Floyd, Billy Early, Steve McNeely, Brad Gregory and Bobby Peterson. Back row, Coach Jim Connor, Larry Gantt and Nelson Connor.

Exciting time for schools

It's hard to believe that we're now in the last one-third of this school year. Parents, be sure to contact your school now if you have any questions about your son or daughter's progress and how it might affect his or her placement next year. One summer school program will be different this year from what we have offered in recent years. We will offer summer school for students in grades 3, 6, and 8 who are not promoted due to their performance on certain state tests. The law requires that. All other summer school opportunities will be on a tuition basis only as our funds are being used to offer remediation during the school year. In so doing we hope to significantly reduce the number of students who need summer school. It may not be too late, with your help, to give those students who are on the border an extra push which will allow them to be promoted on schedule.

Also, state achievement testing for grades three, six, and eight and local achievement testing for grades four, five, and seven will be given during March 23 through April 3 time period. Your school can give you the exact dates for its testing. Of course, the state tests are a major part of the data which determines our performance on the state report card. Our staffs are working very hard to give our children the best opportunity possible to do well on these tests. Parents can help us with this task by being aware of testing dates for their children, emphasizing the importance of the tests, and making sure that their children are well rested when they leave for school on testing days.

State end of course testing for high school students, which also is a part of our report card results, will be given at the end of the school year.

There are many special interest events which our schools conduct in the last third of the year. I hope you will make note of the ones which most interest you and plan to attend. Our annual musical at the high school is this weekend. It is always a highlight of the year, and I encourage you to attend. Other yearly events include the spring band and chorus concerts, the visit of the Charlotte Symphony (this year's is April 30), and spring sporting events. Our K-8 schools also have special programs. Our teachers and students do a fantastic job with these special projects and deserve our support.

We will be completing the West School construction project this spring as well. This will be the final project of the first phase of our construction program. We hope to start the second phase of the program this

BOB McRAE
Superintendent
Kings Mountain Schools

summer with the expansion of North School's media center. There is much left to do in order to bring our campuses up to what the community deserves. Paving needs exist on most campuses. Central School needs to be renovated to serve us as our new district office. Our high school gymnasium is in need of new bleachers. The legitimate list is quite lengthy. As long as we benefit from the sales tax redistribution plan currently supported by our county commissioners, we should be able to continue to see great progress in the years ahead. We are very pleased with the West School addition to this point and think that school community will be also.

The spring is an exciting time for us. We prepare to congratulate our Class of 1992 as they leave us for even greater things and prepare to welcome the Class of 2005 as they embark on their elementary school years. It is a time when we seem to get to focus more on our successes and celebrate the great talents of our staff and students. While it is a fun time, it is also the time when we need to stay focused. June 2 is the last day of school, and there is much to do before then.

Our board of education also has many important decisions to make this spring. During the coming months it will have to determine such issues as how we will offer driver education to our students within new guidelines which require that it be taught outside the regular school day; what our 1992-93 budget will include; and what will be the future of new programs such as the multi-age classroom and the year-round school in our system.

The spring always brings much excitement and many decisions to a school system. The coming spring seems to offer even more than usual for us. I invite you to monitor our progress, our decisions, and the talents of our people.

Look out, she's wishing again!

Sigmund Freud once asked: "What do women want?"

Well, I can tell you what one woman wants...

■ Liz Taylor to stay married this time for at least one year.

■ Kudzu Dubose and Cathy to get a girlfriend and boyfriend respectively.

■ The characters on "One Life to Live" to actually get a life and live it.

■ Audrey Hepburn's body.

■ Dinner with Sean Connery.

■ To interview Mikail Gorbachev.

■ A log cabin on 10 acres of land.

■ A Jeep Cherokee.

■ Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis' lingerie budget (I hear she has enough underwear that she can change it several times a day.)

■ To run a marathon.

■ To go to the moon.

■ To go to the ACC tournament.

Renee Walser

■ Peace.

■ That cute bartender at the Village Tavern.

■ An end to the recession and unemployment.

■ The destruction of all nuclear weapons.

■ My nephew to take care of me when I'm old.

■ A guaranteed way to lose weight on a diet of M & Ms and Coca-Cola.

■ Cher's little black book.

■ To dance just once with Mikail Baryshnikov.

■ To be treated with respect.

■ To be satisfied with what I have.

Against year-round school

To the Editor:

Dr. McRae and our school board probably hear all too much of what is wrong with our schools and never hear about what is right. That is sad, but it just seems to be a reflection of human nature to dwell on the negative.

With this in mind, I'd like to say a big "THANK YOU" to the staff of Kings Mountain Junior and Senior High Schools for all they did for our son, Michael. When we moved here in 1987, we were somewhat concerned about leaving a school system that was well respected academically. Even though the schools were good in that county, it seemed to us that too much emphasis was placed on sports. Here in Kings Mountain it was our pleasure to learn that the schools made it a point to give equal recognition to sports and academic achievers. This more balanced school environment seemed to spur our son on to do his best work. For this we will always be grateful to our schools' fine staff and teachers. To say the least, our move to Kings Mountain has been good for us all, and the schools played a big part in making this so.

Now, on the "flip-side" of this coin may I voice an opinion about something that I understand is being considered by our school system -- the idea of having our students go to school the entire year. Educators who feel that this is the answer to all the school's problems may not like what I have to say, and if this should be the case, I hope they know that this opinion is voiced along with my highest regards for them and the work they do. My mother was a school teacher, and I have a deep appreciation for all good educators.

Several months ago I was asked by one of our church members, who is a parent, what I thought of the new year-around school proposal. I had no opinion at that time but promised to give it some study. I've come to the conclusion that like many other changes, this will have some benefits, but for me, the problems it will generate carry more weight. You may say that my reasons for reaching this conclusion border on being self-seeking, but since my church is involved, I make no apology for this.

First of all, a year-around school plan will greatly hinder, if not kill, some church programs that are already in place. Vacation Bible Schools, Youth Mission Tours, Summer Camps and Retreats are just a few programs that will be affected. If all schools go to this system, the economic effect on camps and assembly grounds will be devastating.

Secondly, I believe this program will place a tremendous burden on families who seek to spend quality time together, especially during vacations. I can foresee that families will begin to take more weekend vacations to meet this need. While I don't begrudge anyone's vacation time, I am concerned that family ties to the local church will be weakened. And the weakening of the family and the weakening of their worship and religious education experiences, in my opinion, can only make the tasks of our classroom teachers more difficult.

If this system goes into effect, students can no longer have summer jobs. Those who want to work, or who need to work, will have to work during their school year. I believe this can't help but hinder their grades as well as our school system's overall test scores.

Even though there are many others, one of the last concerns I want to mention is that of "focus versus diffusion." It seems that our social services have sold many educators on the idea that our schools are supposed to include social work as a part of their many tasks. The term "the whole child" is often included in this bill of goods. I believe some good social services can be given to many who need it in this year-around school program, but I am concerned that it will only tend to diffuse rather than focus our school systems where education is concerned. It has never been the job of our schools, nor should it be, to take care of all the social and medical needs of our children. This is a parent's responsibility, and then our social services should help when the parent cannot or will not do it. If we keep buying this argument that our schools have the responsibility for all of the social problems of our children then we are close to having our children institutionalized by the state.

These are just a few of my concerns, but I believe many of our citizens who are active church members will be equally as concerned once they consider all of the "pros and cons" of this year-around school proposal. I do not envy or covet the jobs of our school administrators or those on our Board of Education, but I do pray for them and the decisions they have to make. They, too, are responsible citizens of our community, and I'm sure they want responsible input from all of us to aid them in making wise decisions. Again I say "thank you" to these folks for all they do to make our school system the good one that it is.

Rev. Morris Jordan

Likes KM Herald

To the Editor:

My Aunt Carrie Hughes asked that I write you to express to you what I so often tell her: namely, how much I enjoy your newspaper. Whenever I visit, she lends me her old copies.

I am especially impressed by the thoroughness and newsworthiness of each article. You and your staff do an excellent job.

Also, your special series on the various segments of life in Kings Mountain was top notch.

Thank you for providing such a great service to the area. Keep up the good work.

Paul Starnes
Gaffney, S.C.

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