

Good News

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"I didn't have God fooled," says Gage

By RENEE WALSER

It's hard to imagine -- by looking at the confident young man with uncommon good looks and a long stride coming around the high school football stadium to the stage where he would preach and try to win some souls -- it's hard to imagine him on his hands and knees in front of an audience crying out, "God forgive me. Take control of my life. Save me."

But life had come to that for Rick Gage at age 25.

"I surrendered my all Jan. 15, 1984," he said recently during an interview.

Since then Gage has turned his back on sin, he said, and made winning souls for the Lord the center of his life.

"It was like a thousand pounds were lifted off my shoulders," he said.

What brought Gage -- outwardly, a "typical, clean-cut" youngster from Texas who was involved in all types of sports during his growing years and came from a religious family (his father is Freddie Gage, a famous evangelist) -- to his knees that night?

Gage is the third of four sons. His father has preached the gospel for 41 years. At age eight, Gage walked down the aisle of his Southern Baptist church and made a profession of faith. He thought that was all there was to it.

All the time, claiming

to be a Christian, Gage said he got involved in all the things teens are involved in today -- drugs, alcohol, parties.

"I would live like the devil during the week, but come Sunday, I would be your all-American boy," he said. "I had my folks fooled.

I had my Sunday School teacher fooled. Obviously, I didn't have God fooled."

During his teens, he would rededicate his life at various crusades, but it didn't seem to make a long-term impact on his life. He would still participate in the temptations facing col-

lege students, even though he was on a four-year scholarship for playing football.

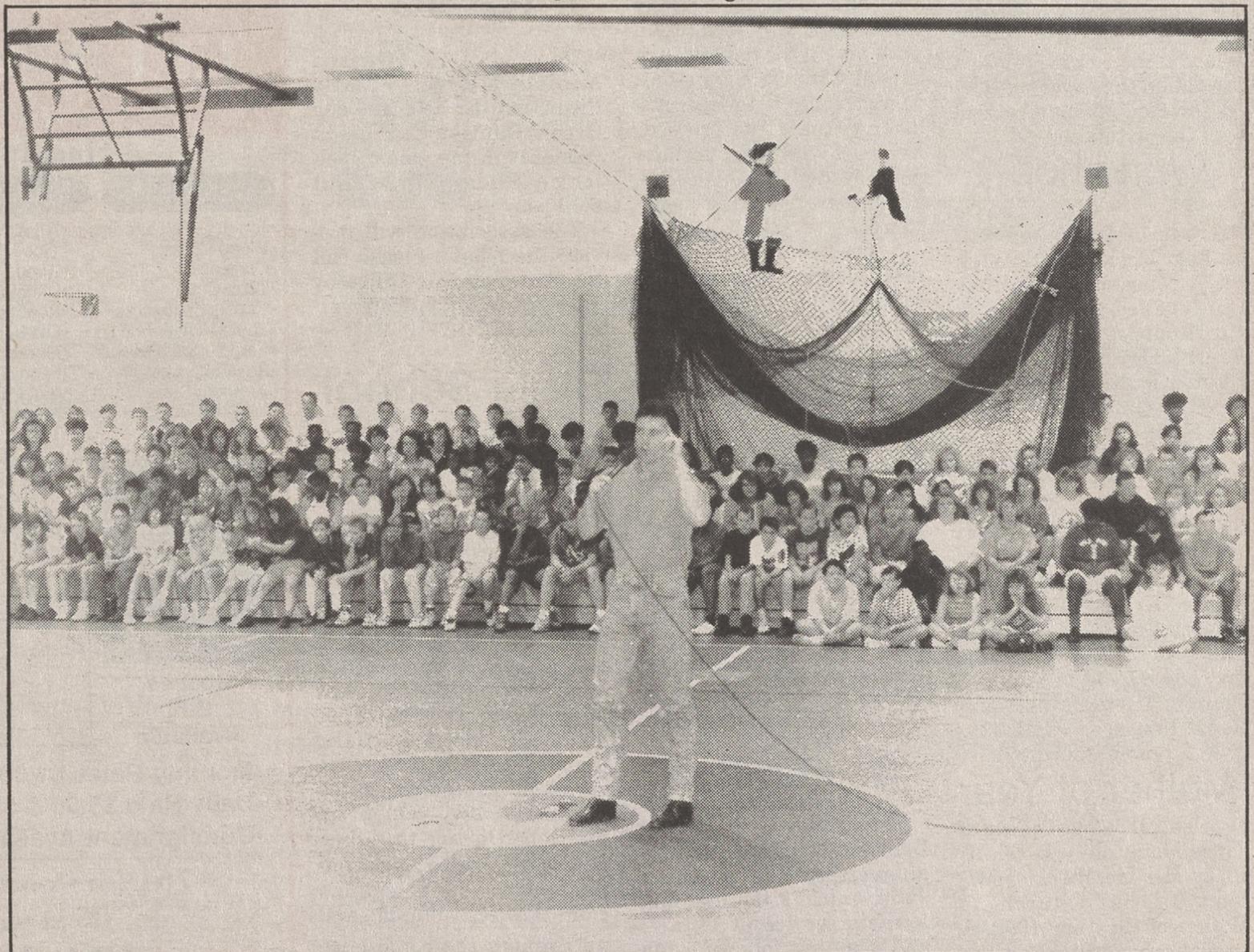
"I got sucked in with my peers," he said. "I knew how to play both sides of the fence.

"Spiritually, I never questioned whether or not I would go to heaven if I

died. That didn't hit me until I truly met the Lord. All I knew was football."

Upon graduation from college, Gage said the only thing he was interested in doing was coaching. He was hired at Texas Tech

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Rick Gage spoke to 1,100 high school students and 900 middle school students while visiting Kings Mountain.