

Opinions

Your Right To Say It

Cartoonitorial



A light goes out

Throughout history the Christmas stories most remembered are the saddest ones. This isn't a Christmas story but part of it happened on Christmas Eve and it ended a week ago, smack in the middle of the season.

As a teen, I was a member of an amateur boxing club. There were six or seven of us and two of them died last week. One of the deceased was a close boy-hood friend. Names aren't important, and because of unusual circumstances, I won't use real names.

Jerry and I were practically raised together. I can't say we were inseparable, but we spent a lot of time together, running around and spending the night at one or another of our homes.

He was a slightly built tow-head who was absolutely fearless. Jerry was the team flyweight, swift and crafty. He got it honestly, both his father and uncle were professionals. The uncle, a classy fighter, once fought for the N.C. middleweight championship, before he was shot to death in a barroom brawl.

Jerry was an unusual youngster. His white hair and pale complexion made him appear almost frail, but looks can deceive.

Once, a known bully and some of his pals approached us on the street. Frankly, we were both scared. The bully grabbed Jerry by the collar and ripped his shirt, a mistake he almost didn't live to regret.

The frail looking, slightly built teenager was suddenly transformed into a churning buzz saw. He slugged the bully some 30 times in rapid succession. In less than 15 seconds, the attacker lay in a sobbing heap while his friends scattered. Jerry won the fight but we didn't wait around for a body count.

Everybody, it seemed, wanted to baby Jerry. Maybe that was one of his problems. He seemed a lonely, withdrawn kid at times. Jerry was raised by a doting grandmother, his parents having separated years earlier.

After high school, Jerry joined the Airborne and served honorably. I often wondered if he carried weights to help bring the chute down, but I guess he gained a few pounds in boot camp.

While stationed at Fort Bragg, Jerry came home most weekends. He dated several girls, but during one of those trips he met his true love. Lydia was a tall, brown-haired beauty with big eyes and a wonderful laugh. She was everything Jerry had ever wanted in a woman.

They were married after his discharge and the union soon produced a daughter. He worked several jobs, then opened his own business which lasted a few years, then failed. Jerry went to work for a large airline.

His dream, though, was to put together a stake and move to Texas. Since childhood, Jerry was entranced by the wild west. He owned a .22 pistol on a Colt Peacemaker frame and a black leather holster, as well as several other guns. He knew he could never be a real cowboy, but, at least he could feel more western by moving to Texas.

One of his guns caused him to lose the airline job. Trouble brewed in the home and Jerry began to suspect his beloved Lydia was seeing another man. One fateful day he went to the guy's apartment, thinking Lydia was there. He took along a small handgun. He knocked on the door and yelled for the other man to come out. When he didn't Jerry decided to shoot the lock off the door. He had no way of knowing the door wasn't locked and the guy was pushing against it with all his might. The bullet severed an artery in the other man's groin, and he almost died before he could be treated at a local hospital. When his boss heard the story, Jerry was fired.

I saw him just once after that. I went by his house several days after the shooting incident, but left early because there was a feeling of hostility in the house.

Jerry and Lydia eventually went their separate ways, Lydia taking the child with her.

Jerry floundered a little after that, working several jobs. He seemed morose and intense to me.

On Christmas Eve in 1972 he called. I hadn't seen him since the time I'd gone by his house several years earlier. "Turn on the porch light," he said, "I'm coming by." He never showed up.

I called him around 1977. We made plans to get together, but didn't follow through.

Last week I opened the paper and there was the obituary, complete with a picture of Jerry as a young man. I traced Lydia down and she told me she hadn't seen him for 20 years.

She is happily married, but didn't hesitate to fill me in. Jerry had a heart attack about three months ago, and he couldn't seem to get over it. At about the same time he lost the job he'd held for the last 12 years. The company was sold and he was left out in the cold, an all too familiar story. She told me Jerry had no insurance and refused to go to the doctor.

The daughter, now 33, found her Dad unconscious at his apartment. His right side was swollen badly. An autopsy showed pneumonia, a body full of fluid, a ruptured lung and very little liver. He weighed 93 pounds. Jerry had placed scraps of paper around the apartment denoting who was to get what when he was gone.

"He always told me he would die young," said Lydia.

I wish I had made an effort to see Jerry after we talked on the phone, but he could have made the same effort.

I know it's a futile gesture, but I intend to leave my porch light on this Christmas Eve.

KINGS MOUNTAIN WEATHER REPORT

	Dec. 16-21	Last Year
Total precipitation	2.19	0
Maximum one day	.99 (16th)	0
Year to date	58.95	45.45
Minimum temperature	35 (18th)	16 (19th)
Maximum temperature	64 (17th)	61 (21st)
Average temperature	48.1	41.3



"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord"

--Luke 2:11

Santa, remember these

Dear Santa:

Well, Big Guy, it's that time again. The years are really rolling by fast now.

I guess you're probably about through making toys and packing your sleigh for the big ride Thursday night. I know you have many, many requests because I have read the letters written by Kings Mountain school children but, if you will, see if you can find room for some of these:

A positive second half of the school year for Kings Mountain District Schools. It seems they've had more than their share of negative news this year. Chill-Out seems very minor when you consider that guns and drugs are making their way onto our campuses. Help the school leaders and law enforcement officials find a way to prevent this from happening again.

A successful conclusion to the Kings Mountain United Fund drive for 1993. And, Santa, thanks for the very generous Kings Mountain people who filled the Empty Stocking again so needy children in the Kings Mountain area will have a happy Christmas.

Food and medical needs for the people of Somalia, and all others in the world who are hungry and have other serious needs during this holiday season. And, protect our troops while they're over there creating safe roads for the food to get through.

A healthy and happy 1993 for my niece, Meredith Rogers, who at age 7 recently went through more surgeries than a person should have to face in a lifetime. There should be a pizza party for her anytime she wants one.

A fourth straight conference and regional championship for Kings Mountain High's wrestlers, and a state championship for their talented 145-pound senior Robbie Ruff who will break the school's all-time win record early next year.

Another state championship for Bruce Clark and his KMHS baseball team. If everyone stays healthy this year, the Mountaineers will not only be contenders for the state title but will be expected to win it...And, Santa, SWC Player of the Year honors for KM's Stephen Fisher who was robbed of the honor last year.

A successful 1993 for David Hancock and the staff of the Kings Mountain Parks and Recreation Department. I've worked with all the full-time recreation directors that the city has ever had, and as far as cooperating with this paper, David Hancock is tops.

Another successful Hall of Fame banquet for the Kings Mountain Chamber of Commerce. And, a second term for President Ruby Alexander who has spearheaded some very innovative programs for members and an excellent public relations program to draw homeowners and businesses to this area.

Continued improvement for our good buddy Allan Sinclair, who is recuperating from a stroke from several weeks ago; and a hole-in-one for Sidney Dixon who was so kind to fill our pulpit while Rev. Sinclair was away.

A perfect game and a state record bass for brother-in-law David O'Shields, who doesn't know it yet but is going to have to give up bowling and fishing 'cause I've got some house repairs that need taken care of.

One more big rushing performance - say 200 yards - for Kings Mountain's Kevin Mack of the Cleveland Browns. I saw him at KMHS graduation last year and he still looks good, but at age 30 he's getting old by football standards...And a successful NFL career for Kings Mountain's Calvin Stephens of the New England Patriots who broke into the starting lineup this year after missing his rookie season with injuries.



GARY STEWART Editor

A national championship for Danny Ford at Arkansas. Does anyone know where David Hughes and I can find two Arkansas hats? (They'll probably be showing up around Clemson before very long).

NBA all-star honors for L.J. and Rookie of the Year for Zo, but I figure Shaq will have a lot to say about the latter!

A pit pass for all 1993 NASCAR races for Gail Bess of Jones Intercable fame, who is Million Dollar Bill's number one fan.

A happy retirement for Tom Tate of Home Federal Savings Bank, who is retiring this week. He has helped many, many young couples dream the American Dream and he has been an outstanding community leader in Kings Mountain.

A good non-conference football schedule for Denny Hicks and his Mountaineers. Hicks thought he had everything worked out until a few weeks ago when the State Association realigned some conferences. With that, he lost Lincolnton and is now having to scramble to find a replacement. And, while you're at it, throw in a conference championship for the Mountaineers. If the ball had bounced a little differently in three close games they could have won it this year.

A crown for Bullet Bob Hayes, who embarrassed me in picking football winners this fall. You'd better bring it this year, 'cause that's not likely to happen again. (Just kidding, Bob. You can beat me anytime, just as long as Big D runs third).

A 30-day limit for the Courts in settling an election dispute. I've never met Harrill Jones of Gastonia, but I think it is ridiculous when one man, who says he is acting on behalf of 12, is successful in keeping a man off of a City Council when he was elected by 70 percent of the voters on election day.

And, speaking of limits, how about term limits for all elected officials, from Congress right down to your local officials? People who spend over 20 years in Congress now retire with pensions that will pay them millions of dollars in their 'golden' years.

A big man - and I do mean a BIG man - in the middle for Larry Sipe. Larry's done a wonderful job with the KMHS basketball team in his 10 years here but he has never had a dominating player. Every coach needs a George Adams one time during his career.

One good snow. I bought a four-wheel drive two years ago and it hasn't snowed since. The other day after a big rain, I drove out across the pasture just to see if I could get stuck.

A wild card berth for the Redskins. I don't know what in the world Ed Spencer will do during the next month if the 'Skins don't make the playoffs. Every piece of furniture in the house will be safe.

Well, I see I have finally succeeded in filling the empty hole on this editorial page. If you can't grant all of the above, just fill the real needs of everyone and help us all keep the true meaning of Christmas in our hearts the whole year through.

Tardy policy needs review

To the editor:

In response to the article written by Jennifer Halter, "Enough About Tardy Policy," we would like to say a few things.

We, too, were in attendance at the Board of Education meeting on Monday, Dec. 14. Not one time did we hear any parent or student say that they wanted the tardy policy done away with altogether. They just said that parts of the policy needed to be reviewed for possible changes. The majority of the students we know feel the same way. Unfortunately we do have students at our school and other schools that want to kiss up and brown nose to try and get on the good side of the faculty members, but we feel we have constitutional rights to protect us to say what we feel is right without kissing up or trying to impress our teachers.

We didn't speak up at the board meeting because we wanted to hear all sides before we voiced an opinion. In doing this, we feel these parents made some good points. The bell cannot be heard in all parts of our school, things beyond our control do take place, and all people should understand. In addition, only having 10 minutes to eat lunch (because of lunch detention) can very well lead to serious stomach and health problems.

Last, but surely not least, Ms. Halter made the comment that these parents should worry about a grade point average, a hard class, or a favorite teacher of their child. Did it ever cross your mind that by worrying about their child being suspended that includes them missing a day of their education, their grade point dropping, missing work and lectures in their hardest class, and also not seeing their favorite teacher.

One concern the students also have is faculty members standing in front of their class and using profanity, when we as students are punished for doing so. Everyone deserves respect and that does not include students who most are there for education and nothing else (but this is, of course, another matter that needs to be approached).

We would like to make a motion that a parent that is not a faculty member, and also a student that is not a faculty member's child should be put on the Tardy Policy Committee. Maybe this way every angle can be reviewed.

In addition, I would like to add that I, a junior at KMHS, just as Ms. Halter, have never had a tardy since the Tardy Policy was enforced. But I can plainly see that changes need to be made.

Thank you for letting us express our opinions.

Mark E. Wood
Shelley Dixon

Look at all sides

To the editor:

I am writing in regard to the articles being written about the tardy policy at KMHS. Now, I am not a parent or teacher of any student at this school. Those years have long passed for me, but I am a concerned citizen.

I went to the school board meeting on Monday, Dec. 14, just to observe and to see how this situation would be handled. What I saw were parents and students crying out for help in issues that they were deeply concerned about. Some of the complaints the parents had were good ones. For example, suspensions and lunch being taken away. I don't see how being in the classroom when the tardy bell rings, and being pushed out the door and sent to Chill Out just because you did not get in your seat that second could be a major disturbance to a class.

I also read a letter from the child at the high school who is now a senior, that was in the paper this week. She was also at the board meeting with two of the faculty members' daughters, speaking for the policy. One thing she said in her article was that parents were trying to do away with the tardy policy. Now I may be old and hard of hearing, but I did not once hear a parent say that they wanted rid of the policy. I did hear them say that it should be looked at and altered. I fully agree with them.

My heart went out to the child that got up there and asked the board to please help do something to keep her education from being taken away from her. In response to the other child saying parents should show concern in other fields of their child's education instead of the tardy policy, well I feel these parents are showing concern when they are taking a stand for the way their child is being treated. It seems to me that the child in this case was treated unfairly and her mother is doing the same thing I would do if it were my child.

I also stood back after the meeting and heard Joel Rountree say that he has, and will again shut the door in the face of a late student. I also found out that he heads this tardy committee at the school. Well, parents, with someone that unreasonable over this I will be very surprised if anything will be done.

I think the school should put someone over this policy who can see things from all sides and not just one. I feel bad that the world is unfortunately full of unreasonable people, and I feel sorry for this child who was treated unfairly and who will probably be done this way again. Parents, don't stop standing up for your child. You're all they have. I wish my daughter was still alive and I could stand up for her.

Katherine Hawkins
Kings Mountain

Herald Letter Policy

The Herald welcomes your letters to the editor for publication in each Thursday's paper. We ask that you follow these guidelines:

Keep the letters brief and to the point. The Herald reserves the right to edit letters for spelling, good taste, libel or slanderous statements, or any other reason; and reserves the right to reject any letter for any reason.

All letters should be typed and double spaced, if possible, and signed in ink. If not, write them clearly and sign them in ink. Unsigned letters will not be published.

Mail all letters to The Editor, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, N.C. 28086. Hand-delivered letters will not be accepted.