

Opinions

Guest Column

by Bill Carpenter

Your Right To Say It

JIM HEFFNER

Columnist



Dog-gone

When I was a kid I used to live on the Victory Mill village in South Gastonia. I had a friend and neighbor named Troy Crisp, with whom I lost contact after I joined the Navy.

Troy and I renewed our friendship when we both went to work for the same airline in the 60's. The airline, Eastern, no longer exists, but Troy and I still stay in touch.

Troy is a big fan of the Washington Redskins and the UNC Tar Heels, so when he called me the other day I was prepared to give him the old raspberry since the Skins didn't make the Super Bowl and Carolina had just lost to Duke.

"If you think I was bothered by Duke's win, you ought to meet Tommy Kiser," said Troy. "He's the worst I've ever seen."

He went on to relate several stories about his friend, and I have it on good authority they're all true.

Kiser is a retired mail carrier who lives in the Oakdale section of Charlotte. As a youngster he was a pretty good left-handed high school pitcher, and his wife Vivian tells me he played basketball as well. She told me, further, that her husband is a pretty good golfer, although one of his friends disputes that. More on that later.

Anyway, according to several sources, Tommy really gets wound up watching Carolina basketball on the tube.

"He stomps his feet and yells," said Vivian, and when Carolina is going good he makes me stay exactly where I am, as if I'd break their streak by moving. Once I was lying on the floor with my head on a pillow and Carolina started playing well and he wouldn't let me move until they slowed down a little."

One of Tommy's best friends is Joe Taylor, who used to watch the games with him.

"Not anymore though," said Joe, "he's too dangerous. He goes into an absolute rage sometimes. I just can't watch games with him anymore."

It might be that Joe doesn't watch with him because of the dog.

Once the Kisers visited Joe and Joyce Taylor to watch a Carolina game, and as the game proceeded, Tommy was his usual self, stomping and yelling with every basket.

The Taylors had a small poodle named Peanut who was getting on in years. Every time Tommy would yell or stomp, Peanut would jump up and bark. This particular night Peanut got into a frenzy and grabbed Tommy's pants leg, growling and yanking at it. As the game wore on, the little dog got more and more wobbly. The next morning the Taylors found Peanut had gone to that big blue dog heaven in the sky.

Don't get me wrong, the Taylors don't accuse Tommy of killing their dog. It probably died of a heart attack considering its age, but it does make you wonder how long the dog might have lived if not for Tar Heel basketball.

Troy tells me Tommy has a million yarns and shares them every Sunday with their Sunday school class.

Word is that Tommy's 86-year-old mother is also a basketball fan, but Tommy won't let her watch the games with him because he suspects her of being a Duke fan.

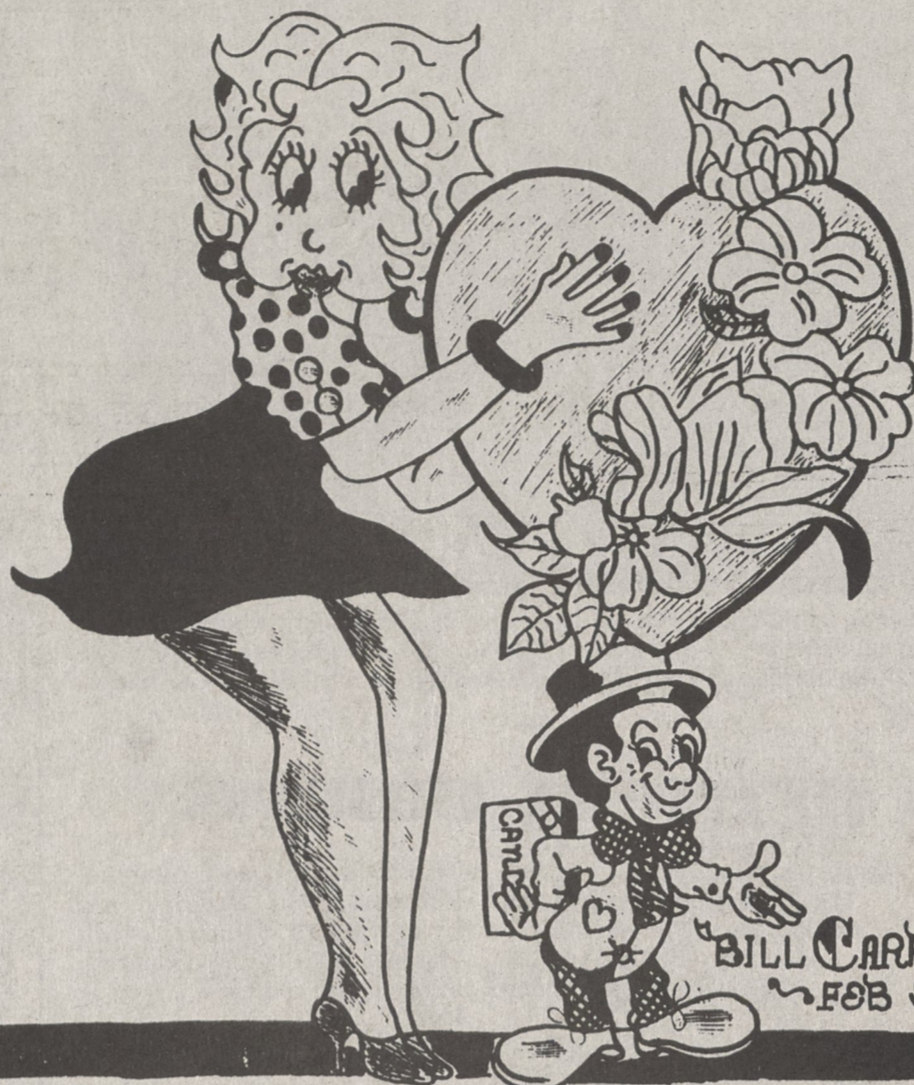
Joe Taylor says he doesn't buy the bit that Tommy was a good pitcher in high school. "After all," he said, "He is left handed you know."

Taylor says Tommy fudges a little on his golf score too, but he does admit Kiser beat him by a couple of strokes last week.

I don't know about that left handed stuff. Former Red Sox pitcher, Bill Lee, says right handers use the left side of their brains and left handers use the right side, so it stands to reason that left handers are the only ones in their right minds.

Vivian and Joe both related another Kiser tale. A couple of years back he decided to burn the Christmas tree in a 55 gallon drum, strategically placed in an open field. The tree was so dry, according to Vivian, it fairly exploded when he put the torch to it. The sparks flew and before Tommy could yell "go Heels!" the field was in flames. The fire department had to come out and extinguish the fire. They told him if he ever did anything like that again they'd have him arrested. Some of Kiser's good friends had one of those fake newspapers printed up with a headline something like "Fire bug tries to burn neighborhood."

I guess the moral of this little tale is, don't root too hard for Carolina. It might be dangerous for your best friend's dog.



Valentine's Day is special

This coming Sunday, Feb. 14, is Valentine's Day. It has become a day for Americans to express our love to those we love and care for a great deal.

February has always been a special month in our family. My late mother's birthday was Feb. 14, and my birthday is Feb. 22, George Washington's birthday. Also, several of my cousins also have birthdays in February.

Most of us can remember when we were small kids in grade school and on this special day in February, the teacher would bring a large cardboard box to the classroom and all the kids would bring their cards and drop them into the large box.

Later the teacher would reach into the box and call out the name of the person to whom the card was addressed and he or she would go up to the front of the class and receive the Valentine card.

I recently ran across some of these old Valentine cards here at my home, which my mother had put away many years ago. All of them were from the late 1930s and reminded me of my early school days.

According to historians, the reason that we celebrate St. Valentine's Day today is due to a Bishop named Valentine.

St. Valentine was a good, kind Christian man who lived in the third century A.D. He was also doing kind things and good deeds for the people of his village and he was greatly loved by all of them. In fact, he was so loved by the village people that they began to celebrate

his birthday which was on Feb. 14.

Now at this time in history, the Romans had a holiday called Lupercalia and it was celebrated on Feb. 15 of each year.

Lupercalia was a holiday dedicated to young lovers and the custom was for a young man to write the name of the girl of his choice on a piece of paper and drop it into a large box. Later at a certain time, the names of these young ladies were drawn and the couples who were matched together on this special day were expected to remain together until the following Lupercalia Holiday.

In regards to the first Valentine card sent, St. Valentine, the Bishop was the first person to do so. He had sent a card to one of his friends, a girl who had always been kind to him and he had signed the card "From Your Valentine."

Whatever the origin, Valentine's Day was firmly established in Europe, especially in England, Germany, Ireland and Scotland by the Middle Ages.

As Valentine's Day grew with each passing year, customs developed such as not only sending cards but flowers, candy and gifts, all with the purpose of expressing one's love for that special someone.

Another symbol of this day in February is Cupid. He was one of the gods of mythology and in Latin means "desire." He is usually shown as a chubby, naked, winged little boy with a bow and quiver of arrows by which he transfixed the hearts of maidens.

He appears on cards and is quite popular as a symbol of St. Valentine's Day.

The red heart which often crops up on Valentine cards, has signified love and emotion since early Roman times.

The red rose is called the flower of romance, the choice of lovers in every century and Cleopatra contributed much to the popularity of the red rose. The red rose is a very old symbol of Valentine's Day and probably remains so as long as we celebrate Valentine's Day.

In the early days of Valentine's Day, cards were handmade and sent by men only. The verses were rendered in most careful penmanship and the early designs were very simple.

Handmade Valentine cards disappeared around 1850 because of the lithographed card which became popular around this time. They looked better and available, and after all, not everyone could print or write their cards as well as others.

Today, there are all kinds of cards, sentimental, serious and comic cards. The comic cards have long been on the scene, however they never seemed to gain the market as the sentimental ones have done.

Bill Carpenter is a columnist for the Cherryville Eagle

To the editor:

The more I read about all of the confusion going on around us in the surrounding cities concerning their police departments, the more proud I am of the Kings Mountain Police Department.

I know that Kings Mountain has its share of crime, drugs, etc., but not to the level that some of our neighbors have, and I am proud of the way our Police Department handles things, and gets involved in things. I think a lot of this is attributed to the leadership in the Kings Mountain Police Department from Chief Goforth, Captain Hayes, Detective Reynolds, all of the Sergeants and patrolmen and women. It is just a closely knit group. They know what to do, when to do it, and then they just go out and get it done.

I am very proud to live in this fine city, and I am particularly proud of our Police Department.

All of you keep up the good work. Citizens, when you see them, take it upon yourselves to thank them for doing a good job.

Kyle Smith

Parents must have control

To the editor:

After reading the letters concerning the Kings Mountain School Board in your January 21 edition, I felt I had to put my two cents in.

The arrogance and utter disrespect toward parents displayed by the tardy committee, the school board, and the staff at Kings Mountain High School is typical of the public school system in America today. I almost lost my dinner when I read that several KMHS faculty members said that parents have no control over how they run their school. To that I say, "BULL!"

I don't know if the teachers, principals, or other big-wigs in the school system realize it, but the parents do have control over how they run their school. I don't know whether the school staff realizes it or not, but the parents pay their salaries. And for what parents pay in taxes every year to run the public school system, they darn well better have some control over how their schools are run. Unfortunately since the public school system's best buddy (except when it comes to his own child) now occupies the White House, taxpayers and parents now have a hard fight ahead of them.

I urge all parents to write their senators and congressmen in Washington and their state capitals and compel them to pass a voucher system so that honest, middle-class parents can take their children out of the crime-ridden re-education camps known as public schools and put them in quality private schools. Maybe when the public school system sees the exodus of pupils and tax money, they'll get their act together and allow the parents to have some say-so in the education of their children. Their monopoly on education must end, and they must no longer continue to think they are the only game in town. Parents must have control.

Sincerely, John S. Hardin, Sterling, Va.

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.

Worth Repeating

Monopolies only for rich and powerful

Remember the cable TV bill passed by Congress a few months ago? These new regulations were supposed to lower our cable rates. Surprise - cable TV operators recently increased their "higher tiered" rates across North Carolina. But, of good cheer - cable TV rates for "basic cable service" went down. What is basic cable service? It's all the TV stations that you used to pick up for free with your rabbit-ear antenna. The higher tier service, whose price recently went up, is everything else. In other words, everything that you could not otherwise get for free from the public airwaves just increased in price. So much for the wonderful, pro-consumer legislation recently passed by Congress. However, this should come as no surprise.

No one gets to be a cable TV operator or a cellular phone carrier by competing in the free market. The name of the game in both of these industries is "political favoritism." Special interest lobbying power earns cable TV operators and cellular phone carriers very profitable and lucrative government granted monopolies, while the rest of us pay the price.

One of the first things most Economics 101 students learn is that "monopolies are bad because they destroy healthy competition which acts to drive down prices in the marketplace." Soon after that nugget of wisdom is learned, students are taught the exception to the rule - monopolies granted by the government are good because the government will regulate the monopolies and help keep the prices low.

In the real world, the exception to the rule is merely wishful thinking. The same people who are politically astute enough to be granted monopolies are also smart enough to stop any efforts to lower their outrageous profits by anything as bothersome as a regulatory board. This fact of life became only too clear after recently studying my cable TV and cellular phone bills. I have now concluded that monopolies, especially those

granted by the government, are very, very bad and much worse than any monopoly "earned" in the free market.

Government monopolies are especially loathsome because they are granted merely for political reasons. Why should any company be given the exclusive right to provide cable TV or cellular phone service in an area? What is so unique about these services that a little healthy competition would not improve? The parties being granted monopolies simply have the political power to usurp the exclusive rights to a business. Such is the state of affairs in the cable TV and cellular phone markets.

Consumer Reports recently reported that although the average monthly cellular bill nationwide has dropped nearly \$100 to less than \$70 in the last five years, rates remain extremely high. In many cases, cellular calls cost more than 50 times as much as conventional calls. And unlike most industries where competition could be expected to drive the rates down, government granted monopolies keep this from occurring. The US currently has 734 cellular districts and, at the most, each district has only two licensed carriers.

What about competition between these two government approved carriers? The General Accounting Office reports that in almost two-thirds of the US's largest cellular markets, the prices charged by the local carriers were almost the same.

In the cable TV market, things are even worse. No competition is allowed. Cable TV executives, however, disagree with charges that they have a monopoly. Jeff King, president of Cablevision of Charlotte, recently challenged the assertion of his company's monopoly in the marketplace. In an interview with the Associated Press, Mr. King had the audacity to back up his claim with this comment: "When you are sitting at home watching a video on your VCR, you are not

watching cable TV." With that type of reasoning, I wonder if Mr. King would also consider walking the dog or mowing the lawn as other forms of competition for the cable TV industry? Maybe he knows something we don't. Is CNN about to start placing Headline News on video tape so that we can run to the video store every hour to see what's happening in the world? Is ESPN planning on immediately placing ball games on video tape so that we can have them delivered with our Domino's pizza?

The current monopolies granted to cable TV operators and cellular phone carriers are great examples of what is wrong with government regulation in the US. In both cases, lobbyists for these industries have been successful in convincing Congress that competition should not be allowed. The result is that a lucky and powerful few have been given exclusive markets and all real competition has been outlawed. The free market has been thrown out by special interest groups that have been granted all the rights and profits in a closed market.

Industry officials attempt to justify this entire charade by claiming that the industries will be "regulated" by the government. This regulation will of course be controlled by the same people who granted them the monopolies in the first place. The recent increase in our cable TV rates is proof enough of this charge. Now instead of having competition drive down the rates, we can count on government bureaucrats protecting the monopolies' interests. In other words, an entire process that should be controlled by the free market has now become nothing more than a political grab bag, sold to the highest bidder. And, we little guys, without the big, high-powered lobbyists, are only allowed to pay the tab.

Thomas C. Goolsby, Columnist

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