



Kudzu presents problem for Kings Mountain woman

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Robin Kiser, Lisa Ramey, Roxie Trammell, Sloan Goforth, Sean Huggins, Steve Bumgardner, Lara Sellers, John Morrison and Amy Brennan, left to right, hold up the 200 pound snake exhibited by Ron Cromer, back row, at Kings Mountain Middle School.

Snakes Alive!

Middle School students learn to love Ron Cromer's reptiles

Penelope, a 17 feet long Burmese Python, got mixed reaction in the Library at Kings Mountain Middle School Thursday.

"Hold what?" exclaimed Roxie Trammell when Ron Cromer of Chimney Rock invited the librarian to hold the 200 pound almost 20-year-old reptile.

Cromer gave an educational program for Science students and Penelope, raised by Cromer since the snake was eight months old and the size of a black snake, was the star of the show.

John Morrison, Sloan Goforth, Amy Huggins, Steve Bumgardner, all students, and teachers Sean Brennan and Lara Sellers joined

in the excitement.

Cromer exhibited 40 different non-poisonous snakes, turtles and lizards to the 8th grade Science class. He visits 160 schools and libraries during a year's time and everywhere he goes the students are fascinated and learn about the lives, habits and characteristics of reptiles, especially snakes.

Cromer's program began with an orientation lecture and slide presentation and featured two dozen live U.S. native harmless species of reptiles, including turtles, lizards and specially tamed native snakes.

Students and teachers petted the snakes.

The giant python from Southeast Asia was

introduced during exciting hands on sessions.

Students said they thought snakes felt slimy until they held Penelope and wound the snake around their arms and necks. "She feels soft and dry," said Trammell.

Cromer explained to the students that his snakes are gentle.

Prior to meeting Penelope, the students said they never had touched a snake. A half dozen of them quickly volunteered to assist Cromer in taking the snake from her big box and holding her up.

Penelope got a reward after the show. She received her favorite food, a rabbit.

Six want to fill School Board seat

Six citizens have applied to fill the unexpired term of Rev. Billy Houze on the Kings Mountain Board of Education.

Houze recently resigned his outside city seat because he has moved inside the city limits.

Persons applying to fill the seat until the November election include former School Board member Paul Hord, Connie Allison, Jeff Grigg, Catherine Hardy, Rev. William Thompson and Lucille Wells.

The Board of Education will

meet in special session Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at the Superintendent's Office to hear a report on the kindergarten program and to go over the applications.

The Board has notified the applicants that they should be present at the meeting in case board members wish to interview them; however, Supt. Bob McRae said it is not definite that any interviews will take place.

The Board has indicated it wants to name Houze's replacement no later than the regular monthly

meeting date of May 10.

"I was really pleased at the quality of people who have expressed an interest in the position," McRae said. "It shows that the citizens of Kings Mountain still believe in the public schools and still feel like it's important to contribute their time to make this a better system. I'm sure no matter the Board's choice he or she will prove to be a quality board member."

Of the six, only Hord has previous School Board experience. He served two full terms on the board

and also filled an unexpired term of Harold Lineberger when Lineberger resigned to move out of the district.

Allison is a retired principal in Kings Mountain District Schools, and Mrs. Wells is a retired nurse and homemaker.

Grigg is production manager for the North Carolina chain of Republic Newspapers, Thompson is pastor of St. Peter Missionary Baptist Church in Grover, and Hardy is a training specialist at American Cyanamid/Cytec Industries in Charlotte.

WOMAN'S BEST FRIEND

KM police officer Rena Rikard and dog Tank in national trials

Kings Mountain Police Department's Rena Rikard, Cleveland County's first female K-9 handler and her K-9 Tank, are eyeing the national competition in St. Louis, MO after their high showing in Police Dog I Trials last week in Charlotte.

Tank was among 67 K-9's from several police departments in the competition and he strutted his stuff, according to his proud handler. They took 604 points from a possible 700 to qualify for the big event in Missouri and for a plaque from the US Police Canine Association which recognized the drug dog as a Police Dog I in Region II.

Rikard said Tank excelled in obedience, agility, article and box searches and criminal apprehension with and without gunfire.

His prowess is evidenced by the fact that he took only two minutes, 32 seconds to find a credit card and tiny screwdriver in high grass with winds gusting up to 50 m.p.h. The box search took only one minute and the dog had to search six boxes to find a man hiding in a 4x5 feet container. A decoy was used and caps were fired from a gun during one of the field exercises in which the dog and his handler apprehended a suspect.

Tank weighs 110 pounds and has been a member of the two-dog drug team at the Kings Mountain Police Department for nearly three years. He lives in a kennel at the home of Rikard, who is five feet eight inches tall and weighs about 140 pounds, and rides/ works with her on 12 hour shifts. He is trained to respond to every command by Rena and will bite without a com-

mand if someone attempts to hurt or get close to his master. He is expertly trained to search for narcotics.

Rikard, who joined KMPD nearly six years ago, never had a dog until she completed training as a K-9 handler. Now Tank is an important member of the family. Before joining the police department, she took criminal justice basic law enforcement training at Gaston College. She took K-9 training at Shelby Police Department.

Rena and Tank have been constant companions for nearly 15 months. When they are not on duty Tank runs and plays with a rubber hose wrapped with towels in a big fenced yard at her home and eats a high protein dog food combined with bite-size pieces of meat that his master prepares for him. Although she is understandably partial to her dog, Rena applauds the work of the second four footed cop on the beat, another German Shepherd by the name of Joker, who is handled by Ptl. Wayne Thomas.

"Tank and Joker are both tough and we have a good canine unit," said Rikard. Both dogs are trained for narcotics searches and respond to the voice or hand signals from their handlers from a distance of 50 feet.

"It used to be that everyone thought that dogs were just trained to be mean," said Rikard. "My dog has 42 sharp teeth and means business but he loves to show out for the kids at school and keeps close tabs on 'mama'."

Rikard is the first to admit that Tank is her right hand officer and woman's best friend.



K-9 handler Rena Rikard and Tank of the Kings Mountain Police Department placed high in recent Police Dog I trials and are eyeing the national competition in St. Louis, MO.

Dam cited for hazards

Eight minor deficiencies at Moss Lake Dam were cited by state officials in the annual dam inspection report in April. City workers are making corrections.

City Manager George Wood said the annual inspection of the Class C (high hazard) dam was made by Regional Engineer Jerry Cook of the Division of Land Resources Land Quality Section.

Once maintenance items are corrected a report is to be filed with W.K. Company, the city's consulting engineers, by June 30.

The cited items: Simply burning slopes is not sufficient. Debris must be cut and removed from the dam. A permanent ground cover is needed to restrain erosion on the bare areas and areas with high weed growth on the slopes of the dam.

Monitor the wet areas on the downstream slope for any flow and/or color change of the moisture.

Clean weir boxes immediately and upon completion notify the regional office for follow up inspection.

Label piezometers with a fire resistant material. Each label should have the the number clearly visible.

Replace broken pipe on piezometer and provide a fire resistant cover.

Determine the source of the leak inside the valve box.

Clean concrete lined ditches in benches on downstream slope immediately for proper drainage. The ditches are partially filled with soil and plant growth.

Cook said a thorough inspection of the concrete spillway would be done when the water flow is minimal. The water level of the lake will be lowered and officials will advise the city a week ahead of the inspection schedule.

Neighbors don't want apartments

A crowd of 30-35 property owners attended Tuesday night's City Council meeting to protest multi-family apartments in Ashbrook Park but learned developer Mike Brown had withdrawn his rezoning request from the agenda Friday after the same group voiced opposition at Thursday's meeting of the Planning and Zoning Board.

Brown's and contractor O. G. Penner's rezoning requests were unanimously denied by the Planning and Zoning Board.

City Council Tuesday unanimously denied the Penner request after Keith Ramey again presented a petition signed by 13 people who opposed rezoning of Penner's 4.48 acres off Bessie Drive from residential to light industrial.

Brown wanted to build multi family apartments at the corner of Fulton Street and Sterling Drive in Ashbrook Sub-Division. Annie Thoms, a former member of the Planning Board, presented a petition from 38 opposing property owners Thursday. Thoms also presented a petition signed by 39 people asking for rezoning of Ashley Park Subdivision to from R-8 to R-10.

Ward 1 Commissioner Phil Hager made the motion Tuesday night that Council initiate the application process through the Planning Board for rezoning of Temple Court, Belvedere Circle and Ashbrook Court Subdivisions permitting only single family dwellings. The board referred the request to the Planning Board and

See Protest, 7-A

Weatherly's bill aids video owners

Local video store operator Bob Wilson isn't laughing about a new bill in the State House that would make it a crime to customers who refuse to pay late fees for overdue video rentals but he says the overdue amounts he sees are "insignificant."



WEATHERLY

Neighboring video proprietors think the bill is on target but doesn't go far enough.

Representative John Weatherly, Republican from Kings Mountain, wants to subject rental scoffers to a \$50 fine.

"My idea is that few of any cases will go to court since the delinquent person will not wish to pay cost of court and the \$50 fine," said Weatherly. "Court cases will be rare, except perhaps, when \$100 or more is owed, which is very rare. Usually it's \$6-\$10."

Weatherly said he got the idea to sponsor the bill from a complaint by local constituents, including an owner of a video store in Cherryville.

"If you pull up to a gas station and get \$1 or \$2 in gas and drive away without paying the police will go after you," said Albert McCarter, who runs A&M Video and Arcade in Cherryville. "But if you come into my store and get my movies and don't bring them back the police won't do a thing."

McCarter says he is losing \$100 a week to overdue videos.

The problem hits the smaller video stores harder than the national chains, says Weatherly.

Some of the bigger companies either charge membership fees, which can cover the costs, or require customers to provide credit card numbers that can be used to levy late fees or charges for lost or stolen tapes, said Wilson.

Wilson, who operates Mountain Video, said that small amounts add up but sometime he overlooks late fees if there are extenuating circumstances. Wilson says he knows all his customers and he usually only rents videos for a 24-hour period.

"I think in some counties a solicitor won't prosecute unless the amount is great," said Wilson. "To tie up the courts because someone kept a video out an extra day or two when you have people with cocaine and guns seems a little like nitpicking."

Weatherly agrees that making a state case of video late fees might not take top priority to prosecutors and that lawmakers have bigger things to worry about but he says the problem hits harder with small companies in the area he serves. "People just don't seem to realize the investment that stores have in their videos," said Weatherly.

House Bill 962 would make failure to pay the late payment fees in 10 days a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of \$50. The act, which has the sponsorship of Representatives Weatherly, Balmcr, Brawley, Brubaker, Crawford, Culp, Daughtry, Gardner, C. Preston, Smith and R. Thompson, would become effective December 1.

The bill has been referred to Judiciary III