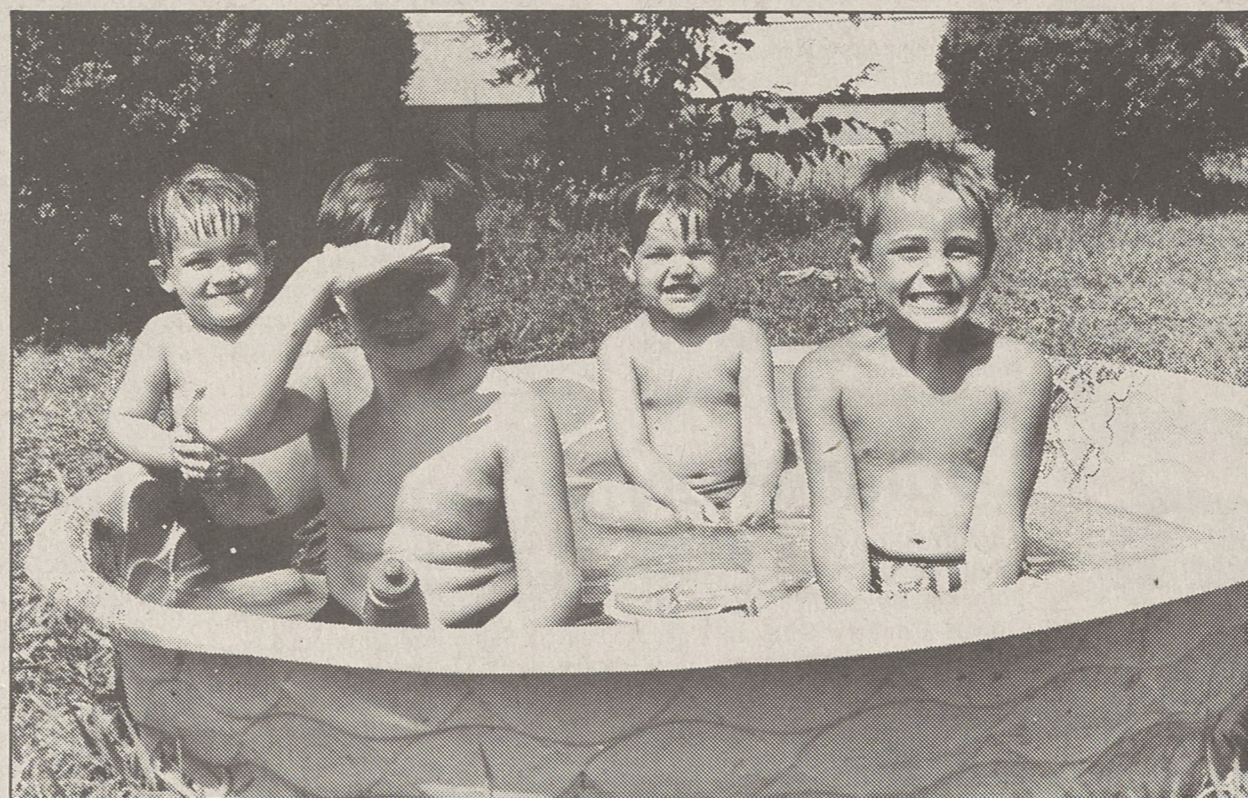


Opinions

Pictorial Editorial



KEEPING COOL - What better way to keep cool in the sizzling heat than to take a dip in the nearest pool. Patrick Cunningham and Ashley Helms, front, left to right, and Cameron and Justin Cunningham, back, enjoy a kiddie pool in the yard of their aunt, Leslie Cunningham.

REFLECTIONS on Religion and Life

DONALD MITCHELL
Interim Pastor,
First Presbyterian Church



A religious smorgasboard

A recent trip to the West Coast has made me very much aware of the multiple forms of religious expressions that are flourishing all across America. As one reporter has put it: "God is not dead. Neither is magic."

In the last couple of decades the substantial growth of Christian denominations, especially of the Pentecostal variety, has been matched by the emergence of spiritualities of a seemingly endless variety.

In a home in Marin County, across the bay from San Francisco, one family has grown its own form of religion. They describe the recipe they used as: "a teaspoon of Buddhism, a tablespoon of Judaism, stirred together slowly with our own sense of the sacred."

That does sound bizarre to traditional worshippers here in the Carolinas, but such a mixing of religious forms is not unknown in these parts either. The religious landscape has changed so radically at the end of our 20th century that the old religious labels no longer serve us.

It appears that those who have dropped out of the church and the synagogue have not necessarily lost interest in finding spiritual answers to life's big questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What's the meaning of it all? They are just looking in unusual places for those answers. Because they assume that one religion is as good as another, they have no problem discarding denominational forms as well as the basic content of the Christian faith.

A long time ago it was pointed out that men and women are incurably religious and today a majority of people still believe it is natural to believe in the supernatural. The difference today is that almost anything goes in the area of the spiritual.

A lot of pollsters have been probing into the modern mindset which underlies this profusion of spiritual practices. A recent "Washington Post" survey reveals that one in three Americans believes that some fortune tellers can foresee what will come to pass. One in four believes that horoscopes can affect the course of the future and a surprisingly large number declare they have been in contact with someone who had died.

In this kind of spiritual climate, psychics do a flourishing business. So do astrologers, channelers, crystal gazers and mediums of all kinds. At the "Mystic Quest Psychic Center" outside of Denver, 15 psychics counsel in person or by phone, up to 150 people a day. And calls are coming in from as far afield as France, Germany and South Africa.

The New Age movement continues to expand. It is not unusual to find forms of Buddhism and New Age spiritualities welcomed right into the churches. These practices on truths that are common to all world religions. They allow for every flexible mix of sacred traditions with personal religious experience that is very amenable to the modern mind.

Wade Roof at the "Center for the Study of Religion" at the University of California at Santa Barbara, has written about this proliferation of religious expressions in his recent book entitled, "A Generation of Seekers." He sums up the present situation in what sounds to me like a major understatement. "We are living," he states, "in the time of considerable spiritual ferment, both inside and outside organized religion."

Church people may be disturbed to find themselves in competition with such a range of spiritual novelties. But they should also be challenged to make the case all the more cogently for the only one who has the credentials to be "the way, the truth and the life."

TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

-Romans 5:6-8

JIM HEFFNER
Columnist

I need counseling

I have been looking through some old copies of newspapers from Charleston, S.C., as well as old Gastonia Gazettes and Gastonia Currents. Some of these papers are dated 1880.

The other day I stumbled on the following item in a Gazette dated April 29, 1887:

It is said that the vaults of the treasury of Washington now contain 2000 tons of silver and 48 tons of gold. Their capacity for storage is nearly exhausted, and still the accumulation is rapidly increasing. And yet, notwithstanding this surplus of riches, the mis-leader of the Democratic party at the last session of Congress would not allow the people's representatives to even vote on the proposition to repeal unnecessary and burdensome tax on tobacco, one of the chief agricultural products of Virginia and the other Southern states. The Democratic masses are all right, but some of their co-called leaders are all wrong.

Nothing has changed in some areas in the last 105 years.

I've had these old bound copies for over 20 years. I kept them stored in my outbuilding until last summer when I lugged them into the office. Termites got into the bottom five or six and destroyed them, but some of these are in pretty good shape, although some are deteriorating rapidly.

They are priceless to me.
New York justice - A while back a 16 year old boy broke into a parked subway train and took off for a joy ride. Naturally, he was caught. There aren't many places you can go with a subway train.

I'm here to tell you that the judge who presided at his trial lit into him with a vengeance.

The youngster was sentenced to a few hours of community service, psychological counseling and probation.

Counseling, of course, must be a part of all criminal punishment in New York, otherwise the streets would be full of lawbreakers. Hah!

I guess the kid learned his lesson. He says he wants to attend college and learn to be a subway motorman.

Can you imagine what would have happened to this boy if he'd stolen a car? He would have probably served time, after counseling of course. Sometimes I wonder about judges in this country. Maybe they all should consider a round of counseling.

The finish line - It was indeed a sad day for race fans when young Davey Allison died in a helicopter crash at Talladega, Alabama.

That incident dredged up my scariest moment. My son Jeff and a couple of his buddies, a few years ago, took off in a private plane to attend a race at that same track. They left at 8 a.m. on a Sunday morning, the day of the race.

At about five minutes past ten, Jeff called me at home to tell me they would be renting a car to return home.

I don't know what made me ask, but I did. "Did the plane crash?"

"You might say that," he replied.

My knees buckled. "How bad was it?" I asked, thinking surely somebody must have been hurt, or worse.

"None of us got a scratch," he said.

I breathed for the first time in several minutes. Thank God, I thought. Not many people walk away from any kind of plane crash unscathed.

The landing gear collapsed upon impact with the runway, and the plane skidded to a halt, while staying on the landing strip. The plane was loaded with fuel and if they had swerved and hit the landing lights and stanchions that lined the runway, there would have most certainly been a fire and disaster. As it happened, though, they all scrambled out of the plane unhurt.

Needless to say, I was extremely glad to see that kid when he returned home.

Rap, again - Here we go again with all that rap business. I refuse to call it rap music, because it isn't music.

I heard a well-known civil rights activist on a radio talk show the other day lament as to how rap musicians were trying to tell us something and society at large wasn't listening.

He is partially right. They are trying to tell us they have no talent and they are adept at composing bad near-rhymes.

A guy in California attempted to blame rap for the murder he committed, but the judge didn't buy it. Obviously, this judge has been to counseling.

He may have a point, though. When I hear rap, sometimes I'd like to strangle the rapper.

I guess I need counseling.

Our View

Trade disputes serious stuff

While President Clinton attempts to even out the trade imbalance that exists between the U.S. and Japan, an imbalance that has consistently contributed to the recession in this country for the past few years, another problem just as serious is growing on this continent.

Even as the economic summit in Tokyo closes, trade disputes are heating up between the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

American steelmakers have filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Commerce charging Canada with "dumping" steel in this country at prices below their costs.

The Canadian ploy, of course, is not immediate profit, but an effort to expand their marketing base.

This development serves to highlight other U.S. - Canada trade disputes that have cropped up in recent years.

In March of 1992, the U.S. Customs Service decided that Honda of Canada owed millions of dollars in import duties because the cars they are producing did not contain the required 50 percent of North American parts.

The Commerce Department ruled, in May of 1992, that Canada was unfairly subsidizing its lumber industry and recommended that a countervailing duty of 6.5 percent be placed on Canadian lumber coming into the United States.

In December of 1991, the Bush administration threatened to double the price of Canadian beer in the U.S. by raising tariffs in retaliation for restrictions on the distribution of American beer in Canada.

Also, in December of 1991, the Commerce Department decided that Canada was unfairly subsidizing exports of magnesium to the United States.

Meanwhile the Mexican government continues to offer favorable economic status to those American companies willing to relocate south of the border.

Needless to say, thousands of jobs are lost by U.S. citizens with every company that goes to Mexico.

More U.S. jobs are lost to Mexicans because an ineffective Immigration Service is unable to stop a constant flood of illegal workers to cross into this country and work for cut-rate wages.

The Mexican government keeps a closed mouth on the subject of U.S. commerce and immigration, but the Canadian government is striking back.

Canadian officials recently complained that dogs sold to Canadian pet stores by Americans have often been diseased.

That's serious stuff.

Turn off the TV

There is an ongoing debate these days concerning TV violence. Congress is conducting hearings and industry executives are wringing their hands and lamenting about first amendment rights.

The National Coalition on TV violence has proposed the following list for federal regulation of TV programming:

- a rating system
- warning labels before broadcasts
- ingredient labels used in publicizing shows
- warning labels on TV ads
- a staff psychiatrist or researcher at each network or cable channel
- public service announcements about the harmful effects of violence
- a ban on violent programming offered in government institutions such as jails and hospitals
- tax breaks for networks, cable channels and production companies that fund research on violence
- a public health campaign in schools that addresses violence the way current programs deal with drugs and alcohol.

There are two problems with this list. Nowhere does it say that TV violence will be reduced or deleted and nobody in either camp is saying to parents, change the channel or turn the set off.

HERALD LETTER POLICY

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

Keep your letters brief and to the point. Type and double space them, if possible. If not, write legibly and sign the letter in ink and include your full name, address and telephone number for verification purposes. Unsigned letters will not be published.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length, spelling, libel, slander, good taste, or any other reason; and reserves the right to reject any letter for any reason.

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

Your Right To Say It

Doris Huffstetler an inspiration to family

Be safe on the water

To The Editor:
This morning I watched my mother-in-law open a package of jelly. Not a remarkable feat for most people, but in watching her I was so moved I had to suppress tears. I am proud of her.

Watching her, I began to recall other times when I had seen her use her hands. Those hands have lovingly held my children, comforted them when they were sad, hurt or sick. Her hands have clasped in prayer, made biscuits, peeled apples, shelled shrimp, painted pictures, petted grandchildren, created needlework, cleaned house, poured coffee, decorated Christmas trees, dyed eggs, wrapped packages, planted flowers, warmed hearts and nurtured a wonderful little boy who became a man worthy of such a mother.

Sunday night I thought I might never see her use her hands again. A stroke nearly took her away from us. Her physician told us that even if she survived, she may never speak or use the right side of her body again.

Today is Friday and she is better. To me this is no less than a miracle, but Mama Doris is like that. In her weakness, I have seen her strength. I have loved her since I became a member of this family some 25 years ago but this nightmare has brought me to love her on a whole new level. I now understand the greatness of this woman. She is a genius at bringing out the best in people.

The Huffstetler clan had gathered for a July 4 picnic when Doris became ill. I was telling my children that no, they had not yet waited long enough after eating to go back to swimming when I felt a very heavy silence behind me.

When I turned, my father-in-law was bending over Doris, cradling her head against his chest, quietly

comforting her. He held her with the tenderness that can come only from sharing life for over 40 years.

Roy Huffstetler Sr. is a mighty man with a mind of his own. He is loyal, steadfast, and has made a good living for his family. He never looked so strong to me as he did at that moment. Only Doris could inspire such love.

Over the next hours and days I was reminded of how many people care about her. Prayers of family and friends began to unite total strangers in a spirit of love. I began to realize the magnitude and purpose of her life. She simply makes the lives of those she touches a little better.

Doris Huffstetler is my hero. She has never led soldiers into war, but she has stood by me as we daily fought for the survival of our special Tripp for eight years. She has never written a book, but she daily creates a legacy of integrity and love for her family. She has never been a star in the entertainment industry, but she has read stories to my daughter and son, kindling in them the desire to read on their own. She has never made a sculpture, but she went about the work of motherhood in a way that molded Roy Jr. into a loving husband and a good daddy.

I hope that we will have her home soon. My children miss having Nanny next door. They to have to eat my cooking and no one cooks like Nanny. In fact, no one is quite like their Nanny at all. She is a loving Christian woman and in her special way, she performs the most divine task of all: she inspires goodness and greatness in others.

Melba Huffstetler

To the Editor:

The warm days of summer are finally upon us and many of us will join our friends on Moss Lake, Lake Norman, Lake Wylie and others to enjoy a few days in the sun.

As we do, the people of Fox Distributing Company want everyone to remember that driving a boat isn't only a privilege but a responsibility, just as important as driving a car. As you prepare for summer activities and for the boating season ahead, invest in some advance planning that can help insure that every day on your boat is safe and enjoyable.

Brush up on boating safety. Stop by your local library or take a boating course. Call Boat/US Foundation at 1-800-336-BOAT for information.

Check your equipment. Make sure you have basic safety equipment on board--such as life jackets for all passengers, fire extinguishers and navigation lights--and that it works. The U.S. Coast Guard and USCG Auxiliary are excellent resources.

And most importantly, stay in control. If you plan to enjoy beer or other alcohol beverages, remember to choose a designated driver and know when to say when. Using a designated driver on the water is becoming as popular as it is on the highways. In fact, according to the Roper Organization, 80 percent of Americans have used or volunteered to be a designated driver.

Let's all work to make our summer a safe one by remembering our individual responsibilities and watching out for each other.

C.L. Fox
Shelby

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