

Opinions

**JIM HEFFNER**  
Columnist



**Mob influence no excuse**

Any day now I expect the U.S. government to file charges against those guys in L.A. who almost killed Reginald Denny. I suspect they'll be accused of violating his civil rights.

That's how it works isn't it? At least it was true in the Rodney King case.

Wouldn't it be nice if it were true? It will never happen. That law was placed on the books, first of all to get by the double jeopardy rule, then to be used only in those instances when a member of a minority is injured by a member of a majority. The statute doesn't work the other way. How many times have you seen a member of any minority group charged with violating someone's civil rights. It just doesn't happen.

No need to worry, however, in my heart I know Jesse Jackson will go out to California before long to sort out the entire mess.

But seriously folks, excusing responsibility for criminal activity, because of the "mob influence" is the first step toward anarchy.

I am convinced that members of that jury were scared to render a guilty verdict. They were afraid for their own personal safety and they were afraid their verdict might trigger violence.

We have come to the edge of the precipice when we allow thugs to dictate jury verdicts. Somebody somewhere has got to say, "If you threaten an individual or a community with an eye toward influencing a verdict, you are going to jail."

Without guarantees of safety, juries will not perform their duties. When that becomes the case, we might just as well go back to the law of the jungle.

I've heard enough - I mean I've heard enough about the Carolina Panthers and the NFL and how Charlotte is surely a world class city now!

Most of you know I'm not much of a football fan anyway, at least above the high school level, but we have been so bombarded with NFL! NFL! for the last two weeks that I'm just plain sick of it.

We're hearing the same rubbish that we heard just before the Hornets came to town. It's going to be great for the area, the economy will soar and everybody has a share. I'm still waiting on my windfall from the Hornets.

I've said it once and I'll say it again. You and I will not find ourselves moved into a higher tax bracket because the NFL is coming to Charlotte. Some restaurants and hotels will make money on specific weekends, and the Richardson family will make lots and lots of money, but I don't think I'd put in an order for a new car just yet.

I'm glad the area is getting a team, just for the many fans around here who have been forced to root for teams such as the Redskins, and never get to see them play in person. That's one good thing about it.

I don't think I'm going to be buying any seat licenses. To tell you the truth, I wouldn't go to a pro football game if somebody gave me free tickets, drove me to the game and brought me home. I cannot tell you who is the reigning Super Bowl champion.

**Fish or cut bait** - Me, my wife, son and daughter-in-law went down to the coast this past weekend to fish.

My oldest son, Mike, absolutely loves to stand on the end of the pier and cast his lines as far out to sea as humanly possible.

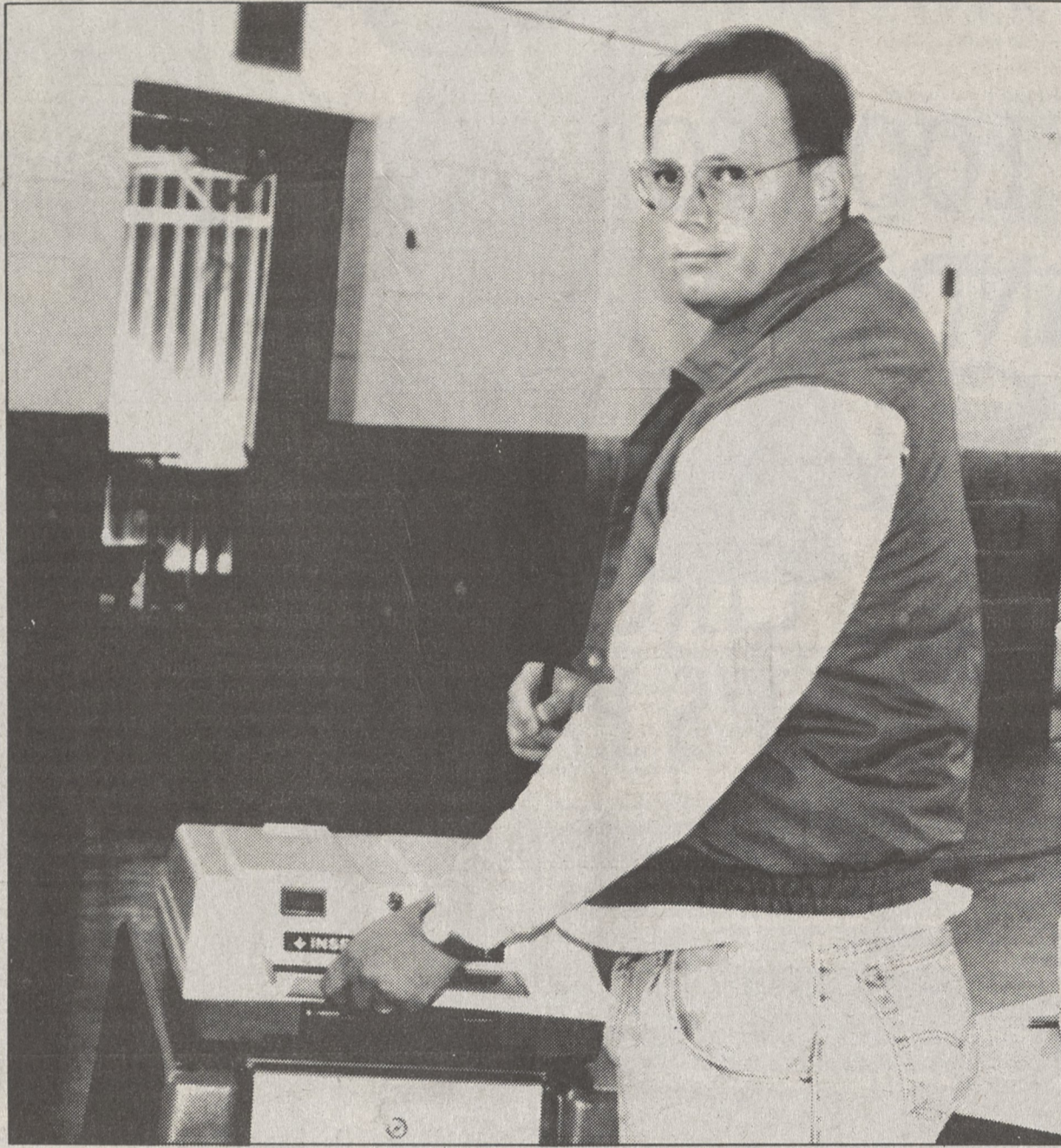
We all love to fish, but this weekend was not a great one. All indications were that the fish were biting, and they were to a degree.

I came down with a terrible cold and didn't even wet a hook, my wife caught my cod, and didn't fish either. My daughter-in-law felt she had to spend time with my wife, so Mike is the only one that fished. He caught a few, but not a lot.

Saturday, it rained all day, and that's when they were biting best. Mike bought a wet suit and hit the pier all day, he caught some good ones too, but gave them away, because he just likes to catch them, not clean them, and we didn't feel like cleaning them either.

I came away with this fishy ode:  
The whiting were biting,  
The spots not so hot.  
The pompanos were no-shows,  
The trout we did without.  
I couldn't find a word that rhymed with flounder, but we didn't get any of them either.

**Pictorial Editorial**



**EXERCISING HIS RIGHT** - Greg Duncan casts his vote in Grover Tuesday as 248 people went to the polls to vote for three seats up for grabs on Town Council and a record turnout voted in the school board election.

**BOB McRAE**  
Superintendent  
Kings Mountain Schools



**School violence a major concern**

In my last column I wrote about the efforts of the recent session of the General Assembly to help schools curb violent activity on their campuses. I also told you about the task force that was recently appointed by the Board of Education to make recommendations about how we should respond to increasing violence in the Kings Mountain District Schools. I had planned on keeping you informed through this column about the work of the task force in the months ahead. However, I did not plan that my next column would also deal with the topic of violence in the schools.

I have postponed what had been written for this issue of the paper due to several incidents which have happened in our school system in recent weeks. I feel I must return to the topic of violence in our system. While the Board of Education needs to hear the recommendations of the task force before formulating final plans, we cannot ignore the current situation while awaiting that report. You need to know what steps we are already taking to react to violent situations, or potentially violent ones. I especially want you to know how we deal with firearms on campus. For those of you who have children in our system this is especially important.

Board of Education procedures adopted in 1992 require a principal to make a recommendation for long term suspension in the case of a student who possesses a firearm on one of our campuses, in one of our school buses, or at a school event off campus. Long term suspension means for the rest of the school year. That is the strongest school disciplinary measure which we can take at this time for such incidents. We also turn all incidents involving firearms over to the appropriate law enforcement officials.

Please understand that we define the term "possession of a firearm" very strictly. A student is guilty of this offense if he or she brings the firearm to school or if he or she receives the firearm from someone else while there. This includes holding the firearm for even the shortest of times. If your son or daughter holds a firearm at school for even one second, he or she will be suspended for the remainder of the school year. I know this is a very strict interpretation of the rule, but it only takes a second for a firearm to go off and strike someone. We simply cannot look upon such a situation lightly even when we are dealing with a short period of time.

There was some confusion with our most recent incident which happened at the Middle School over who should file charges against the student. This confusion was only temporary, and charges have been filed. I want to assure everyone in our community that whenever it is most appropriate that the school system file the charges we will do so. We have already discussed this with our police department to make certain that charges are always filed in situations on our campuses which involve student possession of a firearm.

Remember, beginning on December 1, 1993, it is a felony for any person to bring a firearm on school grounds. This law is more restrictive for students than for anyone else. For instance, there is an exception which makes it only a misdemeanor to bring an unloaded shotgun in a secure gun rack in a vehicle onto school grounds for non-students. However, that same act will be a felony for students. Even concealed firearms, locked in the trunk of a car, will result in felony charges if discovered.

The message which must be understood is that having firearms on school property is a very serious occurrence, one that neither the law enforcement officials nor the school officials can or will take lightly. Parents, please talk specifically with your children about the dangers of such actions and the severe consequences. We need your help. Keep firearms put securely away from the reach of your children. Did you know that, as of December 1, you could be charged with a misdemeanor if you do not make a reasonable effort to keep firearms from your children and one of them takes a firearm to school?

We will not back away from our responsibility to deal with this problem. I do not want to suspend any student for the remainder of the year, but I will not hesitate to do so in incidents where students are involved with firearms. Let's work together to try to assure that it does not happen to anyone else. More importantly, let's work together to make sure our schools are safe for our students, employees, and guests.

**Your Right To Say It**

**Have your pets vaccinated**

To the editor:

Two generations have grown up in North Carolina without knowing the dread that was once associated with rabies in this state. Rabies was dreaded because it was, and still is, a fatal disease. Recent reports across North Carolina indicate that rabies has returned. Closer to home, there have been reports of rabies in Mecklenburg County, Union County and in some of the northern counties of South Carolina.

Rabies is caused by a virus present in the saliva of an animal with the disease. Thus, it is transmitted most often by a bite. People get rabies when they are bitten by a rabid animal and the animal's saliva comes into contact with the fresh, open wound. The disease can also be transmitted by scratching infectious saliva is on the animal's claws. In addition, rabies can be acquired by inhalation, so people who explore bat-infested caves are at risk.

If you are bitten or exposed to rabies, wash the wound thoroughly with lots of warm soap and water. Seek medical attention immediately from your doctor or the local hospital Emergency Room. Also, contact your local animal control agency or Health Department to report the infected animal.

It is very difficult to know if an animal has rabies just by the way it acts or looks. Therefore, a person should always be cautious around wild or unknown animals. Animals with rabies may be aggressive or attack without being provoked. They may have difficulty walking, drooling, or "foaming at the mouth," may or may not be present. Wild animals most often infected with rabies are raccoons, skunks, foxes, and bats. House pets and livestock become infected through bites from wild animals who have the disease.

Rabies cannot be cured, but it can be prevented. Every dog and cat in Cleveland County should be vaccinated. All veterinarians give rabies vaccinations, and the cost is approximately \$8. The first shot protects the animal for one year, and the next shot last for three years. By protecting your animal against this deadly disease, you may well be protecting your own life. So, if your animal is not current on its rabies vaccination, have it vaccinated today.

Cleveland County Health Dept.

**God still in scouting**

To the Editor:

There seems to be a misunderstanding that I need to clarify. The media has recently announced that God was to be taken out of the Girl Scout Promise. This was never the plan. God was and still is part of the Girl Scout Promise. The motivating force in Girl Scouting is three fold. The spiritual force is the first one, one's country and helping people are the other two.

**THE GIRL SCOUT PROMISE**

On my honor, I will try; To serve God And my country, to help people at all times, and to live by the Girl Scout Law.

The decision made at the recent convention allows a girl who worships a spiritual being with another name to use that word when reciting the Promise. The written Promise remains the same. The decision was made in acknowledgement of the increasing cultural diversity of Girl Scouting membership especially in large metropolitan areas. Here in Pioneer Council, Gaston, Cleveland, Rutherford and Lincoln Counties, the recent decisions will have very little impact because the majority of our membership are members of the Christian faith.

Sylvia Holmes  
Executive Director

**Save the wasted space**

To the editor:

I am conscience about the environment. I recycle, re-use, and try to conserve the best that I can. I wish you would do the same by saving the wasted paper that is used to print Mr. Heffner's ignorant, narrow-minded, backwoods sounding column. Who cares about the breakdown of Larry Johnson's salary? This is a prime example of what perpetuates the opinion that all Southerners are people who would rather watch mud wrestling and gulp cheap beer.

Sincerely,  
John Leonard

**Art by any other name**

Senator Helms and his fellow conservatives in the U. S. Senate may have lost their recent battles over funding for the National Endowment for the Arts but "the times, they are changing." Almost one-third of the Senate backed Senator Helms and his proposed changes in federal spending on the "arts."

Once again the cries of "censorship" and "totalitarianism" were heard in the halls of Congress, but if we get past the rhetoric to the reality, we see a totally different picture. One of our senior Senator's common sense proposals was merely to require that NEA funding be restricted to nonprofit organizations. It sounds sensible. Let's only allow nonprofit groups to apply for and receive the free hard-earned tax dollars of working Americans. As Senator Helms said, "I never heard a symphony orchestra that offended anyone." Wrong Senator Helms—you should know better than to question the omnipotent wisdom of the NEA.

In response, the Senate came down against such restrictions on funding. The NEA can continue to fund any number of individual artists of questionable skill and taste. Don't forget—it's art and its little people have no right to question its value to society. We are just expected to pay for it.

The other "offensive" action by conservatives in the U. S. Senate was require that no less than 70

**GUEST COLUMN**

THOMAS GOOLSBY  
Carolina-Syndicated  
Columns

percent of the NEA funds be sent to the states for local distribution. Another critical and "dictatorial" error. How dare anyone question the power of the NEA and their ability to decide what is "art" and what art is worthy of funding. To trust decisions of such extreme import to "provincials" in Any Town, U. S. A. is patently absurd.

If Bill Clinton has his way, we will soon have a new "madame of the Arts." Actress Jane Alexander is the President's choice as the new chairman of NEA. When Senator Helms was suggesting the previously mentioned changes to the NEA's spending habits, Senator Barbara Boxer, D-California, told him, "I am not an art critic. The senator from North Carolina is not an art critic. We will make mistakes, yes, but give Jane Alexander a chance." Senator

Boxer left out that Ms. Alexander is not an art critic either, but even if she were, what gives her the right to decide what is art and what is not?

I freely admit that I don't agree with any federal funding of the arts. When so many Americans need so many things and when our Nation is trillions of dollars in debt, how can we take 180 million additional dollars away from those who need it in order to give it away to something as vague as "art." Even if you disagree and believe in taxpayer funding of the arts, what is wrong with requiring that 70 percent or more of the money be distributed by local officials? At least then the "little guy" has more of a chance in deciding how his money is spent.

The best analogy to use for describing the attitude that exists in the minds of our so-called art critics at the NEA is to pretend that they hire house painters. You may not have even decided if your house needed painting. However, for the sake of make believe, a government bureaucrat shows up and says not only does our house need painting, but you will pay for it whether you like it or not. Further, you don't even have a choice on the color of paint—that's for the "artist" to decide.

Just remember—it's a crazy world we live in and you're paying the tab.

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