

Opinions

REFLECTIONS
on Religion and Life

Rev. Dick Newsome
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The courage to compete

A quiet walk down a short, dark street of our town surprised me recently. I was out in the cold, crisp air, thinking about things a million miles away when I noticed a rather strange sight. From the place in which I was standing, I could see into the living rooms of four homes at the same time. And in each of those living rooms, I saw a television and the shadow of at least one person watching. I chuckled to myself and kept going. To my amazement, I soon discovered that in every home I passed a television set was at work. And even more surprising, every set was tuned to the same network - CBS - and the same event - the Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer (which is in Norway for those of you trapped in a time warp the past month).

The sight and scene was decidedly eerie. I felt as if I had just stepped off of the side street and into the electronics section of a large department store. According to the latest reports, however, my observation that night was not so unusual given the vast numbers of people who tuned in to watch the games. In fact, the '94 Winter Games have been declared the most successful Olympics in U.S. television history. The closing ceremony alone drew a staggering 33% share of the television audience that evening, an audience 41% larger than the one which watched the closing ceremony of the Winter Games in France just two years ago. In retrospect, CBS brought home the biggest gold medal of them all.

For those of us who cannot leave well enough alone, the broadcast success of the Olympics causes a pause for thought. What about the Olympics so captivates us? Why are they so popular when most of us have never touched a luge, performed the dreaded triple Lutz or zoomed down a gigantic slide on skis in little more than a scuba suit and motorcycle helmet? What's the attraction?

I suspect that the answers to those questions lie in the fact that the Olympic Games, as much as any sporting event, is firstly drama and secondly an exercise in technical skill. And in that drama each of us sees the drama of our lives played out in microcosm. The Olympics are so popular for the same reason that sports analogies are used so often in sermons, homilies, civic speeches and editorials. They are eventually parodies of our lives. We discover a figure skater and root for her to win because we sense that we are able to feel something of what she feels, to know in our hearts something of her disappointment or pride or devotion. We cry when the coach cannot restrain from hugging the young man who has won a medal unexpectedly and shocked himself and the crowd. We cheer for those who wear our flag on their outfit because in wearing it, they signal to us that they are like us, or at least like us enough to be from the place in which we live. And for a moment, we are on the ice or in the snow with them.

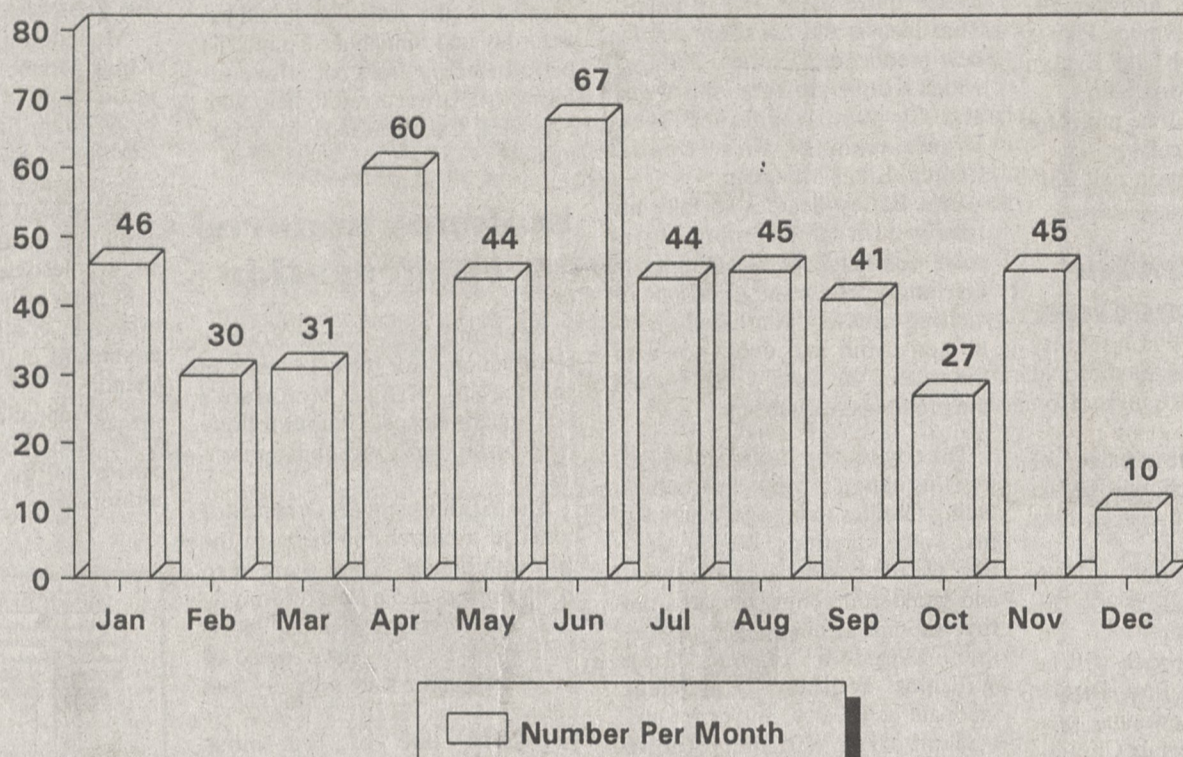
The soap opera of the Olympic Games is an artificial, concise version of the struggles and triumphs of our lives. But in the end we realize that the analogy may be taken only so far. In the end our defeats and victories are much less clear and more less easily defined. In the end the question of who the competition is in the first place is difficult to answer. In the end no neat ceremony with a podium and medals and adoring crowds tells us how we have done. And perhaps most importantly, if we see ourselves in the Olympic athletes, we are left wondering who in our lives are the crowds, judges, coaches and parents. If we are the athletes, who are all of the significant others around us making it happen?

One of the reasons that sports analogies have played so well in sermons and speeches alike is that they offer a tangible way of expressing something of God's presence and activity in our lives. The analogy is ripe because we are able to say in simple ways that God is to us the Crowd which watches us from afar, the One who we are trying to impress with our skill, the Judge who decides how we have done and the Coach and Parent who in the end is the One to hug us and tell us that we have tried our best. In the end, the Olympic analogy of which we are so fond and which captivates us so strongly makes sense in light of a God who cares not so much how we score but that we found the courage and energy to compete in the first place.

So when are the next Winter Olympics anyway? In one sense, they are in the early part of 1998. But in another sense, they are tomorrow and every day to come. See you on the ice.

Fast Facts

1993 Larcenies
Kings Mountain Police Department



Our View

George Wood will be missed

Kings Mountain City Manager George Wood, who resigned this week after almost six years on the job, will be hard to replace.

When Wood came to Kings Mountain from Pinehurst in May 1988 he brought with him organizational and leadership skills which were badly needed.

As the city's first city manager after many years of a Mayor/Commissioner form of government, Wood immediately put into place a chain of command which took small town politics out of the everyday running of city business.

Citizens who have lived in Kings Mountain for many years recall the days when city commissioners got too involved in trying to tell department heads and even city employees how to do their jobs. Wood organized a group of department heads who are professionals in their field, resulting in better employee morale and more efficient job production. Of all of his accomplishments in his five years here, Wood said he is most proud of the city's qualified and dedicated employees.

Organizing the workforce wasn't the only goal for the new city government. Wood faced many other challenges as well.

For starters, the previous administration was leaning strongly toward committing over \$3.5 million to the proposed Crowders Creek Wastewater Treatment plant, which would be owned by the City of Gastonia but would serve Gastonia, Gaston County and east Kings Mountain.

Kings Mountain needed the plant badly because the old McGill Plant in Kings Mountain was succumbing fast, but Wood quickly convinced Gastonia officials that Kings Mountain could expand its own Pilot Creek Plant for much less than \$3.5 million. His efforts resulted in Kings Mountain providing only one-half million toward the Crowders Creek project, saving the city \$3 million.

The city also faced an electrical crisis. The city's electrical situation was so bad that power poles and lines were leaning and breaking, and it was not uncommon for the city to have brown-outs in extremely hot weather because the system was not able to carry the demand.

The citizens very wisely passed a \$9 million referendum to provide improvements, and today the city has an electrical department that is the envy of other small towns. When the temperature stayed in the high 90s for 28 days straight last August the city didn't experience a single power outage. It those improvements had not been made it would have been a disaster.

As a part of the electrical improvements, the city installed a SCADA computer system which monitors the electrical system during peak demand periods, and in another 18 months that system will be paid for and create \$77,000 in savings which can be put back into the electrical system.

During Wood's era, the city also installed the E911 system which has been a life-saver for citizens in emergency situations, and the city built its own refuse transfer station at the public works department, resulting in a savings of about \$60,000 per year in garbage transportation fees.

If there was a failure during Wood's era here, it was the fact that the city was never successful in having its water system stand on its own two feet. A recession in the early nineties resulted in many customers not being able to purchase their full allotment of water, and that created budget shortfalls which could eventually result in rate increases or a cut-back of other city services.

Wood has been persistent in his belief that each city utility department must stand on its own two feet. The one-time savings and cuts passed at the recent City Council meeting will have only short-term effects, and it will be interesting to see if Wood's prediction that rates will have to increase in July will become reality.

So, now, as Wood moves on to become City Manager of Cleveland, Tn., where does that leave Kings Mountain?

The city is well-organized because of Wood's leadership, but it faces some challenges that must be met head-on, the biggest of which is the water situation, and then replacing out-dated fire trucks and other equipment, and moving the Police Department to the old Post Office building so it can undergo much-needed expansion.

But first, the Council will meet Tuesday night to name an interim city manager while a search is launched for a permanent replacement. We urge the Council not to be too hasty.

A good retired city manager or businessman can help the city plan its next budget, and depending on a very capable staff of department heads can carry on the day-to-day operation of the town for awhile.

In April the Council will meet for its annual budget retreat, at which time department heads and council members will have input into the next fiscal year's budget.

We urge the Council to also plan a number of workshops to discuss ideas about the city's strengths and weaknesses, and try to match its needs with a city manager who can continue to carry this city forward into the 21st Century.

Meanwhile, we wish George Wood well in his new position in Tennessee. He is going to a town which, like Kings Mountain in 1988, is moving from a Mayor/Commissioner form of government to a City Manager/Council form of government.

Cleveland, Tn., is in the very capable hands of a City Manager who has earned the respect of his peers all over the state as well as the people of Kings Mountain. If our City Council is committed to find the best city manager possible, and is deliberate in its search Kings Mountain will continue to be in good shape also.

LIB
STEWART
News Editor



Lillian Mauney
loved everyone

Perhaps one of the finest tributes to Lillian Mauney was made Sunday.

A friend stood over the flower-decked casket and said, "Wherever you saw her, she was always Mrs. Mauney."

Mrs. Mauney never changed in her genuine love for people. She was widely respected, not only in the Kings Mountain Community, but in the Presbyterian Church, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Woman's Club and the Study Club.

The quiet, unassuming lady kept many of her good deeds in secret. She shied away from publicity, saying that she wasn't hiding her light under a bushel but she would let everyone else take up the newspaper space.

Her son-in-law, Dr. Donald Kellum, honored her in a special way. He named his prize roses the Lillian Rose, and that pleased her greatly.

Even after she moved from her home on Margrace Road to Covenant Village, the retirement center in Gastonia, she kept up with the comings and goings of her extended family in Kings Mountain.

Every Christmas for many years she hosted the Dixon Presbyterian Church Circle which she founded many years ago. When the small, country church was organized 50 years ago, Lillian Mauney went from First Presbyterian Church, helped with the Choir, played the piano, and organized the Women of the Church. She and her husband were always at Dixon for Homecoming Day in May. After her husband's death, she continued to attend with other family members when her health permitted.

Visitors who shared an afternoon with her in her pleasant two-bedroom apartment always came home feeling better about themselves.

The former Bible teacher instilled in all who met her an incentive to be a better Christian.

Mrs. Mauney retained her sense of humor in any situation.

Moving eight miles to Gastonia was an adjustment, she said on one occasion, but it wasn't long until she felt right at home in her new surroundings. She made friends easily and it didn't take long for the other residents to learn that she was a friend who would listen and share in their experiences. Friends teased Mrs. Mauney about the eligible men in the facility. Not to be outdone, she chuckled and said the men folk enjoyed sitting at her table and eating with her because they knew she planned on remaining a widow. "I don't have my cap set," she would laugh and promptly change the subject.

The American Legion Auxiliary presented her a life membership in her home.

Mrs. Mauney and her husband, the late industrialist Paul Mauney, reared three sons and three daughters. The family also includes 15 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; and one great-great grandchild.

Lillian Ramsaur Mauney was proud of her title as homemaker.

"I just plain like being Mrs. Mauney," she said on one occasion. "I prefer a plain hair style and comfortable clothing and shoes so that I can get a lot done."

Mrs. Mauney got a lot done before she went to heaven March 5, 1994 at the age of 92. Although she didn't quite make it to the century mark, Mrs. Paul Mauney lived a long and fulfilling life and left behind a legacy of love and happiness. Her warm and caring spirit were a living example.

Her departure should only underscore our appreciation that it was good for us that she came our way.

HERALD LETTER POLICY

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

Keep your letter brief and to the point. Type and double-space them, if possible; if not, write legibly. All letters must be signed in ink and include the full name, address and telephone number of the author for verification purposes.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length, spelling, good taste, clarity, libel, slander 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.

A man who needs some help

The letter appeared in an area newspaper, and it was plaintive and touching.

"I pick up a newspaper when I can buy one and see the good things and the bad things. What about the people who are having a hard time in this town?" it said, in part.

The letter was from a family man who lost his job five days before Christmas. His gas was about to be turned off and five children would be cold.

I tried to call him, but he had no listed phone number. I was pretty sure anybody in a situation that dire wouldn't have a phone, but I looked anyway. The phone directory has nobody listed with that last name.

I have no idea why I tried to contact this man, except that I thought I might make a small monetary contribution. I can't afford much, but I am ready to share.

What the man really wants is a job so that he can afford to support his family. He neglected to list his skills and experience.

He noted that if he was able to get a job the pay would be minimal, and he's probably right. Unfortunately, unless he has marketable skills, he'll have to start at the bottom of the ladder in most new jobs.

I know that is frustrating, but it is the way the job market has evolved in this country.

This man isn't the first person to be caught in that trap. When Eastern Airlines had to close their doors in

JIM
HEFFNER
Columnist



Charlotte, hundreds of people found themselves without work. Many of them had never done anything else. Eastern isn't the only company to go through the trauma of ceasing operations, but it's a good example, and one I'm familiar with.

Those people who lost their jobs lacked experience to acquire work in other fields, so they were told by the state employment security commission to get some schooling and try another line of work.

The question is, who was to feed, clothe and house their families while they were being trained? How would they pay for the training?

A friend, several years back, was released from the military. He had been a skilled electronics technician in the service. The only job he could find upon discharge was a temporary position as a service station attendant. After that job played out, he went to the unemployment office. That agency tried their best to

get him another job pumping gas, ignoring his electronic skills completely. All of his records at the agency, even today, have him listed as attendant, ser. sta.

That's another area of frustration the unemployed go through.

Being unemployed, or under employed, and having to scrape, borrow and watch your children make do with less than they deserve is frustrating and painful, but, most of all, it robs a person of his or her dignity. It can best be described as having your soul turned inside out and scoured with a steel brush.

A man who finds himself in that position has trouble maintaining harmony in the home, and looking into his family's eyes. He begins to think of himself as inadequate, a loser. After that it's just a few steps to homelessness, or worse.

The man who wrote the letter can take action before it's too late. He can contact the Department of Social Services and he can ask for help from his church, or any church for that matter. Some people are too proud to do that, but they need to remember their tax money, for years, has been supporting those less fortunate.

If he by chance reads this, he can call me and I will do what I can to get his qualifications out to those who might help him with a job. No promises, but I'll do what I can.

Most people around here like lending aid to their fellow man.

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