

Opinions

JIM HEFFNER

Columnist



Count to ten, count some more

I ran into an old friend the other day, and got a real shock.

She was standing in the office of one of this area's best dentists when I spotted her. I eased up beside this usually friendly young lady, and, viewing her from the side, was surprised to see her pretty features contorted into what can best be described as barely-controlled anger.

The girl wanted her dental records, and as near as I could gather, couldn't get them at that particular time because the dentist wasn't available.

"You can mail them to me," she said, as her face turned redder.

When told they couldn't be mailed to her, but could be mailed to another dentist, she just about exploded. She had no idea that state regulations prevent the mailing of medical records to an individual.

Catching sight of me from the corner of her eye, she turned and stared straight through me. "I'm p---d," she said. I could hardly believe what I was seeing. Her features were distorted and her eyes hard and flat. The room seemed to be permeated with a sense of foreboding.

"I can tell," I said, backing into the nearest corner. She didn't say hello, how are you, I haven't seen you for a while, or anything like that, just the epithet she spat into the air that bounced off the walls like a rubber ball. The lovely smile she had always displayed in the past was missing.

The young lady to whom she was speaking handled the unpleasant situation with the diplomacy befitting her position. She is a true professional.

I don't know how the dispute was resolved, because I beat a hasty retreat after conducting my business as rapidly as possible.

That scenario set me to thinking about anger, and how some people are unable to handle it. I was one of those people in my younger days, but I learned at an early age that only the rich and powerful can afford tempers.

Anger, especially unexpressed anger, is a negative, debilitating emotion that can literally destroy a human being. One of the by-products of anger is stress, and studies have shown that stress can kill. It can cause blood pressure to elevate rapidly and remain high until calmness returns. Diabetics find their sugar levels zoom off the charts in stressful situations. Ulcers, headaches, and perhaps even heart attacks may be caused, or at least helped along, by stress.

Increased anger, or rage, can impair judgement and concentration. An angry driver is a dangerous driver. Further, anger has caused people to hurt their loved ones. A person in an uncontrolled rage may turn on anyone, young or old, and do them bodily harm, perhaps even take their lives.

The dentist, who happens to be a friend of mine, in discussing the incident said, "Anger can stop you cold." That is a true statement.

I was especially distressed after this scene played out, because I know the young lady, and she is, under normal circumstances, a sweet, outgoing girl, an artistic person sensitive to the feelings of others, usually. Her unreasonable ire is a trait she has never displayed in my presence.

I don't know what brought on the anger, and I don't want to know, because it's none of my business, but I will worry about this girl for a while.

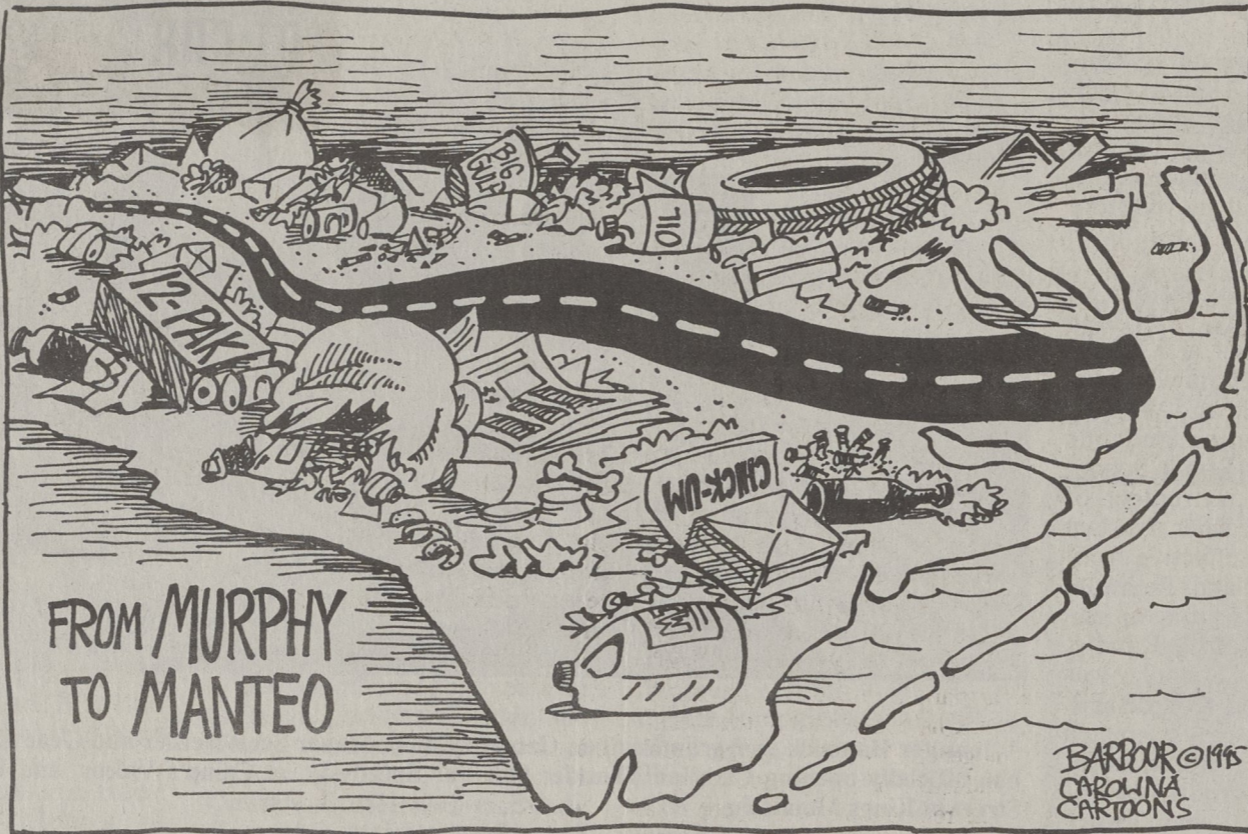
Getting that upset about a situation over which one has no control is a useless exercise. Chances are, even if the girl got her dental records, she remained in an unstable state for several hours at least.

One day, perhaps, all human beings will come to realize that calm reasoning and common sense are infinitely better attributes than raw anger when it comes to resolving differences.

A very wise Englishman once said, Anger is the most impotent of passions. It effects nothing it goes about, and hurts the ones who is possessed by it more than the one against whom it is directed.

It's a good idea to remember that when you get up tight, count to ten. If you are extremely up tight, count to 100.

Cartoonitorial



Our View

2 year terms good idea

Retired City Planner Gene White's desire to return City Council terms to two years deserves consideration by the voters of Kings Mountain.

For the past two weeks White has been attempting to secure the signatures of the required 413 registered voters (one-tenth of the total registration list) on a petition which would require the Board of Elections to call for a referendum on the matter. If the signatures are validated within the next several weeks, a referendum could be held by the time of the regular October city election.

The City went to staggered four-year terms several years ago as a means of providing continuity on the board and removing the possibility of voters causing a "clean sweep" of the Mayor and City Council and leaving the town with no experienced leadership.

That may have been a valid reason for the change then, but it is not now.

Kings Mountain now has a City Manager form of government and it is the responsibility of the City Manager - not the Mayor and Councilmen - to provide the experience and leadership to keep the town running smoothly.

Two-year terms, if staggered, would still assure that the voters do not turn all of the town's elected

officials out at the same time. It would also allow the voters to more quickly turn out some who run with axes to grind and turn the town into chaos for their first two years in office while still giving themselves time to put on a better face during the latter part of their term.

During the past 15 months, we feel some of Kings Mountain's leaders have lost the respect of the populace, not because they brought the city's serious financial situation to light but because the controversy continues to be stirred at each and every Council meeting.

Kings Mountain's budget woes are well-documented, but the auditor's report and the Local Government Commission's report of the past fiscal year's audit show that the situation is improving. The constant bickering about the budget is nothing more than small-town politics.

The time for playing politics is over. We would like to think that our elected officials would regard themselves as public servants, and not politicians. It's time for all of them to forget the past and work together to take Kings Mountain forward. The ones who aren't willing to do that should be put out to pasture by the voters. Mr. White's petition will allow that to happen in a more timely manner.

BOB McRAE

Superintendent
Kings Mountain Schools



High standards needed in school athletics

Athletics in Kings Mountain District Schools have played a major role in the community for many years. I enjoy high school athletics as much as anyone and have been involved with them for 34 years. In fact I am currently serving on the Board of Directors of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association. During those 34 years I have seen many changes - some positive, some not. In today's column I would like to offer some observations about high school athletics and how we can best serve our student athletes.

We offer a comprehensive sports program. While every sport does not have a winning season every year, overall we have been quite successful. We have won the conference athletic award for overall excellence several times and usually place second when we do not. Since 1989 we have won five state championships and numerous conference crowns. Clearly, we have a quality athletic program.

Let everyone think otherwise, you should know that I want us to win every contest. That is why you play them. Yet, we must remember that there are things we cannot be willing to sacrifice for winning. I think we can have the best of both worlds.

We must set high standards for athletes not only in terms of performance but also in terms of behavior. Behavior at high school athletic events is on a downward slide both in terms of athlete and fan behavior. Our school system must hold its student athletes to high expectations behaviorally. We should not want penalties, technical fouls, or ejections to become the norm at our high school. In fact we should not accept any player ejections. I am tired of seeing athletes argue with officials and jaw at the opposing team. Competition can be fierce even while behavior remains good. Coaches and parents and other fans must set a strong example. Let's teach our children the right way to act.

We must have high academic expectations for our athletes. Few of them will ever participate in college sports programs let alone at the professional level. Their main purpose in being in high school should be to get an education which will prepare them to do well after they graduate. We should push them to the right courses and expect them to perform. Their athletic eligibility is directly tied to their grades and rightly so. (As an aside, most of the students who participate in athletics at Kings Mountain High School do fine in the classroom - our greater concern is making certain they take the right courses). In athletics we do need to find ways to better support the classroom achievement of our athletes since the activities in which they participate cause them to have to budget their study time wisely. Again parents must help us establish and uphold these high academic expectations.

We must not let our athletes leave us without learning the lessons of teamwork. Too often today I see individualism in athletics. Many players are overly concerned with personal statistics. Some parents are more interested in their sons and daughters getting playing time than in the team winning. Cooperation often seems to get lost. I believe that our coaches should strive to get as much playing time for all the members of the team as is possible, but I would not ask them to place their teams in jeopardy of losing to do so. I do want them to find the point of reason. They cannot guarantee that every player will be a star or even play a large amount of time. Today's student athletes need to be more dedicated to the team and less to themselves. Our program should teach that, and greater pride in the team will follow.

Don't think I am only talking about Kings Mountain High School athletics. The generalizations that I make are just that, and they apply across the state. But wouldn't it be great if Kings Mountain could be a leader in making a difference in high school athletics in the right way - better sportsmanship, better grades, and more team spirit and pride? I already know our students have the athletic skill to be successful in terms of winning records, even championships. I hope we adults have the skills we need to help teach those students the valuable lifelong lessons which go along with winning and losing. Go Mounties!

State has DPI on the run

State Superintendent Bobby Etheridge is a man under siege these days. His Department of Public Instruction, which employs well over 700 bureaucrats in a \$40 million office plaza that is a monument to state largess, has been placed on the chopping block in the General Assembly. Even "reformed" big-government Democrats, such as Marc Basnight, Senate President Pro Team, and Senator Beverly Perdue (D-Craven), from outward appearances seem to have turned on the education bureaucrats.

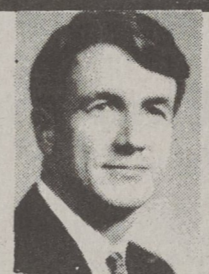
Legislation working its way through the House and Senate calls for eliminating as many as 400 jobs at DPI, where, the department's detractors like to point out, "not a single child is educated." Such legislation has complete support from the public, which is tired of seeing millions of its tax dollars poured down bureaucratic black holes.

Etheridge, whom most of the bills specifically exclude from participating in his department's reorganization, is squealing like a stuck pig. As a statewide elected official, he is demanding that someone, anyone, listen to his cries for inclusion. However, when it is all over, it appears as if Republicans and Democrats alike will toss Etheridge out into the cold.

DPI officials are finding it almost impossible to defend their department, since many of the jobs at the department are poorly defined and include a clerk, secretary or program assistant for every three people. Etheridge & Co., however, are quick to point out that they are not the largest department in state government, but such a claim is far from a valid defense for a state bureaucracy with an annual budget of \$57 million.

GUEST COLUMN

THOMAS GOOLSBY
Carolina Syndicated
Columns



The only real argument that Etheridge offers for the continuation of DPI comes for the assistance his bureaucracy gives to small school systems in complying with the onerous laws, rules, regulations and reporting requirements the state currently places on public institutions.

Etheridge's argument does raise an important concern for state lawmakers. As they prepare to slash the number of piglets feeding at the state education bureaucracy's trough, they must also do away with the hundreds of needless legal mandates and reporting requirements that drive DPI's machinery.

It is fun to watch government officials run for cover while attempting to convince the public that the paper they are pushing is somehow a worthwhile activity. However, in order to reduce the bureaucrats to a minimum, we must also cut to the bone the unneeded laws and administrative requirements that drive big government. Only then will the "mandarins" have nothing upon which to hang their hats. In the case of our state's education bureaucracy, our lawmakers cannot be content in simply tossing out the bath water (bureaucrats) - they should throw out the baby (needless rules and regulations) too.

Holidays to reflect on important people, events

This commentary might seem a bit out of sync with what we commonly call the holidays, but actually it was President's Day that brought the subject to mind.

On Monday, Feb. 20, many government offices will be closed in honor of the birthdays of two of America's great presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. I am old enough to remember when we actually remembered these as separate days, February 12 for Lincoln and February 22 for Washington. At one time I think we actually had two days off in February (at least we did in Iowa), but someone must have decided February was too short for that. Now, for the convenience of all, we put our holidays on Mondays so we can make a small vacation out of them.

What is a holiday, anyway? According to Webster's, the primary definition is "a religious festival; a holy day" and a secondary definition is "a day of freedom from labor, often one set aside by law to celebrate some event." The word "holiday" obviously comes from the two words "holy day" when most of the holidays taken in the

REFLECTIONS
on Religion and Life

Rev. Harold Schwantes
Pastor
Central United Methodist Church



Western World were related to events of the church. In the original, these were days directly related to the church with all the appropriate ceremonies and activities. The idea was to commemorate some special person or event in the history of the faith. In those days, you actually knew why you were having a holiday because the day was spent celebrating the particular person or event. As we can tell from the dictionary, the meaning of holiday had to be "stretched" to include the

other events and people of our history, in this case, those of our nation.

I have no problem with calling President's Day a holiday, nor do I have a problem with making February seem shorter (the shorter the winter is, the better I like it!). But I do sense our modern way of living has taken away greatly from celebrating the significance that called the church or the nation to designate these days as holidays. In our mobile society in which travel is so easy, we have become preoccupied with doing things and going places on the holidays, and we have not made them days of reflection on and celebration of the person or event for which they were named. If the person or event is important enough to name a holiday for, then we ought to spend some time learning why.

I read once where an alarming number of children of all races have no idea who Martin Luther King Jr. is, yet many persons have fought to perpetuate a national holiday in his honor. I wonder how many of our children (and we adults) know more about Presidents Washington and

Lincoln than that they were presidents, and that one chopped down a cherry tree while the other wore a "stove pipe" hat. Do we really take a hard look at Washington to see the leadership and sacrifice which he offered to help establish this nation? Do we understand the greatness of Lincoln who agonized over our broken nation and could so eloquently speak of the sacredness of the shed blood on both sides of the Civil War?

These days were set aside to study and reflect on these things and to take time to pass on this important history to each generation. Instead, I fear we, the people, worry too much about whether the snow is right on the slopes or if the weather will be warm at the beach.

Don't take this wrong. I am not opposed to enjoying a holiday with a small vacation. But I think all of us need to take responsibility, in the midst of our activities and vacations, to be sure we use the holidays we are given for what they were intended. If we ever lose sight of why we have holidays, we may also lose the freedom to have them.