

Mark Hughes writes book 5A

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SHRINE BOWL QUEEN

Courtney Elkins, 9, to participate in festivities in Charlotte

By ELIZABETH STEWART
of The Herald Staff

Courtney Elkins, 9, has always been a queen in her family's eyes.

But Saturday, December 16, she will be crowned Queen of the Shrine Bowl, a high honor for the little brunette beauty born with spina bifida.

Santa Claus came early with a white fake fur from her grandparents that Courtney will wear over a pretty, warm outfit from the White Plains Shrinettes.

For several years now Courtney has been the candidate of the White Plains Shrine Club for the coveted Carolina crown and this year White Plains Shrine Club's incoming President Bruce Ward nominated Courtney and she was chosen by the Oasis Temple of Charlotte.

The excitement is mounting at Courtney's home she shares with her grandparents, John and Lillian Wilson Etters, on Dover Drive. Added to the excitement is the expected arrival of her father, Dale Elkins, who has been stationed with the Army in Hawaii and will attend the big event with wife, Teresa, and Courtney's five-year-old brother Shane.

Queen Courtney practiced for the big parade in Charlotte by riding in Kings Mountain's Christmas parade Saturday and Shelby's Christmas parade Sunday. "She is so excited about Christmas and decorated our Christmas tree," said proud Grandpa who picked her up with ease and sat her beneath the Christmas tree in the family's living room.

A fourth grader, Courtney has attended North Shelby School for two years and before that was an active student at Jefferson School. A bus picks her up every morning and returns her home in mid afternoon. Courtney takes quad canes to school for walking and uses her crutches at home, sometimes using her wheelchair.

When she was smaller, Courtney required constant

attention, said her grandmother, but always a joy to her doting family.

"Now she has become a regular Grandma helper around the house since I have been sick and is a real 55 pound bundle of energy and a great green bean breaker," said Mrs. Elkins.

The Elkins family is familiar with the Shriners Hospital in Greenville and the wonderful work of Shriners everywhere, including the local White Plains Shrine Club.

Courtney was hospitalized in October 1988 and again in February 1989 and since then has undergone surgery on both feet, her right leg, her pelvis and her right hip. She returns to the hospital in January for treatment by a kidney specialist and when she is teenager a "spike" will be inserted in her back to help straighten it.

"Courtney takes all her hospital visits in stride and she is a real fighter," says her Grandpa who moved his family to Kings Mountain in 1987 after a career in the military as a flight engineer and retired in 1994 from Spectrum.

"This child has been a part of our home since she was four months old and is a delight," he said.

Courtney, like most little girls, likes to play pretend games with her brother. She has a big bag that she packs and unpacks almost daily for her make believe trips. She has her Santa list ready, is asking for a lighted doll house, a Barbie doll and surprises for her brother.

Coloring and working on a school calendar are her favorite things at school. At home she colors, plays tapes and listens to country music.

Her grandparents are proud of the progress she is making in school and grateful to God and the doctors at Shriners Hospital for the improvements in her health.

Born with an opening in her spine, the road to recovery has not been easy for the little girl but she is a



COURTNEY ELKINS

real trooper.

Friday after her visit to Carolinas Medical Center's Neurological Clinic, she was fascinated by the lump of coal from Santa that her doctor told her he was getting for Christmas.

"I have a lump of coal too," she said, "but my lump of coal has money in it."

See Queen, 10-A

KM makes first pitch for school

A new K-5 elementary school by the year 2004 possibly in an area between Grover and Bethware Communities to serve the growing population is projected in a school facility needs report which totaled \$12.9 million and was presented by Supt. Dr. Bob McRae to the county board of commissioners Tuesday.

The Kings Mountain District Board of Education approved the report at a called meeting Thursday.

It identifies \$3 million in maintenance projects and additional teaching spaces over the next seven years and projects total state dollars by the year 2004 at about \$15.5 million, considering increased costs for inflation.

The county commission will forward the report to the state legislature which has asked every school system in the state to formulate a proposal for a facility financing package since both the House and Senate passed different school facility funding versions last year. The legislature is aiming to determine the needs by asking local governments to sign off on the project, meaning they would agree it is a fair representation of what the school system is proposing.

Steve Curtis, Superintendent of Shelby City Schools, and Earl Watson, Superintendent of Cleveland County Schools, also presented a report of public school facility needs to the county commission.

Local school board members discussed the needs after a presentation by Dr. Larry Allen but did not necessarily prioritize them.

McRae said that the school system has listed expected costs of maintenance, upkeep, reroofing, heating and air conditioning upgrades and repaving.

Does the school system need a sixth elementary school?

"Given the fact that more and more classrooms are necessary in elementary schools means the auditorium and cafeteria spaces are at a minimum, we had some conversation about where our growth is centered," said McRae.

The report identifies Grover and Bethware Elementary Schools as the highest growth areas but also notes that North Elementary's population is growing.

Between now and the year 2004 the growth rate is expected to be 500 more students in the system which makes a case for more classes at elementary schools.

"It's an unscientific study," says McRae, who said that a few years ago a survey estimated the system population would be down to 3500 in 1995 based on the birth rate but it's up to 4,000 currently.

"The board took no action on whether a new school would ever be built for K-5 or in what area it would be built but we did have some conversation and included in the report of pressing needs that by the year 2004 we might need to build a new school to take care of the growing population for K-5 or K-6," said McRae.

"It's something that we may want to look at more closely in future months."

Grover swears in new Board members

GROVER - The three newly-elected members of Town Council were seated Monday night following a swearing-in ceremony led by notary Judy White.

Political newcomer Elizabeth Throop, a retired Kings Mountain school teacher, was seated along with the two incumbents, Mayor Ronald Queen and commissioner Jack Herndon.

Prior to the ceremonies, Queen presided at a brief business meeting. He took the occasion to announce that a full-time policeman will be hired in January with mon-

ey from the new Cops Fast grant the town received recently.

In early 1996 the board also plans to finish grassing of the Grover Cemetery following cleanup activities at both the Park and Cemetery recently.

The board voted to pave Main Street in front of the downtown businesses, a total of 35 by 600 feet, and sold two guns at \$225 each to Bill Lail pending receipt of permits and bills of sale. Lail was the high bidder for the weapons the board recently advertised to sell at auction.



Elizabeth Throop, Jack Herndon and Mayor Ronald Queen, left to right, are sworn in by the Grover Town Board Monday night. Throop is a new member of the board.

LITTLE CHRISTMAS TOWN

Midpines couple's decorated home drawing many passersby

You won't see anything like Grady Costner's Christmas house even in Christmas Town U.S.A.

And the Midpines Community just outside Kings Mountain is much closer and easier to navigate this holiday season than Interstate 85 North.

This year Costner and his wife, Katie, have added a Carrousel with six Roman horses at the front of the house, a choo-choo set with five cars, a stage coach pulled by (would you believe) three Tennessee Trotters and a total of 100,000 lights in every color you can imagine on every piece of shrubbery, the house, shop, and back and front yards.

And, in addition, Costner and his wife have invited Santa Claus to play host to the hundreds of people who stop nightly to see the spectacle. Starting on Sunday Santa and two elves, Jason and Josh Murray, will host visitors.

Costner retired from his carpet and floor covering business several years ago and 10 years ago started decorating for Christmas, adding more and more lights and tinsel every year.

For nearly 12 months now Costner and his friend, Sam Ferguson, have been getting ready for Christmas. They get the patterns for their creative horses, wagons, trains, etc. from pictures they find in coloring books and then their creativity takes over. They



A Carrousel with twinkling lights is one of the featured new attractions at Grady Costner's home this holiday season. The front and back yards of his house are lighted with thousands of lights which visitors can enjoy nightly through December 31.

cut out the patterns, make the frames, bend the steel rods, weld them together, paint the frames and then the lights are pasted on the finished products. In October Mrs. Costner starts the task of putting up lights.

"It's just something we wanted

to do and we consider it our gift to Kings Mountain and encourage people to drive by and see them every night through December 31 and stop and visit with us," said Grady.

Mrs. O. P. Lewis saw the spectacle for the first time this week and she was impressed.

"Mr. Costner is so talented and my daughter (Mary Lillian Nance) and I stopped by and talked with him about all the hard work his project takes every year and that some people may not know about it and would enjoy riding by and

See Costner, 10-A



Santa Claus came to town Saturday to ride in Kings Mountain's annual Christmas parade. Approximately 4,000 people came out in the warm sunshine to see the 100-plus unit parade. Parade photos are on page 1-B