

# Editorial

## Harmonizing with angels

Darrell Austin was my best friend for almost 40 years. Last week he died, a cancer victim.

Around 18 months ago, Darrell was told he was suffering from lung cancer. The medics found it early and operated. The surgeon told him, "Darrell, you may die from cancer, but it won't be this cancer, because I got it all."

Four months ago, Darrell was again in pain, and again diagnosed with cancer. This time the malignancy had attached itself to his adrenal gland, and was inoperable. The only option was chemotherapy and radiation.

Just prior to the chemotherapy, Darrell was hit with a virus. The chemo was postponed for a couple of days, but the doctors were afraid to wait too long. He never really recovered.

Darrell and I talked every day, either by phone or in person. We've been doing that for many years.

The night he told me he had cancer again, I had the strangest dream of my life. I dreamed he and I were sitting in somebody's living room, perhaps his, and there was a lighted patio just outside. I looked up and saw a man-shaped shadow. The shadow wore a trench coat and a snap-brim, Dick Tracy type hat.

We went to investigate, and when we opened the double doors to the patio, the shadow disappeared. When we went back inside and looked the shadow was still there.

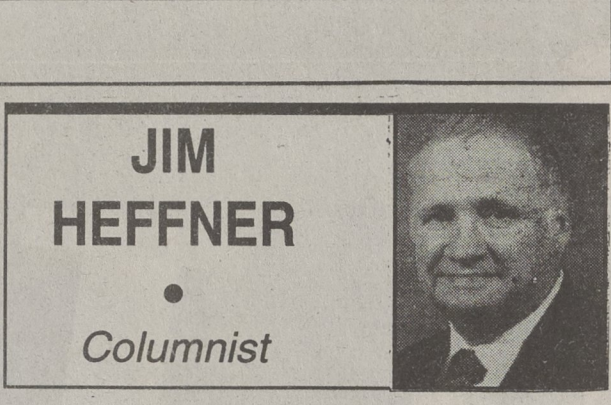
I told Darrell about it the next day, and I told him I believed the dream meant that God was watching over him. Still, he died on August 4, at 5:30 a.m.

Darrell and I traveled together for five or six years, covering 50 counties for an insurance company. He was a remarkable man, funny, kind, gracious and compassionate. I never heard him raise his voice, never saw him angry and never heard him say anything unkind about anybody. In 40 years, there was never a cross word between us.

When we were traveling, we sometimes rode back home from some distant town together. Our usual routine was to smoke cigars and harmonize, "Te-ll me why-y, the sun does shine. Te-ll me why-y, the ivy twines." That was one tune in our repertoire.

Once, when my children were young, Darrell put on a Santa suit and paid them a call. We didn't have much money back then, but we had a visit from Santa Claus.

It wasn't unusual to go into Darrell's office and



**JIM HEFFNER**  
Columnist

find him counseling a youngster, or patting him on the back. Nor was it unusual to have a conversation interrupted by a phone call. Sometimes, after the call, Darrell would apologize, and tell you he had an emergency to take care of. That emergency was usually a wayward soul who needed his help. He went when called, night or day.

A few weeks back, Darrell was hospitalized. I go to bed early, but this particular night, I stayed up watching TV. The phone rang at 12:45 a.m. It was Darrell, asking how I was doing. "How am I doing?" I asked. "How are you doing?"

Darrell was a doer of good deeds. Nobody will ever know some of the things he did for people. That's the way he wanted it. Ask him for a loan and he would reach for his wallet, ask him for a favor and it was yours, ask him for his time and he was happy to oblige, ask him to agree with you that so-and-so was a skunk, and he would just smile and say, "He's really a pretty good guy. He just looks at things differently than you and I."

I knew Darrell didn't have long to live, but I just found out that he knew exactly how long he had. He told a mutual friend that the doctors said he would live four months, with or without treatment. Six months was a long shot. He lived four months. I don't know why he didn't tell me. Perhaps he figured I couldn't handle it, and maybe he was right.

I said Darrell was my best friend for 40 years. There are probably 100 people who will tell you the same thing. I loved Darrell Austin, and I think he loved me, just as he loved his many other friends. There will be an ever present vacancy in all our lives because of his death. I don't think Darrell would like me to get too maudlin.

That strange dream continues to play around the edges of my mind. I still think it means God is watching over him, just in a different place. Now he's harmonizing with the angels.

## Grover to prohibit parking on curbside

Parking would be prohibited on the curbside of Main Street and from Cleveland Avenue to Cherry Street if a plan adopted by Town Council Monday is okayed by the N. C. Department of Transportation.

Commissioners also approved a 20 m.p.h. speed limit to improve traffic in the area.

Mayor Ronald Queen said the new restrictions are necessary for reasons of safety.

## Mike Hutchins scores double eagle on par 5

Mike Hutchins scored a rare double eagle last week at Woodbridge Golf Links in Kings Mountain.

Hutchins used a driver and a 5-wood to score a two on the par 5, 471-yard sixth hole. He was playing in a threesome with Mark Hullender and Tom Canipe.

## MANEY From Page 1A

complaints can be fixed by being open with the public.

"I got calls this week because the utility bills were late but the customers calmed down when I explained that the budget was not adopted until last week and we could not rewrite the software for the computers, no simple task, until we knew the sewer rate increase to plug in.

Maney said that much of the

work in the finance department is "technical" but that he finds people understand when they know what to expect.

Maney said that the key to running a \$20 million business efficiently is communication.

"The city operates big business and there are many positive things that become overshadowed by small negative things that are not necessarily a true representation of how the city is being run," he said.

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## School lunch menus

Kings Mountain District School's lunch menus for August:

Thursday, Aug. 15 - Baked chicken, rice/gravy, chopped broccoli, choice of fruit, roll and milk.

Friday, Aug. 16 - Hot dog with chili, oven fries, choice of fruit and milk.

Monday, Aug. 19 - Chicken nuggets with BBQ sauce, potato rounds, slaw, fruit and milk.

Tuesday, Aug. 20 - Barbecue on bun with BBQ slaw, whole white potatoes, choice of fruit and milk.

Wednesday, Aug. 21 - Country style steak, rice, green beans, choice of fruit, roll and milk.

Thursday, Aug. 22 - Fish crispie or pinto beans, cole slaw, cornbread, choice of fruit and milk.

Friday, Aug. 23 - Taco salad with nachos, corn on cob, choice of fruit and milk.

Monday, Aug. 26 - Hamburger or cheeseburger, lettuce, tomato, French fries, fruit of choice and milk.

Tuesday, Aug. 27 - Potato bar with ham and cheese, vegetarian beans, bread sticks, fruit of choice and milk.

Wednesday, Aug. 28 - Turkey pie, steamed rice, mixed vegetables, fruit of choice and milk.

Thursday, Aug. 29 - Spaghetti, garden salad, buttered corn, bread sticks, fruit of choice and milk.

Friday, Aug. 30 - Ham and cheese sandwich, carrot and cabbage slaw, baked beans, fruit of choice and milk.

Kings Mountain District School's breakfast menus for August:

Wednesday, Aug. 14 - Cheese toast or cereal, apple sauce and milk.

Thursday, Aug. 15 - Breakfast pizza or cereal, juice and milk.

Friday, Aug. 16 - Peanut butter Graham cracker or cereal, juice, fruit and milk.

Monday, Aug. 19 - Pancakes with syrup or cereal, fruit and milk.

Tuesday, Aug. 20 - Muffin or cereal, juice and milk.

Wednesday, Aug. 21 - Scrambled eggs, grits, toast, juice and milk.

Thursday, Aug. 22 - Sausage biscuit or cereal, fruit and milk.

Friday, Aug. 23 - Cereal or buttered toast with jelly, fruit and milk.

Monday, Aug. 26 - Cinnamon toast or cereal, fruit or juice and milk.

Tuesday, Aug. 27 - Peanut butter Graham cracker or cereal, juice and milk.

Wednesday Aug. 28 - Cheese toast or cereal, juice and milk.

Thursday, Aug. 29 - Sausage on a stick or cereal, fruit and milk.

Friday, Aug. 30 - Scrambled eggs, grits, toast, juice and milk.



**BIG CAT** - Billy Hughes, left, and his brother, David Hughes, were bass fishing in Chester, SC last week when Billy caught this 45-pound Blue Channel Catfish on a Pig N Jig. While Billy got credit for the catch, it took a team effort to get the big boy into the boat.

**GET THE JOB DONE**

**MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR RESOURCES**

**INVENT THE FUTURE**

**MAKE CHANGE WORK**

FALL REGISTRATION: AUGUST 22

The workplace of today is dynamic, changing, uncertain. But there is one constant: the constant need to train and retrain employees. It has been estimated that in North Carolina, 60 percent of today's workers lack the education required to compete in the global economy. ■ Gaston College is prepared to help bridge the gap between today's workers and tomorrow's challenge. Last year, over 900 Gaston and Lincoln County workers enrolled in professional development courses...from computer skills to leadership training. Over 1000 workers in expanding industries received training in workplace skills...from blueprint reading to machine operations. And nearly 1000 prospective small business owners used the resources of the Gaston College Small Business Center. ■ Freightliner Corporation is one of the many industries using Gaston College training resources. Freightliner understands very well the need to keep employees' skills sharp. What training needs do you have? Call Gaston College's Corporate Education Division at 922-6266.

**75 percent of the existing work force will require significant job retraining in the next decade; the half-life of occupational skills is only five years.**  
Source: NC State Board of Community Colleges

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