

Opinion



GARY STEWART

Editor

Darrell's in new building and everything is alright

At the end of this month I will close out my 32nd year in the newspaper business. For about 25 of those years I worked with Darrell Austin, who died last week of cancer.

I first met Darrell in the late-sixties when we worked for the Gastonia Gazette. He was an advertising salesman and I was a young sportswriter.

When General Publishing Company bought the young, struggling Kings Mountain Mirror in 1973 owner Garland Atkins hired Darrell as General Manager. Even before his first day on the job, Darrell called me and asked me to join the team as sports editor.

I did, and Darrell and I quickly became good friends.

The news of Darrell's death reached me last week when our family was on vacation and celebrating our 25th wedding anniversary and our son's 20th birthday. It brought a lot of sadness to what should have been a joyous occasion. I shed a lot of tears - and I still am - as I recall some of the good times and bad times we shared together.

One read that the definition of a true friend is "one who knows all of your faults but loves you anyway." I can truthfully say that Darrell and I knew each other as closely as two people can - except for man and wife - and despite all of our faults we loved each other very much.

During the early years of the Kings Mountain Mirror - and the Mirror-Herald and Herald after General Publishing purchased Herald Publishing in 1974 - we changed locations about every time the wind changed directions. We started out in small buildings on Railroad Avenue and West Mountain Street before moving into the old Herald office on South Piedmont. For a year or so while we were waiting for our current office to be built on East King at Canterbury Road, we occupied a one-room building beside Curt Gaffney's Barber Shop on North Piedmont.

The newspaper business is very stressful with a lot of fusing, cussing and criticism of one department toward another. People who didn't know us probably thought Darrell and I were each other's worst enemies because we were always criticizing each other, but those who really knew us both over the long haul knew that it was just our way of getting rid of some of the stress and aggravation. Whenever I vented frustrations, Darrell's favorite reply was "everything will be alright when we get in the new building."

Of course, everything is never alright in the newspaper business.

Darrell, who later became Publisher after General Publishing sold out to Greene Newspapers and then to Republic, probably didn't have the education or the business sense of some other publishers but he was a people person, which in my opinion is most important. It hurt him deeply when he had to fire someone because he felt he was taking away their livelihood.

Darrell as publisher, and I as editor, always tried to put ourselves in the shoes of the people we were writing about and dealing with. Darrell overcame a lot of obstacles in his earlier years, and perhaps because of that he had a kind and compassionate heart and always went the extra mile to try to help someone through hard times.

Those who know me well know of the situation our family went through with our granddaughter, Kayla, who was on life support from the day she was born until her death on March 8, 1996 at the age of three. The medical bills were astronomical and the physical and emotional stress was almost unbearable, and I can truthfully say if it had not been for a merciful God and generous, caring friends like Darrell Austin our family could not have made it through that ordeal.

Ironically, it was just a few days after Kayla's death that Darrell learned he had cancer in his adrenal gland. He had successfully undergone surgery to remove a tumor from his lung a year or so earlier, and was told he had beaten the disease.

Although outwardly Darrell said he was going to "beat it again," I knew deep-down that it wasn't going to happen except through death, because over the years we had talked a lot about the disease and both of us were very scared of it.

When Darrell first learned the cancer had returned, he hesitated several days to tell me about it because of what we had just been through with Kayla. But he mustered the strength one day to come into my office, and with a huge lump in his throat told me that it didn't look good.

Through the years Darrell and I had a lot of conversations about our faith in God, and I told him that no matter how it turned out that he could count on God to be right there with him every step of the way. And he acknowledged that he had already put himself and his situation in God's hand.

As I get older and hopefully wiser - and also because of the experience of losing my father to cancer and my only grandchild to a very rare disease which medicine cannot explain - I continue to believe in miracles but I also believe that the most perfect healing is death.

I thank God that Darrell did not have to suffer long, that he knew his family and friends until the end, and that he kept the faith.

And most of all I am thankful that loved ones like my father and grandchild, and now Darrell Austin, are in that new building and everything is alright.

Cartoonitorial



Don't lose faith in The Rock

There was a great amount of excitement last week over the announcement of the discovery of a meteor in Antarctica that is believed to have come from the planet Mars and is also believed to show evidence of life on that planet.

For centuries, people have speculated about the possibility about some form of life on another planet. In recent years, space probes have been launched to distant planets to gather information about the nature of planet surfaces and atmospheres and look for evidence of some life form. This meteor found right here on earth is the closest thing we have to date of such evidence, unless you are into believing all the UFO stories that have circulated over the past 50 years.

At best, there is still a great deal of speculation and plenty of room for doubt regarding the rock from Mars. The main evidence that the meteor is from the planet is that its composition is similar to the soil samples analyzed by space probes to Mars. This does not rule out other possible places the rock may have come from. The evidence of life on the rock is the fossil-like structure of the rock that look like some sort of primitive life-form. Believe me, they are not talking about a man from Mars as yet! But just the idea that life exists elsewhere in our solar system, far less in our vast universe, gets many people excited and some wondering...

Some are wondering what impact all this may have on faith, for example. If there are other planets that have life, what impact does that have on humanity and all life on earth as far as our significance? Could it be that God has created many planets with life in many parts of the universe? If so, are those creatures accountable to God in similar ways, and has God had to redeem other creatures from their sinfulness as God has had to do here on earth? Would heaven include beings from other planets? It can really get to be mind boggling when you consider all the possibilities. That is why this little rock found in Antarctica is considered to be so significant.

I heard a geology teacher say last week that this may be a real challenge to some people's faith. I think he was particularly speaking about those whom he would call 'creationists,' people who believe in a literal interpretation of the Creation account in the Old Testament book of Genesis. I can't speak for the creationists, but I suspect they will not find this discussion that significant, since this new theory of life on Mars is highly speculative in the first place. Besides, other theories that have challenged the creationists have been met by either dismissing the theories or, in some cases, making room for the theories by placing them "between the lines" of the written text, so to speak.

REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION AND LIFE

Rev. Harold Schwantes
Pastor
Central United Methodist Church
KINGS MOUNTAIN, NC



I think that most of us are simply going to find this new 'discovery,' if indeed it is anything significant, to be just another example of the wonders of our universe and the greatness of God. Many years ago this century, the author J.B. Phillips challenged our thinking with the idea that "your God is too small." His point was well taken, for many of us are guilty of wrapping God up in a neat little package that fits the lifestyle or thought process we want to maintain.

God is a lot greater than we want to admit, and there is no finite being who can comprehend the mind of our Infinite God. While I haven't thought about it a great deal, I don't see how the possibility that God has created and loved another life form somewhere else in the universe will, in any way, diminish God's love for his created beings on earth.

The coming of God's Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us proves God has more than enough love to spare for us earthlings. And if God has other beings elsewhere, I have no doubt of the sufficiency of his infinite love for them as well. Also, this discussion does not even take into account our long-standing belief in the Judeo-Christian heritage of angels and other spiritual forces, which are life forms of another nature.

I don't think that the Rock from Mars will be 'rocking' the faith of too many people, especially those whose life is founded on the Rock of Ages.

TODAY'S BIBLE VERSE

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

"For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

-Romans 5:6-9

Overview

Maney good choice for KM City Manager

Jimmy Maney was a good choice by City Council for the position of interim city manager.

He brings a new perspective to the city manager's office.

Not only does Jimmy have long experience in running city utilities but he is a former four year town councilman.

Maney came to Kings Mountain nearly 16 years ago from the City of Bessemer City after a Show Cause Order from the State required Kings Mountain to hire a qualified gas superintendent. The city currently has 3300 gas customers and in the last six months expanded to White Plains community adding five miles of four inch lines and three miles of two inch lines with 70 customers signing on. Two hundred more customers are expected to be added by year end with other expansion projects on the table.

On the electric side, Maney has worked for months to close a deal with Duke Power Company which could mean reduced rates. A peak generation shaving plant has been his baby for some time.

He has sat on both sides of the desk, from that of an employee/ department head to city council and now to management.

The Herald would be remiss if while congratulating Jimmy we did not thank Gary Hicks for his service to Kings Mountain. Mr. Hicks, retired Gastonia City Manager, had no intention of staying on as a permanent manager but he came to help out when the city needed him and the city got back on good financial footing during his administration. When Hicks' philosophies clashed with City Council, he stepped down last week.

Maney is the city's fifth city manager in the present system of government and the second department head to serve. After George Wood left the city, finance director Maxine Parsons was interim manager for a while until Chuck Nance was hired and resigned after a year. Mrs. Parsons was hired on a 4-3 vote, however, and never got the full support of Council during her service.

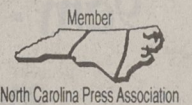
Maney was hired on a 7-0 vote which sends a positive message. It's a welcome sign.

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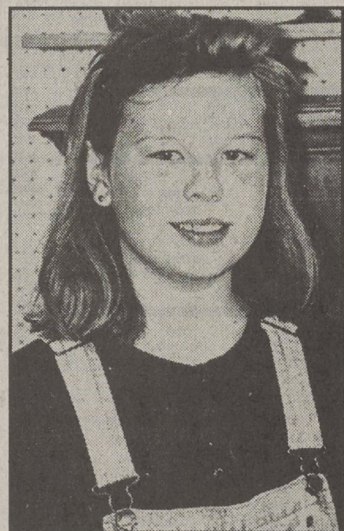
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Sidewalk Survey

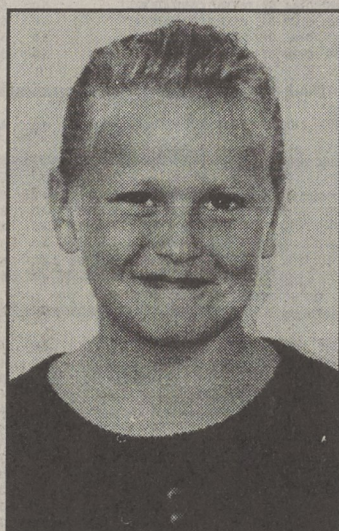
• By Elizabeth Stewart

Were you ready for school to start?



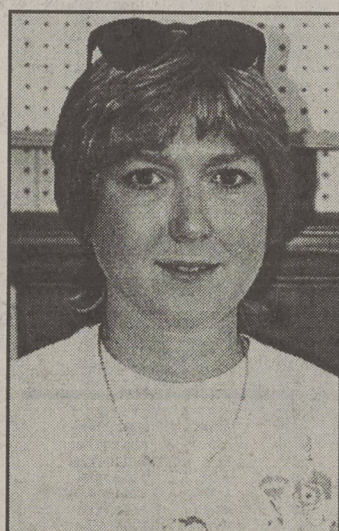
KATY MOSS
Fifth grader
Shelby

Yes. I can't believe I said I wanted some homework. And I wanted to see my friends.



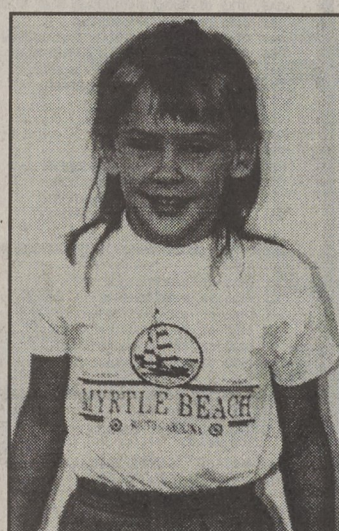
LINDSAY BEDSOLE
Third grader
Bessemer City

Sort of. I went from Primary School to Central which is new for me.



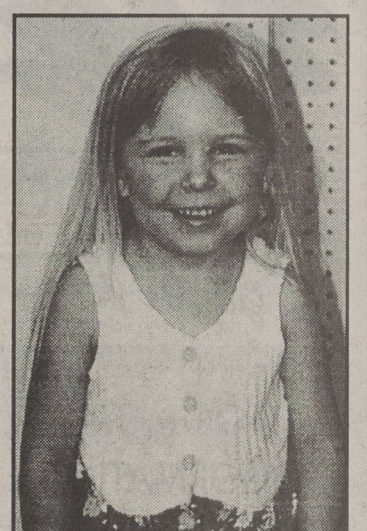
MELISSA LAWRENCE
Travel consultant
Kings Mountain

Yes and No. I am disappointed that Gastonia didn't follow Kings Mountain's schedule of early opening. Starting back to school gets us into a good routine at my house.



CASEY OWENSBY
Kindergarten student
Kings Mountain

Yes. I am five years old and in kindergarten and I like it.



HALEY TEAGUE
Pre-Schooler
Grover

Yes. I am four years old and I like to color and draw pictures.