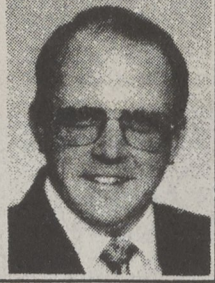


# Opinion

## REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION AND LIFE

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



### Our friendships with God, others grow through shared experiences

Dr. Bill Hinson, pastor of the largest United Methodist Church in the world, tells a true story about when he was the pastor of a little church in Texas and was trying to bring a family of "cowboys" into his congregation.

The men of the family weren't at all interested in church, but they loved to hunt. It just so happened that Rev. Hinson did, too. So he asked these men if he could go duck hunting with them.

They went out early one morning and sat in boats among the reeds of a local lake when a flock of ducks flew overhead. Hinson said he stood up in the boat and drew a bead on the ducks and fired. The recoil from his shotgun knocked him off balance in the wobbly boat and threw him into the water, hunting suit and shotgun and all. It took two hardy cowboys to pull the drenched preacher out of the lake, and after his rescue, they couldn't hold the laughter back anymore. But a few months later, they were all lined up at the altar of that little church confessing their newfound faith and becoming members.

To this day, they still think of Dr. Hinson as a dear friend, and they still kid him about that day he went hunting with them.

Dr. Hinson spoke at a seminar I recently attended and said, "A friend is not a friend until you can say, 'Do you remember when?'"

Shared experiences, whether they be positive or negative, funny or sad, are the soils from which friendships blossom and grow. Without them, it is impossible to grow anything that could be termed a friendship.

There is a danger in the church, as well as our other social settings, that we belong but never share experiences enough to be friends. We become, at best, friendly strangers who worship or work together, but we never experience the thrill of hearts that rejoice together or weep together. It is this thrill that makes life really blessed. It is something that is worth all the sacrifices that it takes to make it happen.

For many years, I co-directed a bicycle travel camp with a fellow pastor. When we first started, about all we had in common was that we were both pastors, we both liked to ride a bike, and we knew each other's name and phone number. Now we have enough "Do you remember when" stories to write a book.

He can tell you about my bad jokes and my corny campfire songs and how bad I smelled in a two-man pup tent after riding a bike all day. And I could tell you about his dancing to Willie Nelson music or about the day he "volunteered" me to help carry a large grand piano from one building to the next.

Both of us would tell you about the day I rode over a hill and found him lying on the pavement with blood running out of his ear after a nasty spill and I wondered if he would survive the night.

That same friend drove several hundred miles out of his way on a vacation trip and stayed overnight in a motel in Kings Mountain just so he could hear me sing "The Chicken Song" one more time and swap more tales about "Do you remember when?"

If I had my wish, I would that everyone in the world had a friendship like that. I believe it is what God intended for us to experience. In fact, God desires that we would experience His grace and love in life in such a way that we would say the same about our relationship with God.

A lot of my work in ministry has been tedious and stressful. But God and I have a friendship that will last forever because we have had some of those special moments that I can talk to God about by saying, "Do you remember when?" And sometimes God reminds me in the same way. Our favorite shared experience is still the day when I first realized that His Son had died for me, but I can assure you there are many others.

I hope you have such a friendship with God and many such human friendships as well. Here's hoping you will develop a rich soil of memories together in which to plant a very special friendship.

# Cartoonitorial



## Let's all try to be good sports

I am currently serving on a committee formed by the North Carolina High School Athletic Association to address the matter of deteriorating sportsmanship at high school athletic events. The problems which are being studied by the committee relate to the increasingly poor behavior of players and coaches. In recent years we have seen an increase in the number of ejections from athletic contests which involve these two groups. The worst culprits seem to be those participating in men's soccer and football although no sports go without their own problems.

The Board of Directors of the NCHSAA is very concerned about the sportsmanship issue. It seems that many athletes and some coaches believe that they should try to intimidate their opponents and the officials. Reactions to calls made in athletic contests are often protested with great emotion. Given the role models which these participants frequently see in professional sports and life in general, I suppose it is no great wonder how we got to the situation we now face. The greater issue is how we reverse the trend.

As I look at sportsmanship in our school system's athletic program I see evidence of positive behavior. We have never been burdened with a large amount of ejections, but we have had some. No objections is the only figure with which we should be satisfied. Records have been kept since the 1993-94 school year. Since that time we have had no coaches ejected. We had no player ejections in 1993-94, however we did have one ejection in 1994-95 and three in 1995-96. To this point in the current school year we have had one ejection. Also, this year the NCHSAA received complimentary comments from local football officials about the conduct of our players.

Statewide figures to this point of the current year show some improvement albeit not enough. Football and soccer ejections for this year numbered 366 across the state down from a high of 508 in 1994-95.

Current NCHSAA rules require players and coaches who are ejected to sit out the next athletic contest. A second ejection results in a two game suspension, and a third causes the party in question to forfeit playing or coaching rights for one year. Even with these penalties we are still plagued by too many ejections. Among things being discussed by the committee are increased suspension penalties and the possible forfeiture of playoff privileges for teams with numerous ejections. I think there will be some stiffening of the penalties for the guilty parties.

Those of us on the committee realize, however, that what is more desirable to action against violations is the promotion of good sportsmanship. I think the NCHSAA will also begin some type of concentrated effort to encourage positive conduct

**BOB McRAE**  
Superintendent  
Kings Mountain Schools

as an alternative to behavior which results in ejections and poor sportsmanship in general.

I appreciate the efforts our coaches give to appropriate behavior on the part of themselves and their players. I think coaches have the largest measure of influence on this problem. I hope the rest of the fans realize that we can support the coaches in this effort by behaving appropriately ourselves and by not condoning unruly behavior by players.

I am proud that we have had little problem with ejections and that we are building a reputation for good sportsmanship. I write on this topic in today's column to remind us that the kind of behavior of players and coaches which we should desire does not come by accident. Parents can help by expecting good behavior from their children. The school system can help by expecting good behavior from its coaches and students. Coaches can help by demanding good behavior from themselves and their players. Cheerleaders can help by leading positive cheers. Fans can help by cheering enthusiastically but positively.

Get the idea? We're all in this together. Let's commit to making certain that Kings Mountain maintains its good reputation for sportsmanship and, if anything else occurs, that it is that we enhance our good reputation even more. Go Mounties!

### KM 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 letters brief and to the point. Letters in excess of 600 words will not be published. Type and double space them, if possible; if not, write legibly. Letters must be signed in ink and include the full name, address and telephone number of the author.

The Herald reserves the right to edit letters for spelling, good taste, libelous or slanderous statements or any other reason; and the Herald reserves the right to reject letters for any reason.

Mail letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086; fax them to (704) 739-0611; or bring them by the Herald office on East King Street at Canterbury Road.

**Gary Stewart**  
Editor

### Giving up something for Lent can be beneficial for a long time

At some point back in the early days of the church someone decided that Lent - the 40-day period between Ash Wednesday and Easter - should be a time for penitence and fasting.

Through the years we've tried, or we have heard of someone, who has "given up" something for Lent. Usually what's given up is something that is noticeable on the outside such as food, smoking or drinking.

I've never been one to smoke or drink but you can tell by looking at me that I haven't given up a whole of food.

I admire anyone who has been successful at giving up any of the above, but I also think that during Lent, and at other times of the year, we would accomplish much more good if we would give up things that are harmful to other people.

A few thoughts and conversations I've had since last Wednesday (Ash Wednesday) have caused me to think about how much good could be accomplished if some of the following were given up:

■ **Gossip** - "Don't believe anything you hear and half of what you see," a wise person told me when I was a lad. I wish I had followed his advice. The tongue is one of our worst enemies. It can spark a fire that spreads to destruction, because each time gossip is passed on it changes. If you don't believe it, put 20 people in a circle and whisper a story into one person's ear and have him whisper to the next guy, and then to the next. By the time it makes it around the circle the story will be completely changed.

■ **Criticism** - Constructive criticism can be beneficial, but negative criticism is as destructive as gossip. We have often heard that politicians and other people in the public eye are fair game, but even they can be dealt with more positively, like in the voting booth. We'd all be better off if we would remember what our mothers told us when we were young: "If you can't say something good about someone, don't say anything at all."

■ **Showing our butts at sporting events** - It seems sometimes that we feel like the price of admission allows us to not only see the game but to holler, curse at, and criticize the players, coaches and officials. Try to remember that they are human, like us, but they have to make decisions and carry out their job assignments on the spur of the moment. Umpires are going to lose track of the strike zone every once in a while. Coaches are going to call the wrong play every once in a while. And sometimes the second baseman is going to boot the routine doubleplay ball. They know it when it happens and they feel badly enough without people in the stands reminding them. Besides, most sporting arenas are big, there is a lot of noise and the coaches, players and officials have their minds on what's going on on the field. Chances are they're not going to hear us chastising them. But everyone sitting around us will, and they'll know how ignorant we are.

■ **Television** - I confess, I am a TV addict. The moment I enter the door I reach for the button on the boob tube. But more and more lately I've noticed that there's not much on TV that's fit to watch. Most TV talk shows are either about filth or O.J. Simpson. The only difference between an X-rated movie and a soap opera is that one shows what the other suggests. Watch any newscast and except for weather and sports, which are allotted about two minutes each, 95 percent of it will be bad news. Even some of the religious programs are nothing more than fund-raising. About the only good things I've seen on TV lately are Jeopardy, Wheel of Fortune, and Andy Griffith reruns. Turn that TV off once in a while and read a good book, or The Good Book.

## Sidewalk Survey

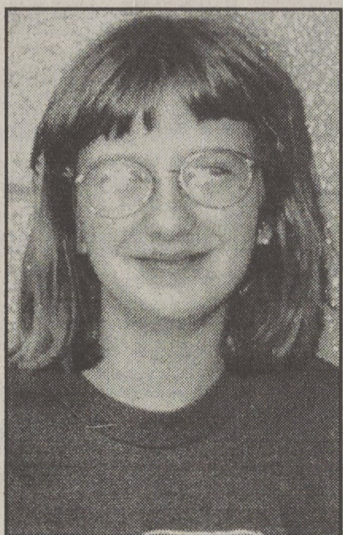
• By Lib Stewart

### What do you like to read at East School?



**ASHLYN HARBISON**  
Age 10

"Little Women." I like it because it's old-fashioned and also earns me 36 Accelerated Reading points."



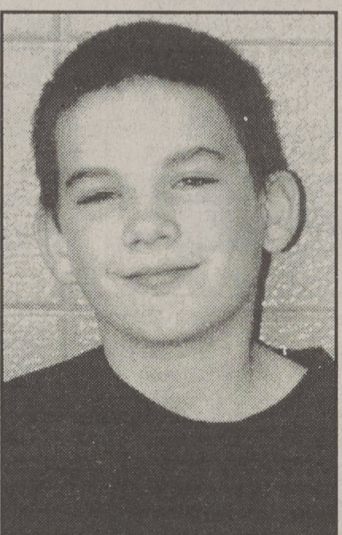
**KATIE DOWDA**  
Age 10

"Island of the Blue Dolphins" is interesting and has nice stuff. It's about a girl on an island."



**CARLEIA OWENS**  
Age 10

"Mystery of the Purple Pool" is a mystery story and I like to read mysteries."



**BRANDON HOWELL**  
Age 11

"I like biographies of baseball players because I like baseball. I am reading 'Shaquille O'Neil.'"



**JEREMY WRISTON**  
Age 13

"I like basketball, so I'm reading Michael Jordan's biography. I'm also a big Tar Heel fan."

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