

People, not guns, cause of violence

To the editor:
I just cannot understand what is going on in our world today! Littleton, Colorado and now Georgia and major warnings in other places.

The parents should have kept their children away from guns and we would not be having such tragedies. Yeah, it must have been the guns.

It couldn't be because as many as half of our children are being raised in broken homes or by teenage girls having babies who grow up to be teenage mothers, school dropouts and parents not teaching our children the true value of life, and living decent lives and not teaching them to work and be responsible citizens.

It could not have been because many of our children get to spend an average of 30 seconds in meaningful conversation with their parents each day. After all, we give our children quality time.

It couldn't be because we treat our children as pets and our pets as children.

Surely it isn't because we allow our children to watch several hours of television a day filled with the glorification of sex and violence that isn't fit for adult consumption. Certainly it could not be because of the outrageously disgusting talk shows which dig up the very worst of human disgust and expose it for all the world to see because of the greed of making money.

Surely it couldn't be because television is leading children and adults down a moral sewer, encouraging lack of respect for authority and crime.

Surely it isn't because we allow our children to enter into virtual worlds of video games in which, to win the game, one must kill as many opponents as possible in the most sadistic way possible.

Surely it isn't because our children are allowed to play on the internet for unsupervised hours and the most dangerous programs known to mankind are available to them. Sex, violence, how to build bombs, even how to shoot many people quick, and much more.

There are good and great things on the Internet. Some of the information in this letter to the editor was gathered from it.

Surely it couldn't be because we have reduced our family sizes down so small that the children we do have are so spoiled with material things that they come to equate the receiving of material things as love.

Surely it isn't because our children, who historically have been seen as a blessing from God, are now being viewed as either a mistake created when contraception fails or inconveniences that parents try to raise in their spare time.

Surely it couldn't be because our nation is the world leader in developing a "culture of death" in which 20 to 30 million babies have been killed by abortion.

It couldn't be because we give short prison sentences or

See Letters, 5A



Scott Thornburg, Charles Smith and Ronnie York, left to right, in their Field of Dreams - their garden behind Thornburg's house on Oak Grove Road in Kings Mountain

Thornburg's corn patch is his Field of Dreams

I always thought I was a farmer - well, a gardener anyway! But over the past two weeks I've seen two that put mine to shame.

I said in last week's paper that Wink Russell's garden beats 'em all, and I don't retract that statement. But a few days after seeing his garden on Henry Street, I was invited by Scott Thornburg out to Oak Grove where Thornburg and Charles Smith and Ronnie York have one that ranks right up there with Wink's. I'll have to say that Wink has the best garden I've seen in town and Scott has the best one I've seen in the country.

Thornburg, Smith and York planted their ground in Thornburg's back yard a week before Easter, and they're already harvesting an abundance of beans, pepper, cucumbers and squash - and have even pulled a handful of ripe tomatoes (including one which I enjoyed). Their first planting of corn will be ready to pull in just a few days.

Thornburg also has a goal to grow a 200-pound pumpkin this year. He had one last year that weighed 104 pounds and won a blue ribbon at the Bethware Fair. A combination of Miracle Gro and sweet milk is going to be his formula for success this year.

"The sweet milk is a new recipe a fella told me about," Thornburg said. "They say a pumpkin plant drinks up spoiled sweet milk like a calf nursing its mamma. I don't know what it would smell like if you'd cut it open, though."

Thornburg, a landscaper by trade, uses a thick mulch of straw and says the key to gardening success is a lot of water. He waters thoroughly once a week unless there is an abundance of rain.

Thornburg got his green thumb from his father, Newell Thornburg. "Daddy had me hoeing from the time I was little," he says. "We have a running bet each year on who will get the first ripe tomato. I won this year. I took him the tomato and he said it was the best one he's tasted since last year."

Corn, though, is Scott's favorite. His patch looks like something right out of Fields of Dreams. "I could make a meal out of corn," he said. "We've got it growing in three stages this year, and I like to plant different types because they will mix and it will be a lot sweeter." His first picking last year filled a large bed pickup truck, and from the looks of things this year's crop will be even better.

Although he loves to eat, Thornburg said his greatest joy in raising a garden is the camaraderie he enjoys with his friends and those he gives vegetables to.

"We enjoy each other," he said. "That's what life's all about. Everything I know about gardening, I learned from my father. He had me doing it since I was knee high to a grasshopper. What I don't grow I can go down and get off of his table."



Gary Stewart
Editor

Sometimes teacher more influential than parents

The most important and influential person in the lives of many youths these days is someone they don't even live with. The person that will determine what sort of career a child will chose, or how far they will go in the educational system is often not the one labeled "parent." The adults who hold more power over the hearts and minds of today's kids than many imagine are the teachers of our public and private schools.

For too many kids, their home is a place where strife and divorce are the norm. Parents who are "too busy" to give their kids the time or help they need with homework assignments or to just sit down and read a book are derelict in their duty. Into this picture comes the teacher.

The influence that teachers have over students is enormous. Though it has been nearly 30 years ago, I can recall to this day the moment when my twelfth grade literature teacher Mrs. Hall took me outside the classroom and said that I should write stories for a living. Even though I had to drive a truck for 15 years, then work in libraries for 13 more, I never lost sight of what Mrs. Hall said that day.

Every day, at schools all over the world, a teacher is pulling a student aside who has a talent of some sort. It doesn't matter if that talent is in the field of mathematics, art, or taking apart a truck motor, someone's life path is being set by a teacher's encouragement.

Kings Mountain is fortunate to have a top rate set of teachers in its school system. I know, because I've interviewed a bunch of them and observed the general deportment of many more. Even to a casual observer, it's obvious that the teachers in and around Kings Mountain care. Just as important is the support these teachers enjoy from parents and administration.

So, to all you teachers out there who are trying to make a difference, here's a big "hats off" and a rebel yell. And to Mrs. Hall, wherever you are, here's a big "thank you" from that long haired kid from way back when.

Letters to the editor

We appreciate your letters to the editor and encourage you to write. Because we receive so many letters, however, we must impose guidelines to ensure that as many readers as possible are able to share their views. We therefore limit the number of letters that any one person may have published to one a month. Also, we ask that you keep your letters short, no more than two pages double-spaced or one page single-spaced. Handwritten letters are accepted, but must be legible.

We will not publish letters from anonymous writers; names, addresses, and phone numbers must be included. We reserve the right to edit letters for grammar, punctuation, clarity, brevity and content.

Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday of the week they are to be published. Mail letters to The Editor, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086 or fax them to (704) 739-0611.

Countdown to 2000



By Alan Hodge

Y2K will even affect weather

With high technology getting ready to experience one of its most important tests in seven months, even Mother Nature is getting in on the Y2K act. By sheer coincidence, (or is it?) January 2000 will see violent solar storms reach the peak of an eleven-year cycle. Though scientists aren't sure what the direct effect these solar flares and their resultant electromagnetic waves will have on computer systems, they are certain that other types of technology will be affected and computers will be forced to work all the harder.

Solar flares of type, which will be going full blast, come Year 2000 are incredibly powerful. Some of the larger ones can equal a 100-megaton nuclear bomb. The problem that these outer space blockbusters generate is that communications satellites in orbit, and cell phones down here on earth, could be disrupted by radioactive and magnetic shock waves.

The computer connection in all this is the fact that some solar flares also emit electric disturbances which computers might interpret as phantom signals. These phantom signals can possibly jam computers already confused by Y2K. Cellular phones are especially vulnerable to solar flares because some use the upper part of our atmosphere - the ionosphere - to send radio signals. Electrically charged particles in the ionosphere from solar flares will disrupt these signals and could also send ground-based relay computers haywire.

When discussing cell phones, their computer switching devices, and the possibility of solar disruptions come Year 2000, it is important to note that most private cell phone calls are handled by towers and stay relatively close to the earth. The government is the customer that uses the vast majority of satellite equipment to transmit calls. The possibility of widespread disruptions in private cell service is "pretty far-fetched" according to a cell phone technician in Shelby because cell towers are rarely over 200 feet in height and their signals are sent tower to tower.

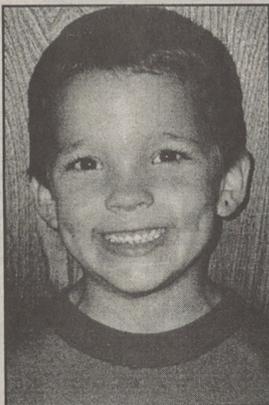
Just in case anyone is interested in further exploring the relationship that solar flares have on communications and computers down here on Earth, there are several Websites available for perusal. The Solar Terrestrial Physics Division of the National Geophysical Data Center can be reached at www.ngdc.noaa.gov/stp/SO-LAR/solar.html. Also online is the National Astronomical Society at www.aas.org.

SIDEWALK SURVEY

By ALAN HODGE
Herald/Times

Who is your personal hero and why?

Got a question you'd like to submit to Sidewalk Survey? If so, call Alan Hodge at 739-7496. If we use your question, we'll give you the credit.



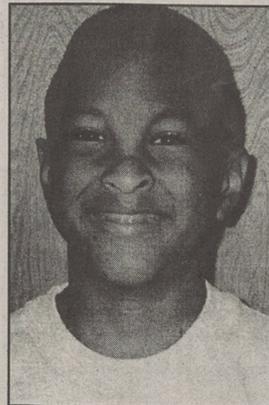
My hero is Clint Johnson because he's a good guy.

Edward Blackburn
Child attending YMCA day camp



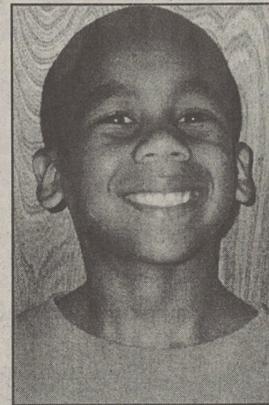
My hero is myself.

Clint Johnson
Child attending YMCA day camp



My hero is Superman because he saves everyone.

Tommy Morgan
Child attending YMCA day camp



My hero is X-Man because he's against the bad guys.

Nick Hill
Child attending YMCA day camp



My hero is my mom because I nearly drowned and she saved me.

Emily Todd
Child attending YMCA day camp