

## Countdown to 2000

By Alan Hodge



## Many may go solar for Y2K

Come January 1, 2000, many folks will be thinking of the title from the Beatles' song "Here Comes the Sun." In the quest for reliable electrical service, more and more individuals are gearing their Y2K preparedness toward solar power.

Solar energy as a source of electric power has been around for quite a few years. Everything from automobiles to garden walkway lights have been juiced with solar energy. No matter what happens come the new millennium, the sun will still be up there in the heavens putting out its rays.

Even though electric utility companies are assuring their customers that all will be well come January 1, more and more people are looking to solar energy as a backup to the wire that comes to their house or business.

Costs for solar energy conversions and backup systems can begin as low as \$1,500 for a set up with 1100 watts that can power a refrigerator, lights, computer and television. Add more watts, and more appliances to run, and the cost goes up. A company in Scottsdale, Arizona, called Golden Genesis is advertising a complete "Y2K Survivor System" for \$8,199.

Companies in certain parts of the country are cashing in on the Y2K solar energy phenomenon. One firm, Northern Arizona Wind and Sun, has sold over \$4 million in solar power equipment.

An early pioneer in the use of solar energy is right here in Cleveland County. Future Energy of Shelby began selling solar energy products in 1983, but concentrates now on fire-place logs and wood stoves. "The Federal tax credit for solar energy home improvements was lifted in 1985," said Future Energy owner Woody Padgett. "The Federal credit was 40 percent and went along with a 25 percent state credit. At one time, you could deduct 650 dollars from every 1,000 dollars you spent on solar equipment. Now, only the 25 percent state deduction is left. This tax situation caused much of the bottom to fall out of the solar energy business."

There's another factor to consider in the solar energy game.

"A lot of solar energy conversion equipment still has to have conventional electricity to make machinery work," Padgett says. "For instance, if you heat water with solar panels, you still need electricity to make the pump on a washing machine work. Even though solar energy is an option, and no doubt many people will give it a try, you have to figure if it's cost effective."

There's no doubt the sun will rise on January 1, 2000, the question will be how many privately owned solar panels will be awaiting its appearance.

### Letter Policy

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.

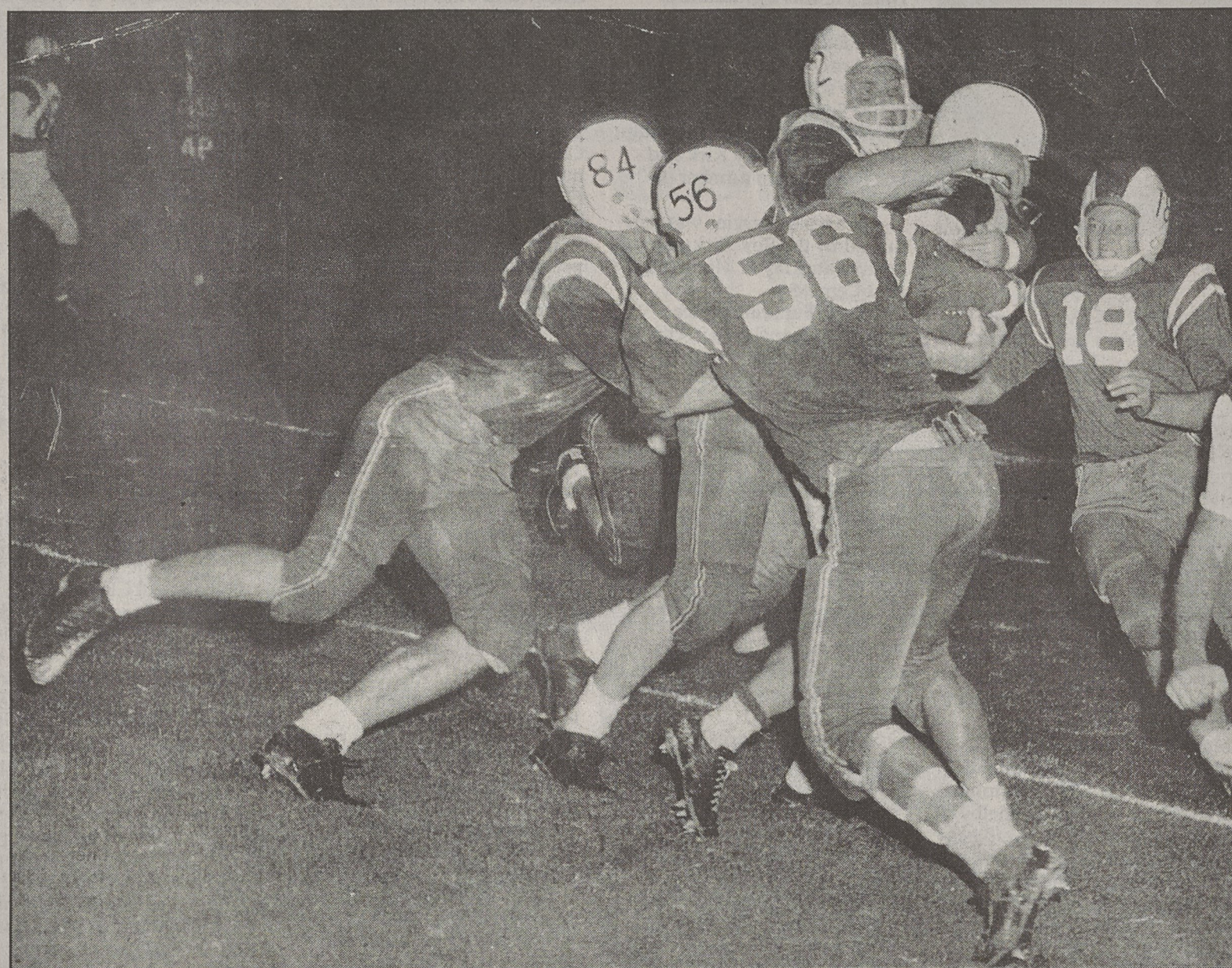
Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday

# OPINION

Herald/Times

Editor: Gary Stewart 739-7496  
July 15, 1999 Section A, Page 4

## LOOKING BACK



George Harris (18) of Kings Mountain is shown during his football playing days at Duke University. Harris was the quarterback of Kings Mountain High's first championship football team in 1955, when he made High School All-American.

## Your childhood memories will last a lifetime, start building

When I was but a wee lad back when Elvis was King and gas was 29 cents a gallon, summer vacations usually consisted of a week at the beach and a week with relatives. Even though the week at the beach was usually the most eagerly anticipated, we had some pretty good times with some of the kinfolks too.

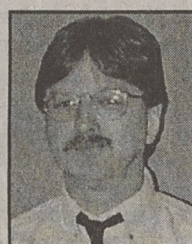
One of my fondest memories of summer trips to the beach was leaving home before daylight, and riding along in the car with the cool air of early morning blowing through the interior. How magical it was to see the slowly rising sun gradually illuminate the landscape in exotic places like Loris, South Carolina.

Sometimes we would go with my grandmother Mozelle and her second husband Ralph Huffstetter to his cottage, the "Snort and Growl" at Crescent Beach. My sister Beth and I were just kids, and Ralph would try to get us to drink black coffee from a Thermos. That coffee was strong enough to float buckshot, and just one sip would knock me for a loop. Even today, the sight and smell of strong black coffee makes me think of those trips.

Another memory of beach trips back then was the time we stayed at a campground at Garden City Beach. About midnight, my mom got up to go to the restrooms which were like gigantic outhouses. In a few minutes her piercing screams had everyone in the campground up and running to what sounded like a murder scene. Turns out a huge bull frog had tried to share the toilet with mom.

Parents today need to spend more time with their kids on summer vacation. Unless your kids play golf, leave the clubs at home and spend some time just walking the beach or a mountain trail with the little ones. Moms, cut the time spent shopping to a minimum and show your children the wonders of nature held in a seashell or wildflower.

Childhood memories of summer vacations can last a lifetime. Now are the days to start building them.



Alan Hodge  
Staff Writer

## The good ole days have come indoors

I was chatting with our weather watcher Kenneth Kitzmiller this morning about the recent cool snap. He allowed as how he'd turned on his furnace a couple morning this week and I mentioned that I was embarrassed to do that at home but had turned on a small space heater here in the office to knock the chill off.

In the "good ole days," he said, that wouldn't have been possible because people didn't have electricity, and they also removed their heaters in the summertime.

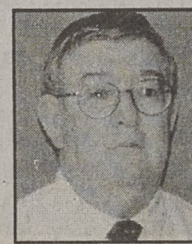
Although I don't recall us ever removing our coal stove, I did get a taste of some of those good old days that our parents and grandparents used to talk about. I always wondered what could be so good about not having electricity, telephones, TV, and cars, and working for 10 cents an hour.

I don't remember the advent of electricity in this area but I do remember our first television and first telephone. The TV was an old Sylvania model which was used when we got it. It picked up only the two Charlotte stations, and they weren't very clear. At World Series time I would run from the school bus to the house in the afternoon to see my beloved Yankees, and had to sit within a couple feet of the TV to be able to see the blurry action.

Our first telephone number was 791-M2. And, kids, it didn't even have a dial on it. When you picked up the receiver the telephone operator asked "Number Please?" We were on an 8-party line and everybody in the neighborhood could listen in on your call if they wanted to. And many of them wanted to.

I was "pretty good size" when we got indoor plumbing. I remember many trips to the outhouse in the dead of winter. I didn't spend as much time on the john then as I do now. And I remember what that Sears and Roebuck catalog was in there for, too. I can also tell you what poison ivy leaves shouldn't be used for.

Even though telephones can sometimes be annoying and with all those cable channels it's still sometimes impossible to find anything worth watching on TV, just to know that Charmin is so squeezable and you don't have to walk 75 feet behind the house to squeeze her makes these the "good ole days."

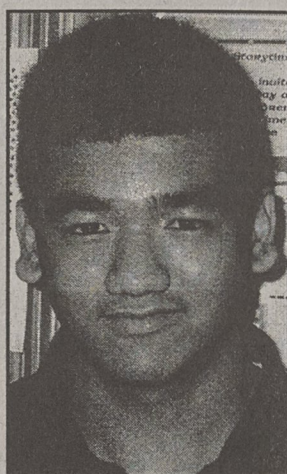


Gary Stewart  
Editor

## SIDEWALK SURVEY

By ALAN HODGE  
Herald/Times

## Should schools be in session year round?



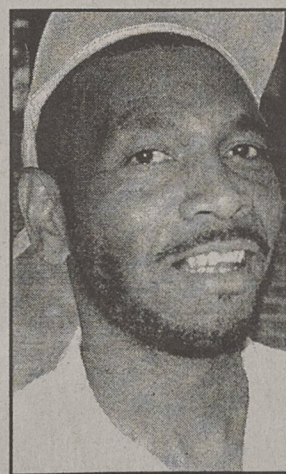
I think that the schools should close in summer to give students a break.

David Angeles  
Library Volunteer



Year round school is too much, the kids need a break.

Marissa Tessneer  
Waitress



The students would get burned out too fast if they didn't have a summer break.

Mike Cuthbertson  
Plasterer



Children need time off to bond with their parents.

John Livingston  
Painter



I think that the kids need their summer break.

Kim Magness  
Bank Teller

## OUR VIEW

## KM should keep 2-year council term

At its regular monthly meeting Tuesday night, July 20 Kings Mountain City Council will hold a public hearing to receive citizen input on calling for a referendum on whether or not to go back to a four-year term for Mayor and Council members.

The people at the Justice Department must think that our city leaders have a hard time making up their minds - and they would be right.

This is just another issue where the Council has flip-flopped on some of its own and the community's wishes. It has been just a few short years (1996) since citizens, led by current Councilman Gene White, ran a successful petition drive to change from a four-year to a two-year term. Voters agreed in a special election.

The first group of Council members elected under that set-up are due to end their current term in December. Many have already announced plans to run for reelection in November. Before the filing ends next month, most of them will probably file for reelection.

We've said it before, and we'll say it again - Kings Mountain does not need four-year terms. Four years is too long for persons who turn out not to be good council members to get out of office. If an elected council member proves to be a good one, he or she will have no trouble being reelected.

That old suggestion that staggered, four-year terms provides for continuity on the council doesn't wash. Kings Mountain is supposed to be a City Manager form of government (although sometimes we wonder if certain elected officials aren't trying to keep their nose in the day-to-day operation of the city). In a city manager form of government, it is the city manager's and the department's heads responsibility to assure continuity - not the mayor's and city council. The mayor should be an official representative of the city at community events, and moderate meetings of council. Council members should set policy for the city manager and department heads to carry out.

We commend Gene White, Bob Hayes and Jerry Mullinax for voting against the public hearing which will be held next week.

This City Council has proved once again that, depending on their feelings on a certain night, some issues have to go through the petition process and some don't. This is a matter that should not come to vote except through a petition drive. Let the ones who want four-year terms get out and work for signatures just like those who wanted two-year terms did three years ago.

Following the public hearing, Council will still have to decide how to proceed. In an election year, it will be interesting to see if they go against the wishes of some of the voters who put them in office two years ago.