

## MAKING CONTACT

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## YOUR OPINION

### Commissioners not listening to the people

To the editor:

On Tuesday, April 18 I attended the public forum regarding the impending school system merger and witnessed a scene that I thought I would never take place in Cleveland County.

I was, in one sense, very proud to hear a student clearly articulate his view and thoughts on what democracy means to him regarding the rights of citizens to be represented fairly by elected officials.

I heard student after student talk of their pride in their schools, pleading with the commissioners to leave their schools as they are, with one student putting it in the very simplest of terms saying, "we're just fine the way we are, leave us alone."

In the eyes of the majority of these Cleveland County Commissioners it seems the superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, or students should have no voice in how our county school districts are to be managed. From all over the county, members of our school districts voiced their opposition to the impending school merg-

er. But, as evidenced by the 5 to 6 seconds it took to approve the merger, even after all the expressed opposition, in the opinion of the people most affected by this action, fell on deaf ears and to minds that were already made up.

One supporter of the merger even dared to compare this process with that employed to prepare and ratify the Constitution of the United States. This statement was an attempt to justify secret meetings held to determine the educational fate of the children and young adults of our county.

Some of the checks and balances in the Constitution were opposed, violently in some cases. However, when the document was completed it remained true to its purpose of providing enduring guidelines for democracy that includes the rights of all citizens. Yes, even the citizens of Cleveland County some 224 years later have the right to determine their own destiny by democratic process.

When by all estimates at least 80 to 90% of all people affected are against the merger of the school systems of Cleveland County, the decision to proceed with this action by the county commissioners only shows a further erosion of people's rights. This blatant disregard for public opinion has caused our nation embarrassment in

practically every level of our government from the White House on down.

The only reason I heard for the revaluation of the county property taxes in 5 rather than 8 years was to lessen the shock of the increase caused by the revaluation after the full 8 years. This reasoning is now in question. It now appears as if the 5-year revaluation was timed to increase property taxes to coincide with the commissioners' intent to merge the school systems.

I have never been a single-issue voter. I have always tried to consider the broader political perspective even with all the campaign platforms that I have heard in my lifetime. But, this May my vote will be to oust the incumbent commissioners who voted for the merger without a public referendum, and for the candidates who are running against them regardless of their party affiliation.

I am deeply disturbed by the erosion of our collective political voice that now seems to have reached even into Cleveland County.

Fred A. Tate  
Kings Mountain

### Remember to vote three commissioners out of office

To the editor:

We must not, we must not forget the names of those county commissioners who voted to merge the three school systems. Three of the four will be on the May 2 Primary ballot. They are: Jim Crawley (R), Joe Cabaniss (R) and Joe Hendrick (D).

These three don't deserve to ever serve the people of Cleveland County again.

So, when you enter the voting booth on May 2, remember those three names: Crawley, Cabaniss and Hendrick.

Remember, "we the people" now have the power! Use it!

Sincerely,  
Rev. Richard E. Plyler  
Kings Mountain

### Ten lessons learned from school merger

To the editor:

Let me share with you ten lessons I learned from the school merger issue:

1 - Only white haired business men from Shelby have a voice in Cleveland County.  
2 - If it is good for Shelby, then it is good for the whole county.

3 - If a majority of the people in the county are opposed to an issue then the county commissioners will vote for it.

4 - If you work hard and achieve excellence you will be shut down, for example the Kings Mountain District Schools.

5 - A prerequisite to being a county commissioner is to be able to lie to the people with a straight face.

6 - Only lawyers hired by county commissioners know best. Educators know nothing about what's best for education.

7 - Black people have very little voice in Cleveland County.

8 - Old dictators never die; they just become county commissioners.

9 - The children of Cleveland County are not nearly as important as the real estate in Shelby.

10 - The railroad system is alive and well in Cleveland County and moves at the speed of light.

Grace M. Costner  
Kings Mountain

### Don't blame all for action of few people

To the editor:

First of all I would like to say how proud I am of all the students from the middle and high schools in this county for taking

a step forward to speak to the County Commissioners at the recent public hearing concerning school merger. You took the appropriate steps in voicing your views and you should continue to seek information on issues in the political arena, especially those that involve you, your family, and the citizens of your county, state, and country. Most importantly, when you reach the age in which you are allowed to vote, always exercise that right. Do not sit back and let others make the decisions for you without your voice.

For some really good teachers in our schools in Kings Mountain, their children, as well as many other children, may be forced to attend Gaston County Schools. Not being against Gaston County Schools, these teachers have strong community ties with the residents of Cleveland County. There are little to no ties to Gaston County. I pray that these students will be allowed to remain in Cleveland County Schools regardless of what grade level they may be.

As for the public hearing and the shock of what seems to be deaf ears, it is amazing to me the hard work that all three school boards of this county have put in to a plan to address all the needs that Commissioners have cited and the Commissioners are not even willing to look at the plan nor give it a try.

With state approval, we will be Cleveland County Schools as of July 1, 2000. The coming year or two will be tremendously hard for our school boards, our interim board, our administrators, our teachers, our students, and our parents. We must find a way to make peace with what has happened and remember the reasons we are in education. Each and every child of this county is the most important reason for being in education at whatever level. Negative attitudes, resistance to the inevitable changes that will come will only prove to be a negative result on our students. Our students need us to have a positive attitude toward their education and toward others. This does not mean that we should not voice our opinion against what we believe to be wrong, but do so in a manner that would be positive in the eyes of our students. Regardless of where you live in Cleveland County, there are good things happening in education in your area. Let's keep our focus on the students and giving them the highest quality of education we know how to give. Let's show the Commissioners that we can work together across Cleveland County, without blaming others for what a few people have done.

Annette P. Burton  
Kings Mountain

Address letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086 or fax 739-0611.

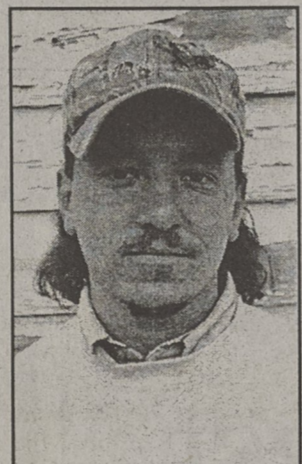
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### SIDEWALK SURVEY

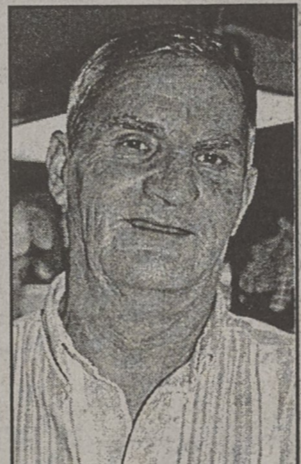
By ALAN HODGE  
Herald/Times

Do you think the government did the right thing in taking Elian Gonzalez?



They did the right thing. He needs to be with his father.

Shane Stanley  
Lake Wylie



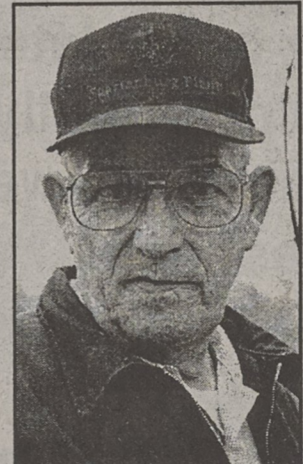
He should be with his dad, but they used too much force.

Paul Pittman  
Kings Mountain



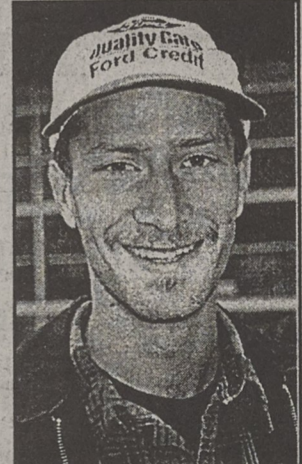
The government went too far in the way they took him.

Earl Sellers  
Bessemer City



The boy survived a terrible ordeal and should be allowed to stay here.

Marshall Stiles  
Shelby



I wouldn't want a child of mine to go through what Elian did.

Joe Cody  
Grover