

YOUR OPINION

Thanks for supporting luminaries

To the editor:

Four years ago, after the death of a close relative, and realizing not only our loss but that we could no longer share the traditional Christmas celebration with them, family get-togethers, meals, exchanging gifts etc., after much thought and debate we decided to place a lighted candle on her grave. It alluded to the star in the east, a symbol of the birth of our Savior, Jesus; light, a symbol that their memory will always shine in our hearts; brightness, that memories of them will always be a bright spot in our lives; placement, on their earthly resting place, facing east, ready for the rap-

ture. This done, we suddenly realized we had other family, friends, and loved ones interred at Mountain Rest Cemetery so luminaries were placed on their graves as well. Thus, the birth of Mountain Rest Christmas luminaries service, a very spiritual and serene annual Christmas memorial celebration.

Four years later, many have joined with us, and with their help this service has grown to mean much to many.

As the organizers of the Mountain Rest Christmas Luminaires Service, we would like to take this opportunity to thank the City of Kings Mountain for allowing us to present this service. Also, to thank the staff at Mountain Rest Cemetery for their help and patience in preparation and presentation for the service.

Thanks to all the many volunteers who helped light luminaries, greet and direct visitors and traffic and helped in so many ways to help make Mountain Rest Christmas Luminaires a success. Thanks to the bag piper for volunteering his time, talent and travel to participate in the program. Our gratitude to all is boundless.

To all who came out, loved ones, families, and friends, without you our project would be without merit. Your continued support and donations will help keep this tradition possible.

Jim and Brenda Belt
James Belt Ministries

KM lakes should not be sold

To the editor:

The City of Kings Mountain is poised on the edge of tremendous growth. With a recent designation of "Gateway City to the Parks," by the National Park Service, it becomes obvious that we can become protector of other natural areas.

The two lakes, Davidson and City Lake, owned by the City of Kings Mountain, located within one-half of a mile from the new connector trail (part of Crowder's Mountain State Park), and in close proximity to the Kings Mountain State Park and Kings Mountain National Military Park, should be a part of this natural area.

Kings Mountain Friends of the Lakes believes that these lakes should not be used for commercial or housing development, but rather kept as a natural resource area to benefit citizens now and future generations to come.

Friends of the Lakes Steering Committee
Mike Smith, Carl DeVane, Dennis Patterson, Tim Plonk, Shirley Brutko

LOOKING BACK



FILE PHOTO / I.G. ALEXANDER
Kings Mountain High School's spanking new baseball field was dedicated in 1970. Taking part in the ceremony prior to the Kings Mountain-Belmont game were, left to right, retired KMHS baseball coach Fred Withers who was engineer for the project; Kings Mountain School Board member Alex Owens who hit the first ball pitched by Withers; Kings Mountain High School Principal Jake Atkinson; Kings Mountain School Superintendent Donald Jones; and Rev. Jim Neal, pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church, who gave the prayer of dedication. Owens, Withers, Paul Lancaster and Dorus Bennett received plaques in appreciation for their contributions to the project. Unfortunately, the first official game played on the field resulted in Belmont's Rick Cherry pitching a no-hit, 2-0 victory over Coach Bobby Hussey's Mountaineers. In 1975, the baseball/softball complex at KMHS and KMMS were named Lancaster Fields in honor of Paul Lancaster for his contributions in rebuilding the high school field and building the baseball and softball fields at KMMS, as well as the KMHS football practice fields.

OUR VIEW

Legislators need to halt merger

Merger has been in the news almost weekly since November 1999 when the "old" Cleveland County Board of Commissioners called for a merger assessment through a letter that was hand-delivered to a Shelby newspaper.

Since that time, the three members of the "old" board that were up for election last year have been voted out of office and three new commissioners who ran in opposition to merger have taken their seats.

At the first meeting of the "new" board, the commissioners accepted the resignation of their merger lawyer and adopted resolutions asking the State Board of Education to rescind its approval of the Cleveland County merger plan, and also to ask the U.S. Justice Department to refuse to pre-clear the merger under the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

All during this merger fight, in which most folks in Cleveland County expressed their opinion, it's been clear that the majority of the citizens are against it. What else could have led them to clean house on election day and vote into office three people from Kings Mountain? In the long, political history of Cleveland County that had never happened before.

Also, it was amazing that most of our local delegates to the General Assembly were silent on what has been one of the hottest issues to ever surface in this county. Andy Dedmon did write a letter to the editor of this newspaper stating that he was opposed to merger.

Now, it's time for the others to speak out. Recently, talk has surfaced about the possibility of the county commissioners asking the local delegates to introduce a bill in the General Assembly to overturn the State Board's approval of merger. The General Assembly reserved this type of power for itself several years ago when it took merger out of the hands of the voters and gave it to county commissions.

During telephone interviews last week with all of the local delegates except John Weatherly, who couldn't be reached, most said they would be willing to have a "delegation" meeting and consider supporting such a request.

We feel they need to do it soon because this is-

sue has been devastating to Cleveland County. The cost of a merger that hasn't even been implemented yet has been astronomical to the taxpayers. The "cloud of merger" has been directly responsible for numerous Kings Mountain School employees leaving their jobs for more secure if not greener pastures, and has also partly resulted in the loss of our top administrator, Supt. Bob McRae. It could also be pointed out that several top-level administrative jobs have changed hands in the past year, and in every case a person within the school system got those jobs. We wonder if more experienced candidates would have applied for them had the merger cloud not been hanging over our heads. We also have to believe that it's going to be virtually impossible for KMDS to attract out-of-system candidates for the superintendent vacancy if the merger issue is not settled.

While some may argue that the local delegates shouldn't get involved yet because there are decisions pending in the Court of Appeals, and the merger plan also has to be pre-cleared by the U.S. Justice Department, we feel it's time to put a stop to this mess. It would be far less expensive, and maybe even more timely and advantageous than having the courts and the U.S. Justice Department rule on it. The courts will rule according to the law, not by public opinion. The Justice Department will rule on whether or not the plan violates the voting and/or civil rights of the minorities who may or may not eventually be affected by this plan. Politicians can rule by public opinion. And the public opinion is overwhelming. The people of Cleveland County do not want merger.

The General Assembly will convene on January 24. It will have a lot of important issues to deal with. To the people in Cleveland County, there is no issue more important than school merger.

Thus, we call upon our local delegates to introduce a bill to overturn this merger and make every effort to convince the other legislators that this is not good for Cleveland County.

If our local delegation cannot speak up for us now, at the next election they need to meet the same political fate as the "old" county commissioners.

Burning powder brings New Year in with a bang

Ring in the New Year is a custom that dates back a very, very long time. Even before there were calendars, indeed, even before there were calendars with the likes of Fabio or Farrah Fawcett or hotrod cars on them, people have celebrated the start of a New Year in some way.

In olden times, before the world was illuminated at night by electric lights, people had plenty of time and darkness to study the moon and stars. By gauging when a certain heavenly body would mark its path across the sky, the ancients could tell when one year had passed and another had started. Things they did then included slurping at a wassail bowl and sacrificing an unlucky maiden.

Thanks to the Chinese and their invention of gunpowder, modern New Year feasts often feature fireworks. Besides presenting a show of light and sparks, the blast of fireworks is also said to frighten off evil spirits. Sometimes, as in the case of the jovial and pyrotechnically inclined Cherryville Shooters, spirits often precede the kabooms as well.

Since I live in a semi-rural area of Gaston County, New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July both provide opportunities for kablarnery to take place. Though some of the folks in my neck of the woods shoot a bottle rocket or two, most saunter, stroll, or stagger outside at the stroke of midnight to loose volleys of gunfire. Someone nearby, I'm not sure whom but I have a good idea, possesses a full scale Civil War artillery piece and treats the populace to its earthshaking roar when the occasion calls for noise and fire.

This New Year I was sick in bed and could only hear the sounds of battle...er, I mean celebration. At about 10 minutes until midnight a desultory fire was taken up by an assortment of arms. There go the skirmishers, I thought. As the moment of January 1, 2001 approached, the fire increased in volume and the cannon again added its concussive blast to the fight. I mean revelry. Finally, as the New Year came in, the steady bang of rifles, shotguns and pistols mingled with rockets to form a battle scene of unspeakable grandeur.

Well, the situation wasn't like sipping champagne on Times Square, but it was unique. And this year, like every year when the shooting starts, I reflect on what the future 365 days will hold. And this year, as all the others since I moved to the free fire zone, I figure if I don't catch a stray slug then the year has started out on a pretty good note.

Way we were January 9, 1986

The year 1986 started off with a potpourri of news stories on the front page of the January 9 edition of the Herald. Topping the roster was a big write-up about Kings Mountain native and pro football star Kevin Mack being named United Press International AFC Rookie of the Year. The announcement came after Mack gained over 1,100 yards in his first season with the Cleveland Browns. As reported, Mack had also set rushing records as a student at KMHS and Clemson University.

Also on the front page of the January 9, 1986 Herald, it was announced that April Ellen Morrison had been the first child born at Kings Mountain Hospital in 1986. The daughter of Judy and Phillip Morrison, April came into this world on January 2 at 2:25 a.m.

Wrestling topped Herald sports news on January 9, 1986. Coached by Steve Moffitt, the Kings Mountain High School wrestling team was reported as winning their latest outing with a victory over North Gaston. After the win, Moffitt was just two wins short of having 100 coaching triumphs. Top wrestlers mentioned in the story included Wayne Brazzell, Vince Sullens, and Roderick Boyce. Also featured on the sports page was a photo of young golfer Matt Heavner who had recently finished in second place at a tournament at River Bend golf club.

The Focus on People section of the January 9, 1986 Herald spotlighted several 50th wedding anniversaries. Included in the roster were Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Ledbetter, Mr. and Mrs. G.M. Huffstetler, and Mr. and Mrs. Paul A. Hord, Sr. Other social news included the military notes that Marty Hovis had completed Navy Basic Training, Private Charles Patterson had completed training at Army Signal School, and that Tracy Lyles had been promoted to the rank of sergeant in the Air Force.

In her weekly column for January 9, 1986 Herald staff Writer Lib Stewart mused about the fact that several famous popular music stars had been killed over the years in plane crashes. Among the names she intoned in the story were Glenn Miller, Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, and Ricky Nelson.



SIDEWALK SURVEY

By ALAN HODGE
Kings Mountain Herald

What will be the biggest challenge facing President George W. Bush in his first year of office?



His biggest challenge will be to cut taxes.

Jeff Cox
Gastonia



The problem of rising medical costs for seniors will be his greatest challenge.

Steve Norkett
Kings Mountain



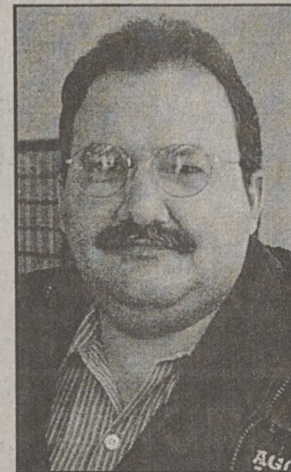
Overcoming the controversy of the Florida election count will be a challenge.

Ivy Quick
Grover



Bush's biggest challenges will be working with Congress and the economy.

J. C. Wilson
Kings Mountain



He will be challenged by the need to cut taxes.

Angel Perez
Kings Mountain