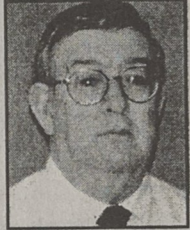


# Merger is all about control

Kings Mountain, Shelby and Cleveland County Schools officials will be meeting toward the end of this week to try to come up with an alternate plan to merger.

The two groups held two marathon meetings during the past week - one Wednesday at Kings Mountain's district office and the other with County Commissioners Saturday morning in Shelby - to consider options that may bring the matter to resolution quicker than having it run its course in the court system.



**Gary Stewart**

Editor

I try to bite my tongue in public meetings. I feel a reporter's job is to listen to the discussion and report it, and not be a part of the meeting. But Wednesday was one of those times that I wish I'd been a member of the Kings Mountain School Board.

When the Shelby Board read and distributed copies of a typed statement - which was obviously prepared prior to the meeting - saying that they'd listened to discussion on redistricting and other matters "so eloquently" expressed by Attorney Michael Crowell and then went on to say that unless they receive more money for their school system by July 1 they'd have no other choice but to support the merger plan, I probably would have told them to...well, I probably would have said something stupid.

School Board members, I guess, are much nicer than I am but it seemed to me that all of them just clammed up after that.

The Shelby Board indicated that their system, which has lost several hundred students over the past several years, cannot survive very long at the present supplement rate of funding (16 cents per \$100 property valuation). Their supplemental tax rate prior to this fiscal year was 22 cents, but the previous County Administration set the countywide rate at 16 cents as part of the merger plan. The County system survived for years with no supplement, and just for the past five years or so have they had a 10-cent supplement.

It was surprising to me that except for one brief mention by Crowell at the Wednesday meeting and one brief mention by County Manager Lane Alexander at the Saturday meeting, not one person suggested that Shelby could put an end to all of this merger mess by surrendering its charter to the State Board of Education.

That would automatically cause a merger of the Shelby and County school systems. This is my own personal opinion, but I don't think Shelby would ever consider that as an option because if that were to happen they would run the risk of losing control.

As pointed out by Crowell, if that happened the State Board of Education would adopt the plan for merger with the county school unit and law would prohibit any involvement by the city or county school boards, or the county commissioners, in developing the merger plan.

Just guessing, but what could happen under that scenario is that the State Board could leave the county school board intact or name an interim board which, if representative of the population of the county, could have a majority of its members from outside the city limits of Shelby.

Power lost. Control of programs lost. Control of re-districting lost.

I believe this whole merger mess originated by the powers-that-be in Shelby, and I don't think it has anything to do with people driving past Shelby every day to go to Crest. No doubt, Shelby wants re-districting but in my opinion they want to select the neighborhoods that would be re-assigned to Shelby. Those they don't want would still be driving past Shelby to go to Crest.

I hope the three systems can work out a proposal that's agreeable to everyone, and that the General Assembly will approve it. The merger mess needs to be settled.

But, be careful what you give up.

# OPINION

The Kings Mountain Herald

Editor: Gary Stewart 739-7496  
February 15, 2001 Section A, Page 4

## PICTORIAL EDITORIAL



ALAN HODGE/THE HERALD

A spectacular panorama looking towards Kings Mountain is part of the beauty in the new connector trail that will run between Crowders Mountain State Park and Kings Mountain National Military and State parks. The 12-mile trail follows the ridge line across areas of unspoiled wilderness. This photo was taken from Juniper Ridge looking towards Kings Mountain.

## YOUR OPINION

# There's more to life than money and development

In the February 8, 2001 edition of The Herald there was an article about how the freeze of gas prices saved gas customers 44 percent on their bills. In that article, City Councilman Gene White is noted as wanting to reduce gas prices and set aside \$100,000 for no interest loans to allow citizens to insulate their homes. Mr. White is quoted as saying he is upset that the city is giving away so much money while soaring gas prices are affecting all taxpayers. Lower gas prices would be nice if they do not put the city in the red. However, robbing Peter to pay Paul usually does not work for long. If the City is paying a high price for the gas, I do not see how they can continue to charge less for it once the surplus is used up. The money would have to come from somewhere. The no interest loan idea may be worth pursuing, but where will the \$100,000 come from?

Councilman White is also quoted as saying "We just gave up \$630,000 for the two lakes." We're anticipating annexing Dyemasters and that will cost us a million dollars over 10 years." My question is this: If it is going to cost the City a million dollars over ten years to annex Dyemasters, why do it? It is my understanding that Dyemasters wants to be annexed to get lower water prices. I can not fault them for that. Who doesn't want lower prices? But should it cost the City a million dollars over ten years? I thought the services that have to be provided due to annexation were supposed to be paid for through the tax revenue generated from the annexation.

It is my opinion that the delay of the sale of the lakes was a good idea. A lot of people live in the Kings Mountain area because they like a small town atmosphere. It seems that several of the present Councilmen and City administration are intent on trying to "grow" Kings Mountain regardless of the cost to those citizens and to the environment. I would encourage them to seriously think about their plans to rapidly develop all the open space around Kings Mountain. If the lakes were sold and

development took place around them as was planned, that natural beauty would be lost forever. I suspect the citizens of Kings Mountain would have ended up spending that \$630,000 to help develop the area anyway with water, sewer, and electrical lines. There is a lot to be said about being able to get out in the beauty of nature and enjoy a little peace and quiet. Unfortunately, that ability is fast disappearing. The \$630,000 has apparently not been needed since the City has had a surplus. I am sure the City would find a way to spend it if it was available, but once it is spent it is gone. By keeping the lakes, perhaps more people can enjoy them, especially if a way can be found to make them a part of the park system or if the Friends of the Lakes find a way to purchase them. Maybe even some of the Councilmen and City administration could go there to get a little fresh air and remind themselves that there is more in life to enjoy than just money and development.

Lynn Welborn

## 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 third party letters, thank-you letters or 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.

# Why not settle merger on the field of glory?

Just like a pot of day old oatmeal, the school merger plot thickens. Wearing on everyone's nerves for nearly a year and half, school merger is like an acne blemish on the face of a teenybopper - it will all be gone one day, but for now it seems as if it will last forever.

The people who made this mess have for the most part been put out of office. They shot and got, or something close to that. Now, adding to that putrid stew is the fact that there might soon be a struggle between the three current school systems to see which one will get what share of the student and money pie.

Surely there must be some parallel in the tales of the ancient Greeks or Romans to equal the entire merger mele. Perhaps it is as if Pegasus winged his way down Highway 74 from the west and when he crossed Buffalo Creek felt his stomach begin to rumble. Maybe it's a tale in which some king or potentate who did not rule by public consent loosed a pestilence upon the land and then went to the beach golfing.

I have a solution to the entire merger problem. Instead of dragging it out for months in the courts, wasting tens of thousands of dollars and sending more and more parents and educators to bed at night with a headache from worry, the thing could be settled like they did in the days of yore.

I envision a scene of high mirth and drama whereby the guys who voted to approve merger would be put in the middle of a field dressed in loincloths and armed with sticks. Then, four guys selected by parents in Kings Mountain - big, strappin' farm lads - would also put on a Tarzan rag and pick up a plank or something and meet for mortal combat. Well, the combat wouldn't have to be mortal, but someone would definitely get a whuppin. The bottom line is, the side that won would have the merger thing decided in their favor.

Just imagine if this event were to be held at a big park or in the middle of a huge cotton field. Advertise it too. Sell hot dogs and T-shirts and let people bring coolers and chicken and cheer on their team. Say, can you imagine what some of those guys who plunged the county into merger madness might look like in a loin cloth?

Well, it wouldn't be the War Between the States all over again, but it would settle the issue and make those responsible for creating it in the first place face the music they tooted. Not only that, but the event might even be on "America's Funniest Videos." After all, merger has become something that if you don't try to find a little bit to laugh about in its ongoing tragedy, you just might cry.

## The way we were February 13, 1986

The special Valentine's Day edition of the Kings Mountain Herald for February 13, 1986 featured a front page story on citizens angry over high utility bills. As the piece related, City Hall had been jammed with folks protesting their Duke Power bills. Some of the bills had doubled in just one month. A petition signed by over 350 citizens was presented to council members and several folks took to the podium to express outrage at the hikes.

Another front page feature in the February 13, 1986 Herald took a look at claims by residents that newly paved Fulton Road had become a "racetrack." Even though the speed limit on Fulton was posted at 35 miles per hour, citizens who lived on the road said drivers often hit twice that speed.

On the February 13, 1986 sports scene, the big news was that Kings Mountain High School football star Calvin Stephens had recently signed a contract to attend and play at the University of South Carolina. Stephens had been KM's first Shrine Bowl player since 1957 and had been on the All Gazette and Charlotte Observer All Piedmont teams. Other reported news spotlighted KMHS wrestlers Vince Sullens and Roderick Boyce who won their weight championships in the Sectional Wrestling Tournament in Charlotte.

In keeping with the Valentine's Day spirit, the February 13, 1986 Herald featured several "love is" letters from Susie Keeter's second grade class at Grover Elementary. In his letter, Leroy McAfee said "love is my Maw Maw." According to Deryn Dixon, love is "when my dog gives me five."

Military news in the February 13, 1986 Herald mentioned several area service personnel and their adventures. In this vein, it was announced the Larry Bridges had recently complicated Navy boot camp. Also finished with Navy boot camp was Lawrence James. Yet another KM sailor, Warren Bumgardner, was listed as being deployed on the USS Coral Sea. In the Army, Robert Wyont was reported as having taken part in a NATO exercise in Germany.



## SIDEWALK SURVEY

By ALAN HODGE  
Kings Mountain Herald

In light of Clinton's idea for an \$800,000 a year office, should there be a limit on how much of the taxpayers money an ex-president can spend on such things??



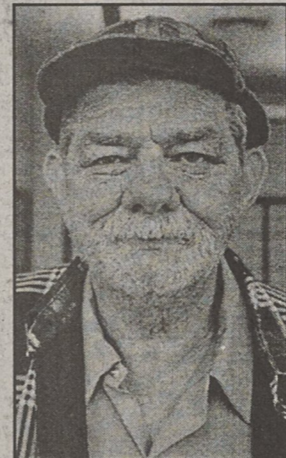
There should be a limit on how much an ex-President gets to avoid abuse of the privilege.

Faye Ross  
Kings Mountain



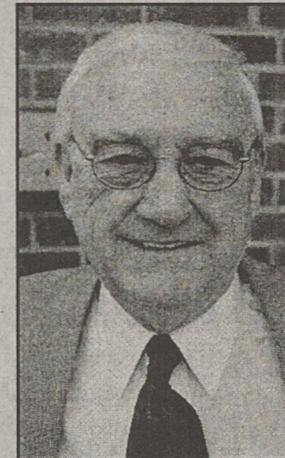
An ex-President should be limited to \$100,000 a year for his office.

Scottie Leftwich  
Kings Mountain



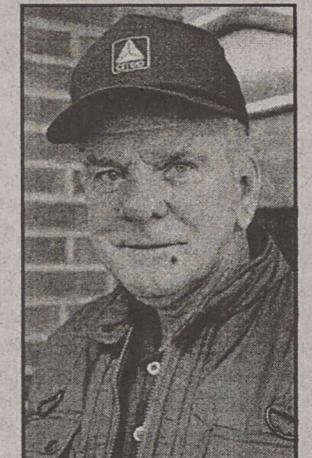
The ex-President should not spend over \$100,000 a year for an office.

Everett Frederick  
Kings Mountain



The ex-President should get very little money to rent an office.

Jonas Bridges  
Kings Mountain



The ex-President should get zero dollars for an office.

Bud Medlin  
Kings Mountain