

Political debates overrated

All over the country, as election day draws nigh, politicians are challenging each other to debates. That's the way it has been for over 40 years, ever since John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon squared off in 1960.

But are political debates really worthwhile? Probably not.

The dictionary defines debate as argument and discussion. That's really not what happens in a political debate.

Today, a moderator, usually a member of the news media, asks questions of the debaters, who always take more than their allotted time to make a political speech, rarely touching on the question asked. His or her opponent is then given a like amount of time to respond, and the response is usually another political speech on an entirely unrelated subject, and that also exceeds the allotted time.

After debates are finished, both camps usually run out a "spokesman" who crows incessantly about how his candidate has literally stomped the other candidate.

In North Carolina, all the polls indicate that Elizabeth Dole enjoys a comfortable lead over Erskine Bowles in the race for the senate seat being vacated by Jesse Helms. The question is why?

Anyone in politics will tell you if a candidate has a wide lead, a debate can only harm him or her. There is very little to gain.

Political debates could be useful to voters if handled properly, but the way they transpire today makes them little more than an exercise in futility.

The veto cometh

Last week the North Carolina House of Representatives passed House Bill 1490 which provides that local revenues may not be withheld or impounded by the governor.

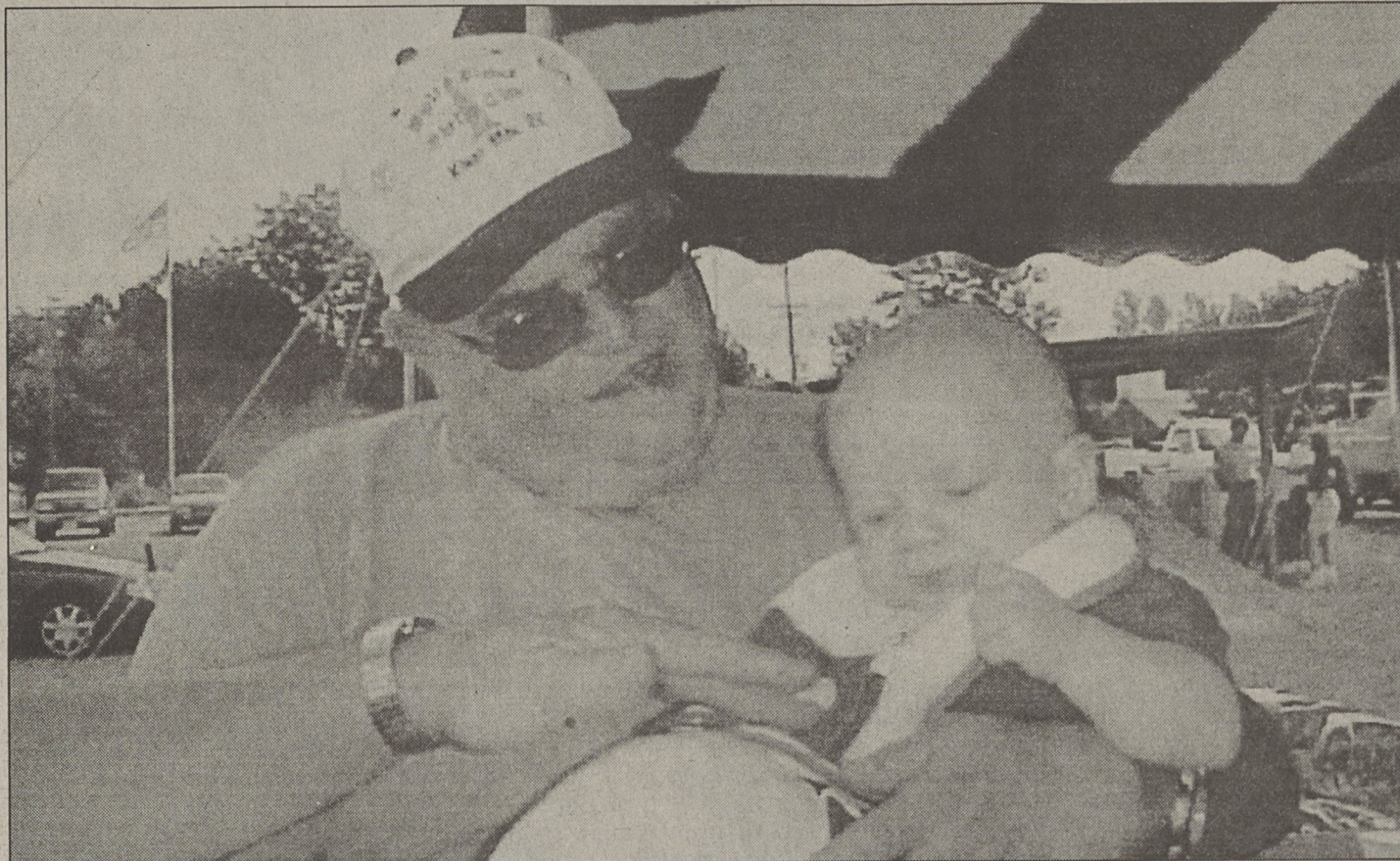
It is highly unlikely that Governor Easley would sign such a bill. He would be more likely to veto.

Easley has said he will never cut funds for education, yet he turns around and withholds millions of dollars belonging to the cities and towns, thus local governments get the blame for shorting education.

The governor has withheld funds for two consecutive years to cover a "short-fall" in the state budget.

See Veto, 5A

PICTORIAL EDITORIAL



LOVE IN ACTION - Gilbert Brazzell, president of the White Plains Shrine Club, is holding 4-month-old Alex Jones of Mooresboro. Alex, who was born with a club foot, has been a patient at the Shriners Hospital in Greenville, SC since he was two weeks old. Alex and his mother, Jennifer, and his parents came to Kings Mountain Saturday to buy barbecue at the Shrine Club's fund-raiser on East Gold St. at York Road. All proceeds from Shrine fund-raisers go to help children like Alex.

Whether it's news or moving on, deadlines are met

If this column could be written later, that would be great.

But like a politician from Shelby wanting something done, it has to be done now.

Unfortunately, deadlines are about as flexible as Jesse Helms' vote during his glory years in the Senate.

The deadline for this column, along for other things in most newspapers, is no exception.

Taking that into account, good ideas have to flow from head to pen during that time.

Like a sporting event or town meeting, that changes with the final buzzer or gavel.

To make sense of the plight reporters and editors go through to bring readers what they think is interesting and insightful, I will list a few things.

- Using a big local issue - This makes great fodder for an editorial or column. It can be anything from a "county" wide water proposal or a school merger issue that will benefit the "whole county."

- Often big local issues can be used multiple times.

- What's going on in the big city, state capital or Washington - For people in Kings Mountain, what goes on in Charlotte can either effect or interest citizens. The same thing goes for the state capital, since legislators are also neighbors.

- Political races - I'm not just talking about running endorsements for candidates that make the most promises or have incomes that could support third-world countries. Local races have the tendency to pit family members against each other and split areas faster than the Civil War. The dynamics of local elections are also interesting with one candidate spreading gossip about the other. Unfortunately, it doesn't stop at the local level.

- Beauty pageants and political misdeeds - More good ideas for the editorial idea clearinghouse. The pageant idea got a lot of use when North Carolina had two Miss America contestants that competed for a time during the national beauty contest. How the pageant thing made news is amazing. Little explanation is needed on how political misdeeds can fill a column or editorial.

- With that said, today's newspaper date is also my last day at the Kings Mountain Herald. I'll be moving to South

See Ben, 5A



Ben Ledbetter
Staff Writer

Who was that lady in the red pickup truck?

The last I heard about Janet Reno was when she said she was going to buy a pickup truck and drive across America. I warned people then to be on the lookout for her lost on some back road in the Midwest.

Dang my hide if she didn't go on back down to Florida and run for governor.

I think Reno must have forgot about how Florida elections work. You'd think she would remember what happened to the last Clinton cabinet member in Florida. Of course nobody ever accused her of being the smartest woman in the world, not with Hillary still alive.

Anyway, old Janet went down there and ran in the Democratic primary, but she couldn't win.

Seems like those blamed Florida voting machines did another Democrat candidate in.

But, wait a minute. Didn't the state of Florida spend about \$58 million on the latest technology machines? Sure they did, but they forgot something. They forgot to teach people how to use them.

The Democratic turnout was low, because it took two voters to register one vote. How so, you ask? Because with voters in some parts of Florida, you have to take one of their hands and help them touch the right part of the video screen to register their vote. They don't have the mental capacity to operate that new-fangled machine. So it takes two Democrats to cast one vote.

The last time there was a voting foul-up in Florida, all the Democrat bigwigs, Janet Reno included, were running around sticking their faces in TV cameras and complaining that the Republicans had rigged everything in Florida from voting machines to tarpon fishing.

There was talk of hanging chads, dimpled ballots, undervotes, overvotes, and endless recounts, and it was all because all those bad old Republicans cheated the good old Democrats, forcing them to vote for Pat Buchanan when they really meant to vote for Al Gore, I mean Gore.

After this latest Florida voting fiasco, the silence from Democrats is deafening.

Why aren't all the party stalwarts, Janet Reno included, yelling, pointing fingers and crying about being cheated

See Jim, 5A



Jim Heffner
Columnist

LETTERS

It's time for a change in Raleigh

To the editor:

After 40 years North Carolina's bond rating is no longer AAA. This is the very reason why our Democratic governor and our Democratic House member Andy Dedmon, and our Democratic Senator Walter Dalton said we must re-elect them the last election.

Well, we did and what have we got to show for it? The state's AAA bond rating is history. Downgraded. And why? Did not our Democratic leaders raise taxes to insure our bond rating would stay AAA? Yes they did. Did not our Democratic leaders infer that spending needed to be curtailed to balance the budget? Yes they did. Did they deliver? Our downgrading of the bond rating is your answer. The time for change is now.

How much longer can we as taxpayers continue paying for our governor's helicopter rides at taxpayer expense while calling for a lottery tax on the poor? How much longer can we as taxpayers support a Democrat agriculture commissioner whose campaign is awash in illegal cash contributions, or a Democrat judge who takes hundreds of thousands of dollars in outside work while serving on the state's second highest court?

How much longer can we support and elect representatives such as Rep. Andy Dedmon, who voted for the Budget Appropriations Act of 2001 (SB1005), which included numerous tax increases.

He also voted for the local option sales tax increase, which would increase the sales tax from 6.5 cents to 7 cents (HB1633). He also voted for the closing of corporate loopholes, which would tax small businesses. He voted for the budget revenue act of 2002, which also included numerous tax increases.

How much longer can we stand back and watch as the governor takes designated county government funds year after year and use them for his own political agendas?

It is time for a change.

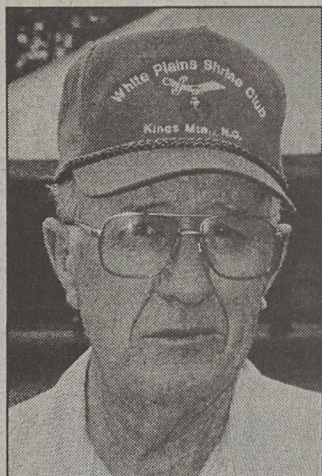
How unfair it is to put the awesome responsibility on our county commissioners to raise funds for our water, our security as a citizen and countless other priorities simply because

See Letter, 5A

SIDEWALK SURVEY

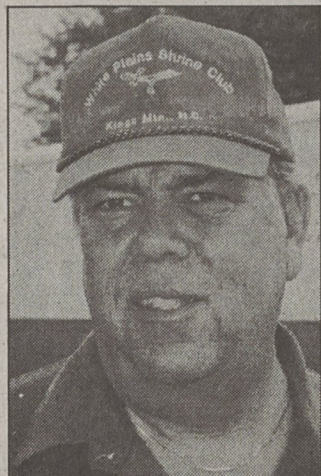
BY BEN LEDBETTER
THE HERALD

Should the U.S. invade Iraq?



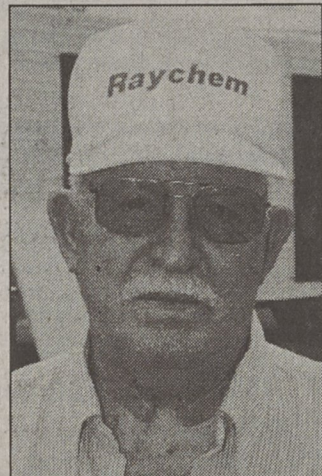
Well I'm pretty sure they'll wind up going before its over with.

Moffett Scism
Kings Mountain



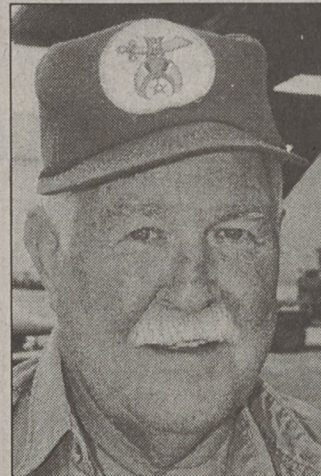
I absolutely do not think so. I think we're rehashing Bush's War.

D.W. Lee
Kings Mountain



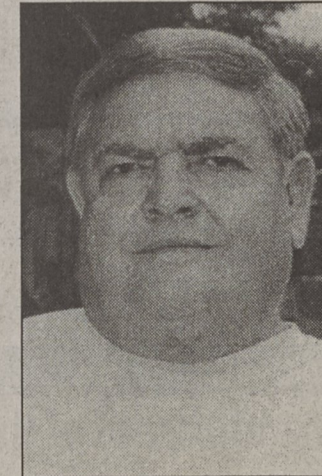
No. I don't think we've got a bit of business over there.

Bob Pearson
Kings Mountain



I think we ought to eliminate that dude before he has a chance to get us. I believe we ought to get Saddam Hussein before he has a chance of harming more Americans.

Tom Shytle
Blacksburg, SC



I think we should have done what we needed to do back in '91.

Gilbert Brazzell
Kings Mountain