

Letters

We appreciate your letters 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, unsolicited poems, 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.

Letters must be received no later than 5 p.m. on Monday of the week they are to be published. Mail letters to Publisher Mike Blanton, P.O. Box 769, Kings Mountain, NC 28086 or fax them to (704) 739-0611.

News Deadlines

Deadline for B Section news is 12 noon Monday. This includes lifestyles news, people stories, weddings, engagements, anniversaries, reunions, club news, church news, business news, school news and community news. Items received past the deadline will run in other parts of the paper if time and space permit. Otherwise, they will be held until the following week.

Deadline for A Section news is 5 p.m. Tuesday. This includes city and county news, sports, and miscellaneous items. In cases of Tuesday night meetings and ball games, items will be taken up to 9:30 a.m. Wednesday.

GUEST

From 4A

payment. Can you afford it? Will your payments stay steady or change? If the rate is adjustable, how high can your payment go?

- Beware of balloons. A balloon payment is a large payment that comes due at the end of the loan term, often after a series of low monthly payments that may have only paid the interest on the loan. You may be forced to take out a new loan or face foreclosure.

- Watch out for prepayment penalties. Some loans require you to pay extra fees if you pay off the loan early by refinancing or selling your home. To avoid getting trapped in a loan by prepayment penalties, try to negotiate the penalty out of your loan agreement.

- Look at credit insurance carefully. Some lenders may imply that you must purchase and finance expensive credit insurance in order to get a loan, or they may automatically include it in your loan agreement. Don't agree to purchase credit insurance until you've studied it carefully and decided that you really do want it.

- Contact a non-profit credit counseling agency if you need advice. Check with the National Foundation for Credit Counseling at 1-800-388-2227 or www.nfcc.org to find a reputable local counselor.

(Roy Cooper is Attorney General for the State of NC).

ANDIE

From 4A

mouths and make noise.

Kids will make friends fast. They are too busy enjoying each other to do what we adults do. We'll ask those subtle questions that reveal social and economic status. We want to make sure others are like us before we plunge into friendship. All kids care about is how much fun the other person is.

As they head to school, let's all remember what they have to teach us.

JIM

From 4A

gravy. After you've eaten a plate full of beans, there's nothing quite like taking another biscuit, raking it through the remaining fluid and popping it into your mouth. Then washing it down with a long pull from a frosted glass of iced tea. Man, that is good eating.

After you finish a good steak, try grabbing the last roll and soppin' the juices. As the Colonel used to say: It's finger-licking good.

If you are fresh out of biscuits, soppin' can be done using loaf bread, corn bread or any kind of muffin.

You will notice that all the fast food restaurants have found out about how much Southerners like gravy. They all sell gravy biscuits, and plenty of them. I wonder if gravy biscuits sell as well in Yankee land? I doubt it.

If you could bring all those bad guys in the countries that are in full squabble these days, set a big bowl of gravy and a mound of biscuits in front of them, they would be so busy soppin' they'd forget why they were mad at one another. So, you see, gravy soppin' is the real answer to world peace.

A man soppin' gravy has not time for firing a gun.

OPINION

Money can't make you happy, but having none is devastating

'Po but proud.' 'We ain't nuthin' but po folks.' 'I is po.'

For too many people, these phrases are more than timeless cliches', they are statements of condition as real as the next late bill payment or skimpy luncheon.

It's a known fact that money won't or can't make you happy, but a lack of it can certainly make you sad. You don't have to look far to see a lot of sad people.

Without going into a lot of details, let me say that lack of money is something I am familiar with. I recall my eleventh birthday when all my mammy had was 50 cents. She gave me this for my birthday present. I bought 50 cents worth of rope from the hardware store and made a cowboy lasso out of it. Maybe it would have been better for some people if I had made a noose.

Another time we ran short of food. Mammy took some flour and a chunk of meat called streak-o-lean and made some biscuits and gravy and slapped some streak-o-lean on it. As I recall, the effect when this repast hit my stomach was to make me streak for the restroom and lean upon the facilities contained therein. But we didn't go 'hon-gry' as they say.

Sometimes I go to the BCO to see

what is shaking there. Sometimes it's me after I see the jams people are in. I quake from fear that it could be me down there begging instead of snitching an occasional pack of crackers.

Last Sunday I visited the First Presbyterian Church in Belmont. Hey Uncle George! Hey Janice! Hey Carol! Hey Dick! Hey etc. & etc.! Part of Rev. Boyce's talk was about being rich and out of touch with the poor. He said that if Jesus was walking around today he would probably be found in a race track infield or a place like Willard's Old Yaller Tavern rather than the country club. Maybe He would be wearing a black t-shirt with a big number 3 on it. The point is, Jesus would be in the trenches.

When I worked at the main library in downtown Charlotte, it was an almost everyday occurrence to be approached by someone begging money. We often laid bets to see who could make it to the Bojangles on N. Tryon near 8th Street and back without being harassed. Few every made that perilous journey of two blocks without smelling the fetid and alcoholic breath of a rummy asking for 'bus fare.' Yeah, the bus was in a bottle of wine that would take them to the next world.

I never gave those folks any dough except one guy who had no eye and just an empty hole in his head and he and his little pistol were rather persuasive. But since I am less that rolling in dough for the current time, I have suddenly felt a new found empathy for the

financially challenged.

For instance, recently I was eating a hotdog and a couple wandered through the parking lot of the joint where folks were likewise eating hot-dogs or licking ice creams and the man had a rather downtrodden aspect about his person and the woman looked as skinny and wasted as a concentration camp victim and she had on short shorts and a halter top and her legs were no bigger around that cigarette and she had a defeated, desperate look and the man's pants hung very far down in back in a dejected sort of way and he was begging money and reminded me markedly of a starving hound looking for scraps.

I gave them the one dollar I had to spare. There goes I, I thought.

If you are feeling sorry for yourself because that high-end car you so desperately crave is just out of reach, then try to imagine how it feels to be a single mother with a crowd of kids at your feet looking at you with that pleading look they have and a cupboard with a rat in it holding up a sign that says 'will work for food.'

Take that thought and chew on it for a while and when your jaws ache enough go to a place like the BCO or CRO or SOCKS or any other place where folks need help and give them some money or time or anything else you can and then go home and fall on your knees and be thankful you have it as good as you do.



Alan Hodge Columnist



Gary Stewart Editor

Thinking about school merger and people who make difference

Just a few thoughts on the school merger, which last week was upheld by the NC Court of Appeals.

Although I admire anyone for "going down swinging," and support Kings Mountain School Board's decision to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court, deep down I don't think it's going to do any good.

First off, since the Appeals Court opinion was unanimous, the Supreme Court probably won't hear the case. From past decisions, it's apparent no court in the State, which is supported by state taxes, is going to rule against a State agency, in this case the North Carolina School Board.

In my opinion Kings Mountain's only hope lies with the U.S. Justice Department, and that agency isn't likely to rule our way either. Since all public schools are supported by tax dollars and states are still basically free to set up school attendance lines as they wish, it will be difficult to prove Gaston County students' rights have been violated. Inconvenienced, yes!

It's probably time for school officials and Gaston County parents to begin deciding how they will make the transition to new schools easy for their children.

My personal feeling is that the superintendents of the three Cleveland County units should begin informal meetings to discuss possible ways to best serve the districts as we know them now while a new school board works on a common policy for how the new system will operate. It would certainly be best for everyone concerned if all districts remain as they are for a period of time until those policies are put in place.

The existing school boards could continue to exist as advisory boards to their district, and the superintendents could continue to exist as deputy or assistant superintendents in charge of their specific area.

Certainly, if the final decision comes against KM in the middle of the school year, there should be an understanding between Cleveland and Gaston County School Systems to allow the Gaston County students now attending Kings Mountain schools to remain until the beginning of the next school year. And, such as the case when a district builds a new high school, rising seniors should be allowed to complete their education in KM.

But farther down the road, it's very likely that anyone who lives in Gaston County would have to pay tuition to attend KM schools. Gaston County certainly won't continue to pass its State per pupil funds along to KM once the merger is in effect.

■ A man with a heart for Kings

Mountain people:

Ward 2 City Councilman Jim Guyton announced last week that he is withdrawing from the upcoming Council race because of recent health problems.

He will certainly be missed on the board.

Of all the people I've known to serve in public office over the years, I can say that Jim Guyton was the one that always did what he thought was the best for people.

He has a big heart and does a lot of good things for people that you will never hear or read about.

Jim, know that you're in our thoughts and prayers as you recuperate. We hope to see you well soon and back in office someday.

■ From the yes, people do read this newspaper department:

Bobby Childers, owner and manager of C&C Heating and Cooling on York Road in Kings Mountain, has been inundated with phone calls and comments recently after we ran an article on Bill Childers retiring and closing his business, Childers Heating and Air Conditioning.

It's understandable, since both men have the same last name, are in the same type business, and both are Carrier dealers.

But, no, Bobby Childers, is not retiring, and C&C Heating and Cooling is not closing down. Bobby says both are still going strong and will be for many years to come.

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