

## No easy answers to some questions

I sat on the bench waiting for a friend. We were having lunch in Shelby and I was



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early. A man walked by and commented on the book I was reading. After acknowledging him, he turned and asked me for money for a Coke. As I dug through my purse for change he explained that he had not eaten for eight days. The man then said he going to Oteen for help with problems I assumed to be alcohol related by the smell of his breath.

I knew the odds of his buying something as mild as a soda with my change were slim but I wanted to show concern. I know that many will argue I was misguided and merely feeding his addiction. That may be correct however my refusing a few quarters will not slow down his drinking.

I suggested he visit one of the soup kitchens operated by churches. He pulled up a pant leg revealing an infected sore. Not being a medical professional, my only advice was a free clinic or the emergency department.

My advice giving took place as I continue to search for spare change. The man, he never gave me his name, noticed a \$5 bill in my purse. He suggested I just give it to him and forgo the hunt for coins. I explained that I needed my money to pay for my lunch and was not giving it up. After a few more pleas, he realized I wasn't budging on the \$5.

A few minutes later my friend and I were catching up over chips and salsa. I enjoyed the meal that followed but felt guilt.

I know that the man has a choice. He can stop drinking, get a job and be a responsible member of society. Twelve step programs abound. Limited space is available in shelters. Churches and other faith communities can offer a spiritual refuge.

However I don't know the inner demons he fights. I don't know what situation he was born into and what blows life has dealt him since then.

I wish there was a way to make people get their lives together but at the same time I have to question the ethics of forced change. To complicate matters more, does the social cost of a homeless alcoholic justify forced attempts at change?

Someone must pay the eventual medical bill when this man does end up at the hospital. Assuming he makes it to the soup kitchen, the money to run that program comes from somewhere.

I have no answers. Let's ponder the questions together.

## LOOKING BACK



Kings Mountain players work hard to get drenched Lancaster Field ready to play 1989 State Baseball Championship game.

## 1989 Mountaineer baseball champs one of state's Notable Ninety teams

Kings Mountain High's 1989 state championship baseball team has been named one of the Ninety Notable teams in the history of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

The baseball and spring sports teams were announced late last week. Basketball and football teams had been announced the previous week.

The NCHSAA, anticipating its 90th anniversary, sent out nomination forms late last year. I nominated the '89 team, not because I felt like it was better than any of the other KMHS teams that have won state championships, but because its team and individual accomplishments were very notable.

The '89 team was the most powerful hitting team in KMHS history, and one of the most powerful in NCHSAA history.

The Mountaineers compiled a team batting average of .337 and hit a state-record 51 home runs.

Their slugging first baseman, Paul Brannon, set school and state records for most home runs in a season (20) and most home runs in a career (41).

He hit .474 and drove in 43 runs and had at least one home run in each of the last seven games.

Even in this modern day of aluminum bats and short fences, hitting over .400 and blasting home runs at that pace is very unusual.

But Brannon was just one of four .400 hitters on that '89 team. Third baseman Dale Greene hit .435 with four home runs and 19 RBI, Chad Plonk hit .438 with 11 home runs and 30 RBI, and Toby Deaton hit .451 with two home runs and 19 RBI.

Second baseman Chris Henson hit .355 and pitchers Keith Allen and Todd McDaniel each hit .333.

Although this team will go down as one of the best teams in school and state history, it did not win its conference championship. The Mountaineers finished second in the regular season to South Point.

When the Red Raiders were upset by St. Stephens in the first round of the state playoffs, it seemed to give the Mountaineers some life and they hammered all but one of their opponents in the playoffs.

Their only real close shave in the playoffs was in the Western Regional championship game against Statesville at Lancaster Field.

Statesville, which had a strong right-hand pitcher named Gary Davis, carried a 1-0 lead into the bottom of the seventh inning.

As I recall Coach Bruce Clark had been encouraging his Mountaineers to jump on the first pitch the entire game, but for some reason Davis' moving fast ball seemed to freeze KM's bats on their shoulders.

But, finally in the bottom of the seventh, they heeded Clark's advice.

Chris Plonk hit the first pitch in the bottom of the seventh over the right-center field fence to tie the game at 1-all.

Davis buckled down to strike out the next two batters. Brannon was on the on-deck circle and there seemed to be a feeling throughout the ball park that if he could get to the plate he would end the game with one his monstrous home runs.

Chris Henson had to get on base some way.

Davis got ahead of him quickly with a one ball, two strike count. Henson fouled off several pitches and then laced a single to center.

Brannon came to the plate and with one quick flip of his wrists sent a Davis fast ball towering over

the center field fence for a 3-1 victory.

The state championship series with Rockingham County was also a memorable one. Rockingham County came into the series as a third place team from its conference that had also caught fire late in the season.

The visitors jumped on KM quickly in the opening game, 6-1, but the Mountaineers scored seven runs in the fourth inning to take command and won 8-6.

The championship day of the best-of-three series was indeed notable, and memorable. It rained for most of the day and Lancaster Field was flooded. I really believe Rockingham County felt like the game would not be played. But after the rain ended in the late afternoon Kings Mountain players, coaches and fans worked for several hours burning off the infield and digging drainage holes in an attempt to get the field playable.

They finally got it in playing shape and it was 8:35 p.m. before the first pitch was thrown in a game that was supposed to begin at 7.

With sophomore lefty Keith Allen on the mound, the Mountaineers were in control all the way and cruised to the state crown with a 10-0 victory.

That was Kings Mountain's first state championship since the old Western N.C. High Schools Activities Association and the NCHSAA merged in the early seventies.

The 1956 KMHS football team had shared the WNCHSAA crown and the 1969 baseball team won it.

Since '89 the Mountaineers have won state championships in swimming, golf, women's volleyball, and another in baseball.

But the '89 season was quite notable, and the team very deserving to be chosen as one of the most notable teams in NCHSAA history.

## Don't take any prisoners

Everybody thought Smarty Jones was going to win the Belmont Stakes and become the first triple-crown

winner since Affirmed 27 years earlier. Birdstone's owner, trainer and jockey may have been the only

people not rooting for Smarty Jones. At any rate, at 36-1 odds, Birdstone flashed across the finish line to win and spoil the triple-crown once again.

The Belmont Stakes is a little longer than the other two jewels in the crown, and sometimes horses lose a little stamina toward the end, but mostly, it probably has to do with overconfidence.

Remember the Super Bowl in 1969? The lowly N.Y. Jets were playing the all powerful Baltimore Colts and absolutely nobody gave the Jets a chance of even staying close in that game.

Joe Namath, however, told everybody who would listen that his team would win, and they did. Another case of overconfidence.

The lesson to be learned by these incidents is that it's just fine to be confident, even supremely confident, but everything should be taken with a dose of reality.

Overconfidence has been known to topple giants. Goliath is a perfect example. Who would have ever thought that little David would win that battle? It was truly shocking, but overconfidence was the great equalizer, along with a helping hand from the almighty.

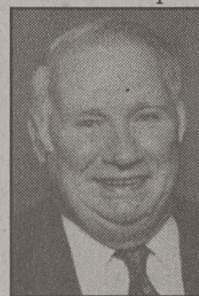
When Thomas Dewey ran for president against the little haberdasher from Independence, Missouri, Harry S. Truman, all the polls predicted Dewey in a landslide.

After all, he was a crusading NYC district attorney who had been tough on organized crime for a number of years.

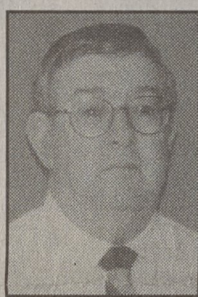
Back then, in 1948, communication was a little slower than today's fast-paced telecommunications networks and doo-dads. A Chicago newspaper published a huge headline, the morning after the election which screamed: "Dewey Wins."

The next day, as he celebrated his triumph over the NYC lawyer after all votes were counted,

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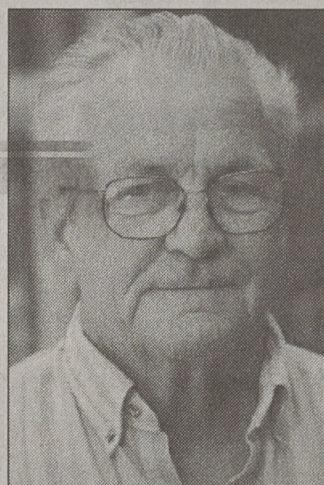
## SIDEWALK SURVEY

By ANDIE BRYMER  
HERALD

### Have higher gas prices affected your summer travel plans?



Yea. I try to watch how much I drive.  
**Bill Ware**  
Kings Mountain



Yes. You don't drive as much as you usually do.  
**Forrest Turner**  
Kings Mountain



Not really.  
**Katie Dowd**  
Kings Mountain



Yes. It puts a damper on it.  
**Roxanne Bell**  
Kings Mountain



I'm getting married. We're staying local with the wedding.  
**Amy Huggins**  
Kings Mountain