

The Herald

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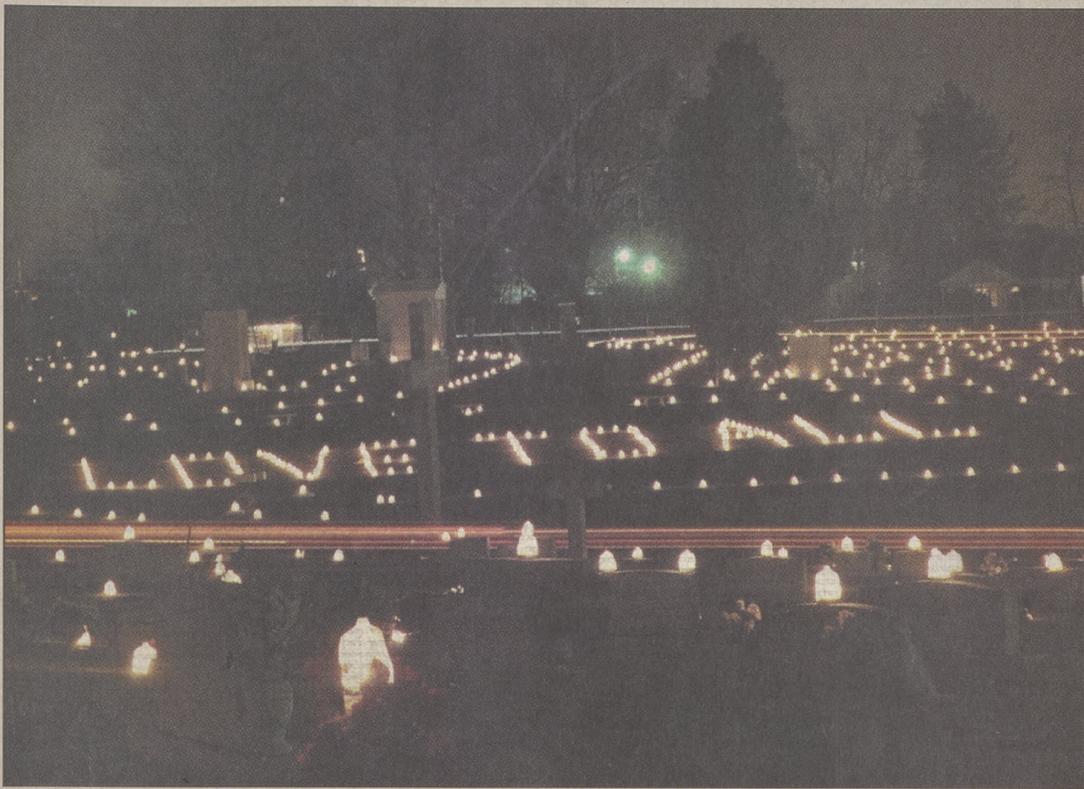


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JOSEPH BRYMER / HERALD
 Luminaries spell out "Love to All" and light the driveways and graves at Kings Mountain's Mountain Rest Cemetery on Christmas Eve night. See story and more photos on page 7A.

LOOK BACK AT 2004

Elections, death of President Reagan big stories of the year

By GARY STEWART
 Editor of The Herald

Politics and political decisions were probably the top stories in Kings Mountain during calendar year 2004.

Although a city election wasn't held this year (one is scheduled for next year) Kings Mountain area citizens were among a huge number that went to the polls in November to re-elect President George Bush and Governor Mike Easley.

Locally, area voters returned Kings Mountain's Tim Mooré to Raleigh for a second term in the State House and put three Kings Mountain people on the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners.

The re-election of Ronnie Hawkins and election of first-time candidate Johnny Hutchins gave Republicans control of the County Board for just the second time in recent memory. Kings Mountain Democrat Mary Accor was also re-elected to the Board, giving Kings Mountain the majority of three seats on the five-member board for a

second straight term.

Commissioners elected Hawkins as Board chairman, replacing Mrs. Accor. Other members of the board who were not up for re-election are Democrat Willie McIntosh and Republican Jerry Self, both from upper Cleveland County.

Elections aside, the biggest political story of the year in Kings Mountain and the nation was probably the death of President Ronald Reagan, who had suffered from Alzheimer's Disease for a number of years. Some people from the area even went to Washington, DC for the public viewing of the Reagan casket in the Capital Rotunda.

While elections and the death of President Reagan were the big stories of the year, there were many others that were constantly on the minds of Kings Mountain folks. In no particular ranking, they included:

-School Merger.

After more than three years of court decisions from the local to the state level - and eventual clearance by the

U.S. Justice Department - Cleveland County schools were finally merged in January. Kings Mountain District Schools filed suit after the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners approved a merger plan in the spring of 2000 to merge the Kings Mountain and Shelby systems with Cleveland County.

The appeals went all the way to the North Carolina Supreme Court, which denied hearing the case, and merger was cleared by the U.S. Department of Justice on Monday, January 12. The Kings Mountain Board met for the final time that night, saying emotional good-byes. But the Board still went down fighting, voting to ask the State Board of Education to re-draw the Cleveland County School lines to include the portion of the Kings Mountain city limits that is in Gaston County. Gaston County commissioners later voted not to go along with such an idea, and the NC School Board did not act on the KM request.

The three systems officially became
 See 2004, 3A

WHAT'S UP FOR '05?

Mayor to push for second lake

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

Utilities are at the top of the City of Kings Mountain's agenda for 2005.

City council will consider a new water reservoir in the Muddy Fork area. Dam repairs also are planned for City Lake.

"Water over the next 50 years will be more important than gold," Mayor Rick Murphrey said.

The city has locked in its current rate with Duke Power through January 2009 meaning no electric increases for customers, Murphrey said.

The electric department is now \$200,000 ahead of budget with another \$300,000 expected by the end of the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

The city's second peak shavings plant was paid off in November. The plants will save the city roughly \$1 million annually on the electric purchased from Duke Power.

A new electric substation is planned for 2006 in the Phifer Road/Margrace area.

A back-up generator will be installed in 2005 at the city's utility department. This will power communications equipment during electric outages. A new emergency command post has been established at the department.

In 2005 an outdoor classroom will be created for utility workers. It will feature transformers and utility poles for training sessions.

Through federal funding a communications tower will be built this coming year at public works. It will link police, highway patrol, Sheriff's officers, public works and fire fighters. The funding is through
 See Mayor, 2A

Litton: 5th high school needed

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

With three of Cleveland County's four high schools at capacity, a fifth facility should be considered, says school board Chairman Dr. George Litton.

"We need to start looking at a new middle school and high school," he said Tuesday.

Burns High School in upper Cleveland is at capacity. Kings Mountain High School is over capacity.

"Ideally you would like to get rid of those trailers," Litton said. The school has 15 mobile units.

Crest High School in Boiling Springs is "grossly over capacity," according to Litton.

Speaking only for himself, Litton said the best location for a new middle and high school campus would be Grover or Patterson Springs.

"That would alleviate a great deal of busing," he said. "You could really do some shifting of lines."

The board will make regulations for transfers early in 2005. The date of a public hearing will be set during the first January meeting. Parents, students and community members will be able to give their opinions on a proposal to redraw Shelby's Elizabeth Elementary lines and to set
 See School, 2A

KINGS MOUNTAIN PEOPLE

Senior Games keep J.C. Bridges on the go

BY ANDIE L. BRYMER
 Staff Writer

J.C. Bridges wasn't a sports enthusiast in high school or even middle age but all that changed when he retired.

Well known for a hardware store bearing his name, Bridges needed something to do after selling the business in 1987. That's when he found a new outlet, the Senior Games.

Today Bridges has boxes of medals from county-level competition. In November, the City of Kings Mountain honored him for winning three medals - table tennis and singles and doubles badminton - at the state games.

"It's a lot of fun. I've always enjoyed competing with people," Bridges said. "So many things people don't realize you can enter."

Athletic competition includes archery, shot put, running, swimming, basketball, football throwing, horseshoes, golf, billiards, bowling and racquetball. Arts, crafts and literary competitions are part of the Silver Arts portion of the Senior Games.

Bridges' wife Edie Bridges says the

games keep her husband active. He will begin training for April's county games in January and continue through state competition next fall. The 81-year-old man also swims 24 laps three times a week and does his own yard work.

Bridges had a heart attack in 1988 and again in 1996.

"I bounced right back. I feel fortunate and blessed," he said.

Bridges carried the Senior Games Olympic torch through a portion of Charlotte in 2002. That year the national games were held in Salt Lake. Bridges' friend Edward Covington secretly nominated him.

"What in the world. I couldn't believe it," was his reaction when a letter arrived informing him he had been selected.

The torch, with its glass still smoke stained, stands in the front room. Awards cover the hallway.

"We're going to have to get a new wall," Mrs. Bridges joked.

Bridges is recruiting other seniors to compete in April.

"They ought to consider getting into it
 See Bridges, 2A



JOSEPH BRYMER / HERALD
 Retired Kings Mountain hardware man J.C. Bridges holds just a handful of the many medals he's won in North Carolina Senior Games