



West Craven Highlights

News From Along The Banks Of The Neuse



VOLUME 11 NO. 33

AUGUST 18, 1988

VANCEBORO, NORTH CAROLINA

PHONE 244-0780 OR 946-2144

(UPSP 412-110)

25 CENTS

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Natural Lighting

A summer storm provides natural lighting from lightning recently. The lightning slices through the air to provide illumination and when the air separated by the lightning comes back together we hear the thunder. Sometimes the thunder is a loud cracking sound

and other times it rumbles and rolls for a few seconds, getting fainter as it seemingly travels among the clouds. It is a light and sound show that is hard to beat anywhere and anytime. (Ric Carter photo)

Area Crops Look Good For Farmers

Tobacco, Soybeans Appear To Be Top Crops For Year

By MIKE VOSS
Editor

After several years of agricultural problems ranging from low prices to bad growing conditions, farmers in Craven County appear to be experiencing one of their best years in the 1980s.

While the nation's corn belt, wheat belt and other agricultural areas in the Midwest suffered the worst drought since the 1930s, farmers in Craven County and eastern North Carolina have had a pretty good year, said county agricultural officials.

Weather conditions proved to be just right for many crops grown in the area, but there were some close calls with high temperatures and little rain, they explained.

Tobacco growers and others associated with growing the state's top crop say this year's leaf production is one of the best in recent times. The tobacco industry said weather conditions were near perfect for growing the leaf and that the quality of the tobacco crop this year is one of the highest. Producers are expecting prices above recent years, especially leaves from the top of the tobacco plants.

Marshall Bland of the Craven County Farm Bureau said the

Asbury section of the county was "hit pretty hard and the tobacco there suffered a lot of damage" in the recent hailstorm. But Bland is optimistic about the overall agricultural outlook in the county.

"The biggest thing looks like the tobacco crop that wasn't damaged with hail will turn out with good quality," said Bland. Although there was some tobacco lost to the hail, the county has grown an excellent crop of quality leaf, he said.

"The market opened better than some people expected," said Bland.

Most of the hail-damaged tobacco was found in the Cove City, Asbury, Jasper and Ernul areas of the county, said Bland. Most of the damage was centralized, said Bland.

Bland would not say that this year would be one of the better years in recent times for county farmers. "It remains to be seen," he said. But Bland did say that the agricultural picture in the county is "shaping up to be a real good year."

Bland said corn producers may have lost some of their crop because of lack of rain earlier this

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Don't Raise A Stink Over Skunks; They Can Help Farmers

By RAY BRONK

Few residents of North Carolina are unfamiliar with the pungent odor sometimes noticed wafting on an otherwise pleasant breeze. Upon recognizing the odor, the cry is usually, "Peeeee-ooooooo, a skunk!"

That odor is usually the first indication that one is about to meet the most easily recognized denizen of the wild found throughout North Carolina: the skunk. Chances are, it is a member of the most populous subspecies of the skunk species, the striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*). *Mephitis* is Latin for "bad odor."

The skunk is the most common member of the Mustelidae family, and is typical in the musculature of this family; small, with long low-slung bodies, short legs, short, rounded ears and a thick, silky fur.

All members of the Mustelidae family are equipped with paired anal glands. These glands in the skunk are highly developed for defense and the skunk can spray this powerful secretion as far as 15 feet. This stench keeps the skunk from being welcome in any manner while within scent range. To put it bluntly, he stinks!

The male skunk, like most mammals, is color blind, and is usually nocturnal. The base color of the striped skunk's fur is silky

black. It has a small white stripe that begins at the nose and ends at the forehead, and does not join the large white stripe on the back. The back stripes (one or two) start as a cap that begins at the ears. The cap is about 2 inches square, then it branches. Each stripe continues back, sometimes ending behind the shoulders, sometimes at the hips and sometimes extends into the tail.

The skunk is a digging animal, and is equipped with long, strong claws on all feet. The front claws are three-quarters to more than one inch in length. The back claws are about half as long.

Skunks in all areas feed almost exclusively on insects. They will feed on bees from hives, and apparently are not harmed by frequent bee stings. Their favorite insects are grasshoppers, crickets, grubs, cutworms, weevils, spiders and millipedes. Their diverse diet also includes fruit, grain, rodents, birds and bird eggs, rats and mice, baby rabbits and turtle eggs.

Most skunk dens were originally dug by woodchucks, red foxes and badgers. When a skunk digs its own den, it is dug into a well-drained soil and many are dug into the sides of hills to promote drainage. The den will

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Almost Here

A West Craven football player gets in some practice time before the prep football season begins. The season is less than 10 days away and players have been practicing since Aug. 1. The Eagles, under Coach Clay Jordan and his staff, will take on North Pitt's Cougars at Bethel Aug. 26 at 8 p.m. The Eagles look to improve on last year's 7-4-1 record. (Mike Voss photo)

Hello America: Vietnam Letters Tell A Real Story

Royce P. Barrow will never forget the fateful day in 1966 when the silence of the Vietnam jungle was pierced by the crack of a sniper's rifle.

It was Nov. 23, Thanksgiving of all days, and the 21-year-old Washington native, then a specialist four in the Army, had just completed a long day of combat in the hills around An Khe.

Or so he thought. For as Barrow, his platoon leader and Pfc. Donald Rankin began moving through a rice paddy thinking the battle was done, the shot rang out and Rankin dropped face down in the mud.

Barrow called out to the Paris, Ky., native whom he had befriended in basic training. There was no answer.

He stood in the rain, gazing on as his friend's body was covered with a poncho, loaded onto a helicopter and taken away.

Later that day, more helicopters came bearing Thanksgiving fare — a turkey-and-trimmings feast the men had waited for days. But the meal went to waste. "None of us felt like eating," he wrote in a letter to his mother, Mrs. Walter Hill of Shady Banks.

That was half a lifetime ago. Today Barrow, 43, manages

the Heilig-Meyers furniture store in Dunn, where he lives with his wife, Ann; daughter, Allison, 11, and son, Trent Rankin, 14, whose middle name is tribute to his father's comrade.

It wasn't until recently, however, that Barrow spoke much of the war and of the friends who perished in Southeast Asia.

In late April, HBO began showing a documentary titled "Dear America: Letters from Vietnam," in which actual letters from Vietnam veterans were read by movie personalities amid a collage of combat footage and music from the turbulent era.

After the show aired, one of Trent's friends in Dunn, who knew Trent had been named for his father's fallen war buddy, heard a story of how Rankin had been killed.

When the word got back to Barrow, he figured the story must have been about another Rankin. Nonetheless, he videotaped the show one night and watched it the next.

There it was. A photo of himself, Rankin and other friends at An Khe. The memory floodgate was opened.

"As soon as they showed the

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Numbers, Talent And Conditioning Worry Coaches

Havelock is experiencing a numbers problem, East Carteret is trying to get itself in shape, West Carteret is concerned about its talent and North Lenoir has a new head football coach as pre-season practice continues at the Class 3-A Coastal Conference schools.

HAVELOCK

Coach Wilbur Sasser has been used to having 40-45 kids try out for the Rams' varsity football team the past few years. This year, he has 30.

"I'm real disappointed with that number," Sasser said in a telephone interview from his home Monday afternoon. "Depth may be a factor unless we get a few more kids out."

Sasser said practices have

Coastal Conference

gone well with the players that show up, but he added, "we've had some people quit after just one day of hitting. My concern is, how many more will quit now that we're in pads? If more quit, we might be in for trouble."

The players reported in fairly good shape last week for the first week of practice, Sasser said, adding, "but some of the players could've worked harder to get ready."

"I'm really surprised that more kids didn't want to be a part of our football team this year," Sasser said. "It might be because of our success the past few years,

but you would think it would be the other way around. Still, I was hoping for more."

Sasser added the team is practicing twice a day for three days a week and once a day the other days. "The two-a-days are just for working on specialized things," he said.

Sasser said he has been pleased with the performance of his players thus far, but he added the Rams still have a ways to go.

"We need an awful lot of young men to get to the level we expect of them and they should expect of themselves before we can be considered a good team," Sasser said.

Havelock will host Kinston Saturday at 7 p.m. in a scrimmage game.

WEST CARTERET

West Carteret head football coach Ed Hiatt reports 64 candidates turned up for the first day of football practice last Monday. "We've got about 60-62 now — 32 for the junior varsity and 30 for the varsity."

Talent-wise, Hiatt said he doesn't expect much improvement over last year's 1-9 record. Hiatt said that geography and economics are two of the reasons why the grid program has suffered in recent years.

"If we could move the ocean about 20-30 miles out farther, we'd have a chance," he said. "And, a lot of the kids work, so that makes it even tougher."

"It's not that the kids haven't worked hard, because they

have," Hiatt added. "But when you don't have the talent, you have to be real basic on offense and defense. That's what we're working on."

Seven sophomores, all starters from last year's team, quit before the end of the first week of practice, Hiatt said.

"I hope we'll be competitive, but I know we can't as long as we have the problems we do."

EAST CARTERET

Although the East Carteret football team expects to carry between 25-30 players this season, Mariner coach George Viereck said the team has to be in shape before it can move on to other things.

"Right now, we're a little be-

hind at practice," Viereck said. "We have some kids that travel 30 miles to get here, so we only practice once a day in the early evening. Most of them usually get here so we don't try to practice twice a day." Viereck was disappointed at the players' lack of conditioning when they reported Aug. 1.

"Most of them didn't do a whole lot over the summer to keep in shape. But the heat has been a factor too, especially for our linemen," he said.

"We're conditioning the players as they go," Viereck said. "They act like we're killing them but really we're not. We're working on getting into shape and we have to work on our execution."

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