

Utilities Commission Hears Rate Increase Request

TARBORO — The N. C. Utilities Commission began hearing testimony in Raleigh on Tuesday, as part of its consideration of Carolina Telephone's request for a general rate increase. Public hearings on the company's request were scheduled for the last week of January at Elizabeth City, Tarboro, New Bern and Fayetteville.

In testimony filed on January 12, the Public Staff of the Utilities Commission recommended that only \$16.3-million of the company's \$47.2-million request be granted. The Public Staff represents the public in rate proceedings before the Commission. The Staff found that "the overall service provided by the Carolina Telephone and Telegraph Company is good" and agreed with the company's proposal to increase local calls from coin telephones from 20 cents to 25 cents.

Disagreement on four principal areas accounts for the majority of the difference between the company's request and the Public Staff's recommendation. These differences center around the level of long distance revenues received by the company, whether or not to consider revenues from Yellow Pages advertising in setting rates, the capital

structure of the company, and the rate of return stockholders should be allowed to earn.

In supplemental testimony filed with the Commission on January 22, the company reduced its request from \$47.2-million to \$45.8-million to reflect its increased estimate of long distance revenues. Wayne Peterson, president of the Tarboro-based utility, recently indicated that the amount of the company's request may be further reduced if the Commission approved a pending request to increase long distance rates. However, Peterson said, "our need for additional revenue is certainly higher than the Public Staff contends in its testimony."

In its August, 1981, application, the company cited inflation, deregulation, competition, and the need for a higher return to attract investors as the principal reasons behind its request to increase rates. The company requested an 18 per cent return on stockholder investment as part of its requested 13.28 per cent overall rate of return.

The Public Staff recommends a 15.75 per cent stockholder return and an overall 12.33 per cent rate of return for the company. The staff also contends that the capital structure of the company should be based on

the consolidated operations of United Telecommunications rather than the operations of Carolina Telephone as the company contends. Carolina Telephone is a subsidiary of United.

"Although the Public Staff's recommended return on stockholder investment represents an improvement over its previous recommendations, we don't

believe it adequately recognizes the return investors can earn elsewhere today," Peterson stated. "This is especially true when you consider that the Staff's recommended return is based on a capital structure not appropriate to Carolina Telephone."

The company contends that applying United's capital structure to Carolina Telephone is like saying that

the local Chevrolet dealer is just a smaller version of General Motors," Peterson commented.

Both the company and the Public Staff will formally present testimony to the Utilities Commission at the Raleigh hearings which are expected to last about eight days. The commission is expected to issue a ruling on the company's request around the first of April.

Flanagan Leaving Football Post

LAFAYETTE, La. — Dwight Flanagan, offensive coordinator on USL's Ragin' Cajun football staff and a member of the Cajun staff since 1974, has announced his resignation from the staff to enter private business.

The 33-year-old Flanagan, who took over duties as offensive coordinator last July after serving six years as wide receiver coach, announced his resignation this week in a letter to USL president Dr. Ray Authement and athletic director Dan (Sonny) Roy.

"I've been contemplating getting out of the profession for some time," Flanagan said. "I've had some other coaching opportunities, but I've just about ruled out any coaching positions at this time."

The departure of Flanagan leaves a vacancy on the USL staff, and Roy said that an announcement of a position vacancy would be forthcoming in the near future.

Flanagan came to USL in 1974 as a graduate assistant and became a full-time staff

member in 1975, and in his six years as receiver coach practically every Ragin' Cajun passing and receiving record was broken.

He began his coaching career at his alma mater in 1971 and received his masters' degree in 1972 in education before earning an educational specialist degree from USL in 1974.

He served as an assistant at New Hanover High in 1972 and went to Samford in 1973 as receiver coach before coming to USL.

"One of the main reasons I've stayed here," said Flanagan, "is that if I ever decided to get into private business that this would be the place to do it. My family likes it here, both of our children were born here and it's the type of area that's a great place to live."

"I plan to be one of the players' biggest boosters," he added. "I'll be pulling for them just as much from the stands as I used to from the sidelines."

Highway Fatalities Down

RALEIGH — For the first time in 18 years, fewer than 1,500 people were killed on North Carolina highways in a single year. Based on figures released today by the State Highway Patrol, 1,483 people died in traffic accidents in 1981.

Colonel John Jenkins, State Highway Patrol Commander, credited the dip in highway fatalities to the "concern for improved safety by most drivers in North Carolina as evidenced by their voluntary compliance with the 55-mile-per-hour speed limit, and the strict, but fair and impartial, enforcement of our traffic laws by the State Highway Patrol Troopers."

The 1981 traffic fatality figure of 1,483 deaths is 31 fewer than the 1,514 people who died on North Carolina

highways in 1980.

There were 174 fewer driving under the influence arrests made by troopers in 1981 compared to 1980. "In 1980," Colonel Jenkins said, "troopers arrested 48,270 motorists on DUI charges, the largest number ever charged for DUI in the 52-year history of the Patrol, and they charged 48,096 during 1981."

Colonel Jenkins praised the troopers for their determination to remove every drunken driver possible from the state highways as evidenced by the high arrest numbers for DUI in both years.

"We know that speed and alcohol-impaired drivers are the leading causes of highway fatalities, and I know of no greater contribution that can be made to saving lives on our highways than to remove the alcohol-impaired driver from our highways," he said.

During the first eleven months of 1981, total highway accidents in North Carolina dropped by 2.7 per cent compared to the same period in 1980. There were 132,151 accidents in that period in 1980, and 128,629 in 1981.

In the same time period, alcohol-related accidents increased by 12.3 per cent in 1981 compared to 1980. There were 12,426 alcohol-related accidents in the first eleven months of 1980 compared to 13,948 in 1981.

Colonel Jenkins praised the public for their contribution to the decline in traffic fatalities and accidents in 1981 compared to 1980.

"The public's support of our collision prevention program contributed greatly to the dip in highway fatalities and accidents in 1981," Jenkins said.

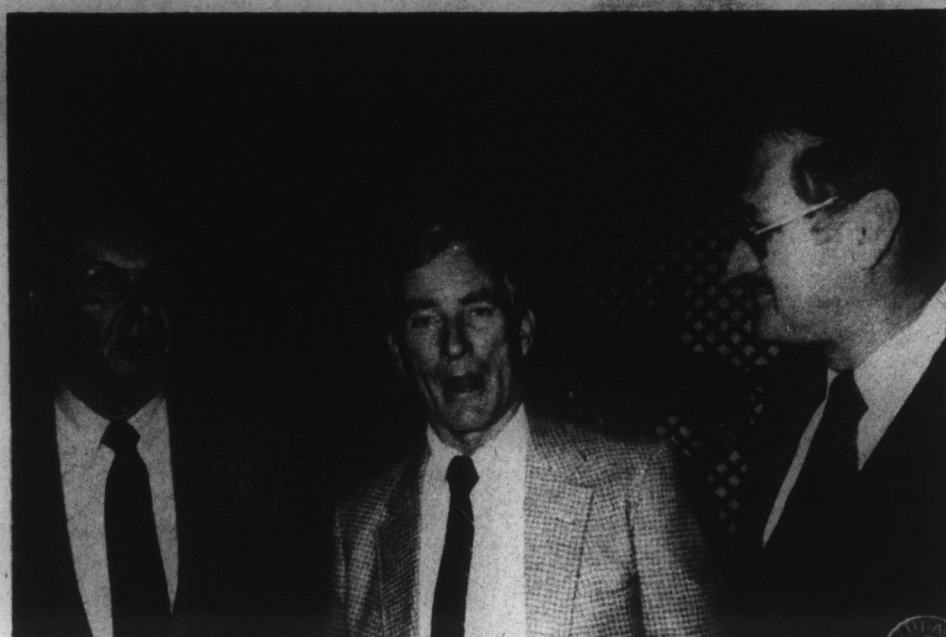
"We hope that the public will continue to support our efforts to reduce traffic accidents and that 1982 will be an even greater year for traffic safety on the highways of North Carolina," Colonel Jenkins said.



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HIGHWAY 17 LEADERS — W. P. (Spec) Jones, of Edenton, left, vice chairman of the Board of Directors of the Highway 17 Transportation Association in North Carolina, is shown discussing the highway with fellow executive committee members, William B. (Bill) Page, center, of Washington, the association's president, and Tommy Combs of Elizabeth City, right, the vice-chairman of the Association's Professional Advisory Council. The association is working to get the highway four laned through Eastern North Carolina.

Veterans May Receive Extended Benefits

Officials of Beaufort County Community College announced today that veterans discharged between August 5, 1964, and May 7, 1975, may be eligible for an extension of their educational benefits.

Because of recent

amendments to the "Veteran's Health Care, Training and Business Loan Act of 1981" the previous 10-year limitation has been extended for those veterans released from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable.

Eligibility is limited to veterans in need of vocational, apprenticeship, or other on-the-job training to achieve suitable occupational and vocational skills, and to those who do not have their high school

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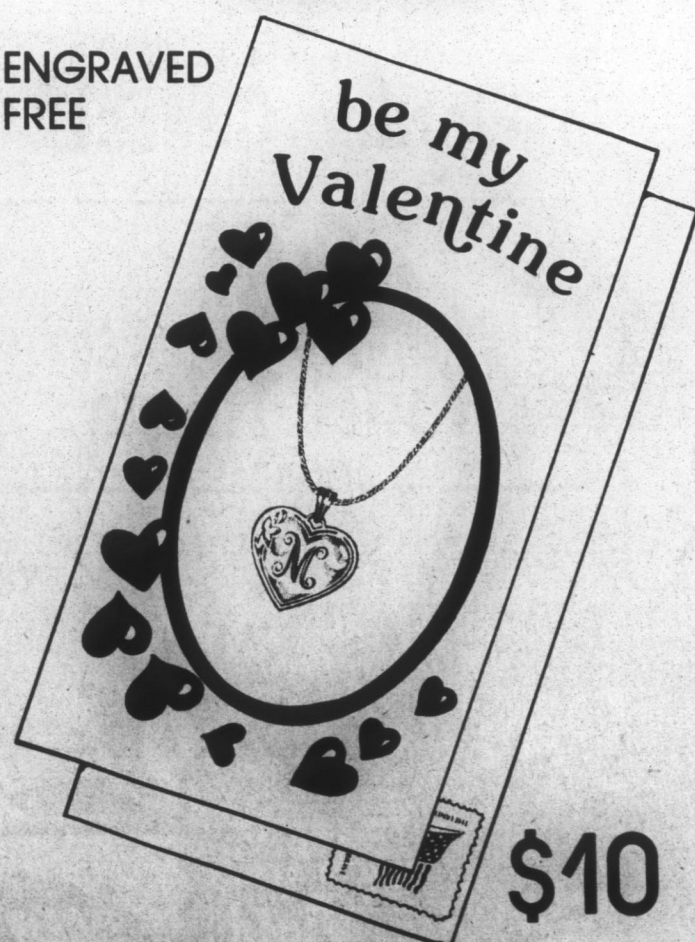
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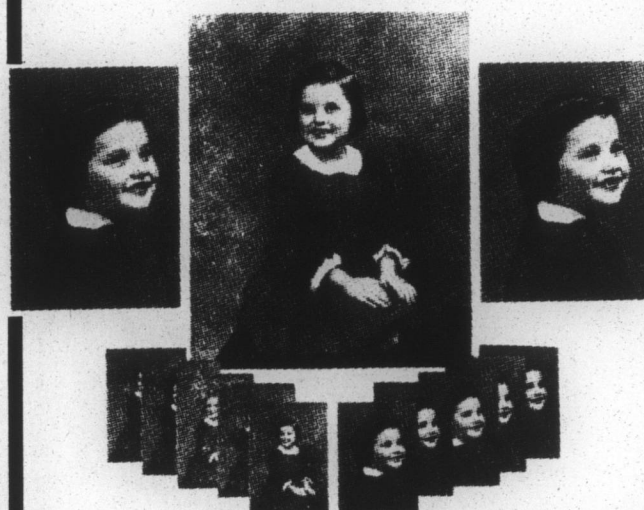
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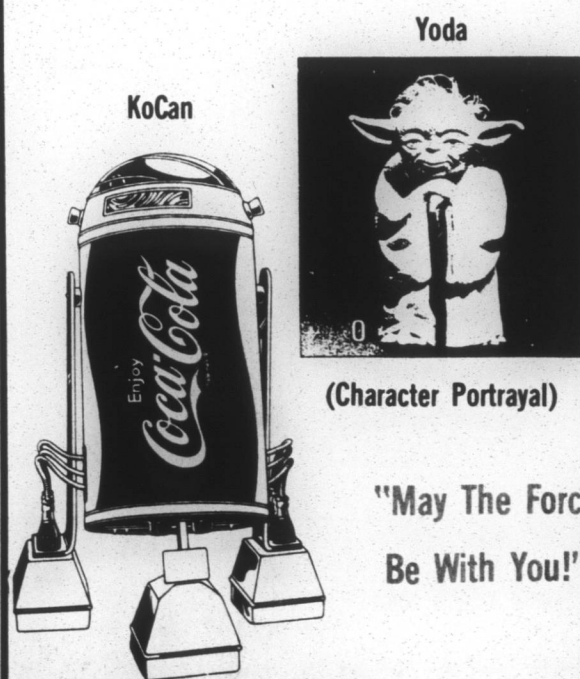
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