

by Lynn Smith
Staff Writer

Vendors to go

The Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen voted Tuesday night to retain an ordinance prohibiting all street vending.

Judge Thomas D. Cooper ruled last week that a clause in the ordinance allowing the sale of homegrown and handmade flowers was discriminatory. The ruling came in a suit filed last March by Mrs. Laura Spinarski, a leather goods saleswoman.

The ordinance was originally intended to keep the "hippie" vendors from selling candles, records and leather goods on Franklin Street, but it was ineffective even before it was overturned. Vendors immediately avoided prosecution by selling flowers and "giving away" their other goods as a bonus.

Aldermen have been at odds for some time on how the town should limit vending. Tuesday night was no exception.

Alderman Ross Scroggs suggested that selling a specific number of vending locations would be an equitable solution. Mayor Howard Lee also supported limitation using zones or stalls.

Alderman George Cox made the suggestion that was eventually adopted. The ordinance will be allowed to stand without the clause exempting flower sales from regulation. There will be no more vending on Franklin Street after the present licenses expire near the end of the month.

Mayor Lee, who fought to allow the vendors to stay, called the decision "hypocrisy" on the part of the Aldermen. He charged that the Board members want the flower ladies to remain only because of their aesthetic and historical value.

Lee's concern is based on economics.

"There is no other way that those ladies can make the

kind of money they need in a decent and respectable manner," he said. "We have to have some concern for the people that are involved."

The Mayor feels that street vending in Chapel Hill is dead now.

"We slammed the door and went home," he said after the meeting Tuesday night. "Even if we discuss the problem again after a two month moratorium (the present plan), we'll never be able to treat it with the dedication and determination that we could have. We just didn't use every ounce of our intelligence in solving this problem."

The flower ladies agree with Mayor Lee in that the ruling is unfair to everyone. Lily Pratt, who has been selling on Franklin Street for almost 35 years, doesn't think everyone, including the "hippies," should be allowed to stay.

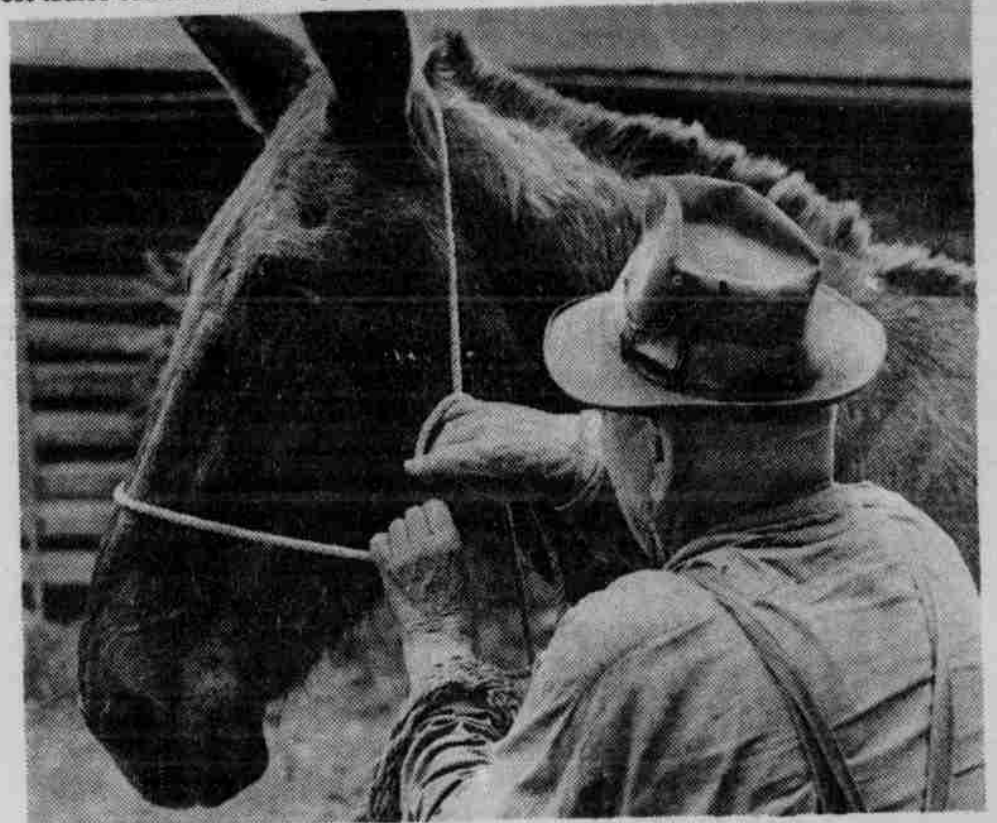
"I wouldn't want to stay if I was causing any trouble—like the people couldn't get by—but we aren't doing anybody any harm," Mrs. Pratt said. "The shopowners don't mind us. I don't see why the Aldermen are so against us."

Rosabell Stones, another of the flower ladies, echoed this view. "We're just trying to make an honest living. A lot of these people's husbands are afflicted or dead; they will be hurting if they can't sell anymore."

Ada Edwards, the oldest of the vendors, says she "won't know what to do with herself" if the ordinance is not changed. She has been selling for at least 40 years.

"Old people don't have much to look forward to," said Mrs. Edwards. "Lots of us just like to get out and watch the people go by."

All of the vendors agreed that the proposed plan to relocate them in University Square would not be feasible. There are too many of them and not enough people pass by.



If you're going out to the airport sometime near sunset, you might see F.H. Page getting ready to feed the mules. On hot days like these Mr. Page is probably moving pretty slow.

Like Mr. Page says, there's not too much to feeding mules—you just catch 'em and tie 'em and pour out the corn. They don't complain much. (Staff photos by Johnny Lindahl)

