

State and National

Thomasville residents oppose pre-game prayer policy

By **CHUCK WILLIAMS**
Staff Writer

The community of Thomasville continues to react to a decision to cease prayer before high school football games.

The decision was enacted by Thomasville School Superintendent Ronald Singletary in October.

Since the ban went into effect, many town residents have angrily reacted and called for the restoration of prayer before football games. Thomasville High School traditionally began games with a prayer and singing of the national anthem, as do many schools across the nation.

Singletary issued the new policy on the counsel of a local lawyer.

"It was on the advice of our school board attorney, Russell Batten," Singletary said.

ary said.

Batten said he gave the advice after receiving a complaint from Charles Lambeth, another attorney in Thomasville.

"We implemented the policy after we received a complaint from Charles Lambeth," Batten said. "There was a similar case from Georgia brought before the Supreme Court, who refused to review it. Our policy was temporarily adopted in October and will be adopted permanently in December."

The Supreme Court refused to review the Doug Jager case earlier this year, in effect upholding the policy. Jager was an American Indian in the marching band at Douglas County High School in Georgia. In 1985, his family sued to stop invocations before football games there.

The strong reaction to the new policy in Thomasville was somewhat expected, community leaders said.

"We're a very religious community, so I did expect this reaction," Singletary said. "The board of education has put a policy in place and, given a chance, it will work. I expect disapproval to go slowly away."

Some residents hoped reaction would remain minimal.

"I was hoping it would not occur," said Lambeth, the attorney who complained to the board that a policy should be adopted. "It has occurred in a lot of other school districts."

The nature of the community made such a reaction likely, said Daniel Copman, principal of Thomasville High School.

"I'm not surprised by the reaction,"

Copman said. "There's quite a few people in the community who take their religious beliefs very seriously."

Despite the complaints, officials have defended the policy and plan to stand by the ban.

"We are simply upholding the law as we are sworn to do," said Singletary.

The law on the issue is clearly stated, said Copman.

"The officials have stuck to it," Copman said. "It's pretty much clear-cut from an administrative point of view. The First Amendment separation of church and state is well-defined. There are people of other religious beliefs here, and all people have the right to religious freedom."

The new policy in Thomasville may also cause other school systems to examine their policies on prayer before

games.

"I think it's going to cause other schools to be challenged," Singletary said. "It will probably be an issue in other communities."

Other school systems have already dealt with the issue.

"I'm no expert on this policy, but I believe High Point and Greensboro and other metropolitan areas have gotten away from (prayer before games)," said Copman.

A spokesman at the office of Joel Long, director of high school athletics for Wake County, said there is no written policy in Wake County pertaining to prayer before games.

Reaction at the school from students and coaches has been varied, as in the community, said Copman.

"The coaches had very much their own opinion," Copman said. "There were differences of opinion on the coaching staff. Most people have an opinion on this type of issue."

"I think one thing that developed out of this issue was more student interest in the First Amendment. There has been a lot of open discussion in our social studies classes about the issue."

As a compromise, a pre-game unguided moment of silence now precedes the national anthem, Singletary said.

The moment of silence was observed for the first time this season last Friday night when Thomasville lost to Monroe in the state AA playoffs.

The moment-of-silence policy is expected to be continued next season.

Judgment fines bar owners for deaths caused by drunk driver

By **ERIC LUSK**
Staff Writer

Tuesday's \$5.4 million ruling against two Winston-Salem bar owners in a drunk-driving incident raises questions on N.C.'s "dram-shop" statutes, some restaurant and bar owners say.

Tuesday's verdict ordered Paul and Margie Wilson, owners of The Friendly Inn, to pay the \$5.4 million to the family of Lanny and Nancy Bradley, a couple killed by a drunk driver.

The suit alleged that Alfred Vance became intoxicated at The Friendly Inn shortly before the accident occurred in

March 1987. The Bradley family sued because they said The Friendly Inn's staff should have known Vance was drunk, and yet they continued to serve him alcoholic beverages.

The Wilsons failed to respond to the lawsuit; thus, by N.C. law they were found guilty of all allegations presented.

"While I'm not totally familiar with that case, I don't feel that it is fair to make bar and restaurant owners totally responsible for their customers," said Mike McCormick, manager of Players nightclub on Franklin Street.

N.C. dram-shop statutes state that

taverns or bars may be held liable for any accidents caused by intoxicated customers. Another statute states that injured persons may collect \$500,000 from a bar or restaurant that sells alcoholic beverages to underage persons.

McCormick said he agreed with holding the bar responsible for someone who is visibly drunk.

"If someone could blow a .25 (blood alcohol content on a breathalyzer test) or something, then obviously the bartender needs to cut that person off. The problem really arises when someone's on the borderline."

He said it was sometimes a tough call for bartenders to tell whether someone is intoxicated.

"The dram-shop laws are asking us to be totally responsible for someone else's actions. That puts a lot of pressure on bartenders and owners."

Mark Burnett, manager of He's Not

Here, agreed that the dram-shop statutes were too tough.

"In some ways, we are responsible for our customers, but it's not all the bar's fault. It takes two to tango. The drinker also has to take some sort of responsibility for himself."

Burnett suggested that liability needed to be split even between the drinker and the server.

He also said that while some parts of the dram-shop statutes needed to be changed, they had helped people become more aware of the cautions of drinking and driving.

"People aren't driving as much. More people know what a DWI will do, and they are acting more responsible."

Most local restaurant and bar owners ask their staff members to use common sense and judgment before serving customers alcohol. Owners said they usually only accepted driver's

licenses, military IDs or passports as identification and tried to card all customers appearing under 30 years old.

Bob McBay, manager of Darryl's 1890 Restaurant and Tavern in Durham, said he encouraged employees to give away appetizers to intoxicated customers and, if needed, call them a cab to get them home.

Robert Byrd, professor in the UNC School of Law, said Tuesday's verdict should not set much of a precedent for future cases or affect restaurant and bar owners' insurance rates.

"Logically, one case doesn't usually affect rates and all that, but it may heighten bar owners' awareness of the cautions of serving drunk customers."

Rush

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Phi Gamma Delta president Joe Hogan said he felt the next move was up to the fraternities. "Once we get our act together they'll be able to help us."

Hardin said he hoped to meet again with the IFC, probably next semester. "The things we'll be talking about run the gamut from the condition of the houses to rushing styles."

One of the main topics of the meeting was the position of assistant to the dean of students, who works with fraternities on any problems they have. The Greek adviser position is now only part time, but several fraternity leaders have suggested that it be made full time. "The fraternities and sororities would like it to be full time, and the University recognizes that need," Gilreath said.

If the position of Greek adviser is made full time, fraternities and sororities may be forced to help pay for the increased costs. "I think that's a question that the fraternities and sororities

should consider," Schroeder said.

Hogan said he felt fraternities and sororities would probably financially support the full-time position if they felt it would benefit them. "If this person could really help us we wouldn't mind the money."

Hardin said that overall the meeting was very productive. "There was a lot of progress being made already, but I feel that the communications are superb right now."

Caldwell

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done in the next two years. A new mayor would inherit some real problems, he said, such as the rapid decrease in the tax reserves, which is not being addressed.

Kinnaird said she was exhausted from the last campaign and said she did not want to think about running again yet, but she added, "I might consider it."



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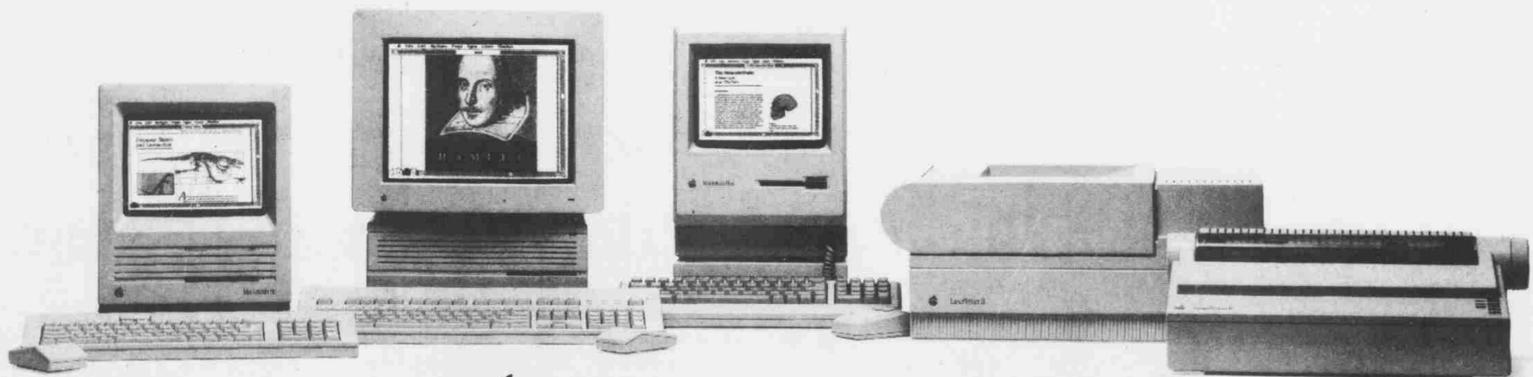
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