

THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

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Sheriff Seizes Cache Of Stolen TV Gear

A cache of stolen electronics equipment valued at \$55,000 to \$75,000 has been discovered on the premises of WEB Communications in Hot Springs, a newly-formed cable television company.

Charles B. Edmunds, 38, the president of the company, has been arrested on charges of grand larceny. He has been freed after posting a cash bail of \$5,000, according to Madison County Sheriff E.Y. Ponder.

The case is still under investigation, according to Ponder, and several other suspects are being sought in connection with the multiple thefts.

Both Sheriff Ponder and Yancey County Sheriff Donald Banks have been working on the case for some time, on the basis of information supplied by other law enforcement officials, detectives, and com-

pany employees in five states. The actual arrest was made on the basis of a warrant sworn out by the Blacksburg, Va., Sheriff's Department for the theft of one spool of half-inch copper cable of the type used to carry cable TV signals.

Altogether, however, 40 spools of cable were discovered at the WEB offices in Hot Springs. Each spool holds about half a mile of cable, so that the total amount stolen would stretch approximately 20 miles. The cable is worth about \$240 per 1,000 feet.

Other equipment in the haul includes transformers, taps, C-lashes, amplifiers, and a variety of installation equipment.

Original ownership of the equipment has been traced to the Gerold Equipment Co. of Columbia, S.C.; Wometco TV and Cable Co. of Roanoke,



CHARLES EDMUNDS (Seated)

Va.; Peter Carter of Memphis, Tenn.; Catawba Cable TV Co. in Hickory, N.C.; Blacksburg Cable and TV Equipment of Blacksburg, Va.; and Clearview Cable Co.

of Burnsville, the company now installing cable TV in Mars Hill and Marshall.

Identification of some of the articles and additional information leading to the arrest has come from Salem, Va., Atlanta, Ga., and Miami, Fla. Edmunds has listed his home address as Bland, Va.

Three and possibly four more warrants will be served on Edmunds, and a trial has been scheduled for Jan. 7.

Edmunds had worked at several of the companies from whom cable equipment has been stolen, including Columbia Cable Co. and Catawba Cable TV Co.

According to Ray Miller, owner of Clearview Cable TV, Edmunds borrowed 45,215 feet of cable, valued at about \$11,000, from Miller while installing the system in Hot Springs. He also borrowed other, smaller items, such as connectors and converters. Altogether he borrowed equipment from Clearview on five separate occasions between Oct. 17 and Nov. 23, and on one occasion he loaned Clearview

10,800 feet of feeder cable.

"It is not unusual for companies to borrow from each other when they're setting up a system," said Miller last week. "We pretty well have to trade back and forth because it's so hard to get equipment. It's common for someone to get in a bind when they've ordered something that doesn't come when they need it; that's happened to me repeatedly this fall.

"So I wasn't suspicious, really, until the last time, when he told me a story about a shipment sent to the wrong place that just didn't sound quite right. Then a friend of mine told me that some cable had been stolen in Virginia and we started to get a little concerned."

Clearview Cable began installing wire and electronic components early this fall around the communities of Mars Hill and Marshall (see accompanying story). The company has a system in Burnsville, and has been setting one up in Spruce Pine.



SHERIFF PONDER stands beside some of the stolen equipment. Before the photo was made, 19 spools of cable had already been returned to their owner.

Marshall Asks For Payment Of Water Bills

The mayor and the board of aldermen of the town of Marshall announce that any customers of the town water system having delinquent accounts should pay any past-due balance promptly.

Town officials said that any

customer still carrying a past-due balance on Dec. 19 will be subject to disconnection without further notice.

If such a disconnection is necessary, the customer will be charged for reconnection to the system.

The new water system has

electrically-operated pumps for pumping water from the wells. In order for the town to pay these utility expenses and to keep the water lines maintained and improved, it is imperative that all water customers pay their bills promptly.

County Man Recalls Effort That Saved A Girl's Life



KEN METCALF on duty at the Buncombe County Ambulance Service dispatcher's console.

Kenneth Dale Metcalf, who grew up on Big Laurel Road north of Mars Hill, has a part-time job as a dispatcher with the Buncombe County Ambulance Service. Most of his on-the-job hours consist of long slack periods spent in a bomb-proof, radiation-proof room deep within the bowels of the Health Department building in downtown Asheville. That room was designed as a communications center of last resort, where civil or military officers can coordinate emergency operations in case of war or other disaster.

Mostly, Ken Metcalf watches a small television mounted above the two identical communications consoles and chats with his coworkers. But once in a while there is a bonafide emergency that abruptly switches the mood to one of life-or-death tension. The emergency may last only minutes, or even seconds, but it is those brief, crucial periods that put the training and discipline of

these dispatchers to the test. Ken has worked as an ambulance crew member himself, and most of his career has been spent with the State Highway Patrol, where he worked for 10 1/2 years. And he is a certified Emergency Medical Technician.

When the call came suddenly, as it always does, on Nov. 17, Ken had to be ready. The voice on the phone was yelling at him, sobbing; it was saying over and over that a child was dead. It took him valuable seconds to make sense of what she was saying.

"The first thing I had to do was to get the woman to calm down," he said. "She was hysterical. All she could say was that the child was dead."

Gradually he was able to understand what was going on. The voice on the phone belonged to Daphne Harper, 18, of Stoner Drive in the Oakley section of Asheville. It was Saturday, and she was babysitting for three children at her home; a two-month-old baby, her own daughter

Helen, 3, and her nephew, Christopher Pruitt, the son of Pamela Pruitt of 7-F Bingham Heights Apartments.

She had gone to change the diapers on the baby when the daughter came running to tell her that Christopher was in the shallow pond near her house. She dashed out to find him floating in the water; he was not breathing. Scooping him up, she ran back into the house and tried to find the right phone number to call, finally dialing the operator who connected her with the ambulance service.

"We have two side-by-side consoles here," said Ken. "I was working the fire and rescue line, and Dell Wilkerson was on the ambulance line. He used to work at the news department of WNCN radio here. Anyway, he took the call, got the address, then switched her over to me while he called an ambulance.

"So I started to talk with Daphne; of course I didn't know any of the names then.

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H. S. Health Program Receives \$13,311 Grant

The Hot Springs Health Program (HSHP) has received a \$13,311 award to help construct the new building for the Laurel Community Medical Center, the programs board of directors announced last Thursday.

The award was given by the Kate B. Reynolds Health Care Trust, a private foundation based in Winston-Salem.

Part of the award - \$3,311 - will be used to complete the required match of funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission. The ARC had earlier arranged an "80/20" grant for the program, with 80 percent of the money coming from the ARC and 20 percent from the community. The HSHP, through the hard work of many Madison County people, had raised all but \$3,311 of its portion, and the present

grant takes care of this final amount.

The rest of the money, \$10,000, is designated specifically for the equipment and furnishings necessary to make the new building into a fully equipped medical facility.

The board of directors of the Hot Springs Health Program issued a brief statement through its executive director, Michael Norins.

"The board is pleased and extremely grateful for this award," said Norins. "The portion of the grant intended to pay for medical equipment, office furnishings and waiting room furniture was not included in the original grant and is vitally important to the operation of the center."

Intensive negotiations to arrange for actual construction are continuing, Norins added.

Mars Hill Will Have Its Own Library

After five years of work and many frustrations, a small group of dedicated Mars Hill residents can proudly announce concrete plans for a new branch library for their town.

With the help of Mars Hill College, the county library system, and the town government, the Library Building Fund Committee has managed not only to raise some \$40,000 from private sources in the area, but also to locate necessary matching public funds and a sizeable building lot at the center of town.

Among the members of the library committee, the most active fund-raisers included Ruth Anderson, Elizabeth Crocco, Polly Cheek, and Dr. Evelyn Underwood, the chairman.

"I would say that the secret of our success is the large sum of money we raised on our own," said Dr. Underwood earlier this week. "That showed the federal people we were serious about the project, which enabled us to get the matching money."

The money gathered by the committee will be matched by a \$40,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commis-

sion. Becky Williams, a representative of Region B of the Land-of-Sky Commission based in Asheville, wrote the grant and skillfully guided it through the tangle of red tape that surrounds any project of this magnitude.

The library committee hopes to increase the funds available to \$150,000, both through further local efforts and through small supplement-

ary grants. The land for the new building has been donated by Mars Hill College. Measuring approximately 80 by 100 feet, it lies immediately below the fire station.

Architect for the project is Wayne Roberts of Mars Hill, who works for the Asheville firm J. Betram-King, architects. Roberts, who has already done a good deal of

volunteer consulting for the library committee, has agreed to furnish a preliminary drawing of the building by Jan. 1. If adequate funds are available, the building will probably have two floors. Because of the hill it will sit against, there can be two "ground-level" entrances, with the second-story entrance set toward Main Street, on the uphill side of the lot.

The campaign to build a town library began five years ago when the Mars Hill Community Development Organization acted as one of its major goals. The library committee was appointed, and began raising pennies and dollars through local activities: flea markets, bazaars, quiltings, chicken suppers, spaghetti suppers, all kinds of suppers. As the years went by, many people wondered at the tenacity of the committee, and the dollars trickled steadily in.

And there were major setbacks. At first the committee hoped to get matching money through community development funds; then it was announced that libraries could not be funded in this way. Then the committee hoped to

Plans For Cable TV In County Not Affected By Recent Thefts

The work of installing cable television systems in Mars Hill and Marshall is more than a month behind schedule. But according to Ray Miller, owner of Clearview Cable Co., the delay has little to do with equipment loans made to WEB Communications.

Charles B. Edmunds, president of WEB, located in Hot Springs, was arrested last week on charges of grand larceny. A large amount of cable TV equipment, some of it belonging to Miller, was found at Edmunds' place of business in Hot Springs.

Instead, Miller cited difficulties in obtaining equip-

ment, the delay in gaining approval from Southern Railroad to hang wires over its tracks near Marshall, the departure of several key workmen, and cold weather as factors in delaying cable hookups to private homes in the county.

"The cold has definitely been a problem," said Miller. "You can't string cable when it is less than about 40 degrees. And it is hard to get equipment. I've been waiting for some connectors for weeks now; the first batch I got were the wrong size, and without the right ones I can't splice

lengths of cable together.

"I can't tell people exactly when we will be ready, because we have no control over the weather. But if I were to guess, and if the weather were just right, we could be wiring homes in Marshall about three days after the connectors get here. In Mars Hill, we still have about two weeks' worth of work to do. There are two strands of cable to add to, and the antennas are not up yet."

People with questions about cable service can call collect 682-3790 in Burnsville, where Clearview Cable is headquartered.

County Students Excel In Test

On Oct. 9 and 10, 224 students at Madison High School took the North Carolina competency test. Ninety-three percent of the eleventh grade students, taking the test for the first time, passed the reading test. Ninety percent of the students passed the mathematics test.

The graduating class of 1980 will be the first class affected by the North Carolina Competency test in reading and mathematics before graduating in the spring. Fifty percent of the students who

had previously failed the test passed the reading test and 33 percent of the students passed the mathematics test. All seniors, except six, have now passed the competency test necessary for graduation. These students are presently enrolled in remediation classes and will have another opportunity to take the test again before the graduation date. Only two of these students have failed both parts of the test.

Remediation classes have been established at the high school,

in both mathematics and reading. Some remedial instruction is given to high-risk students in the tenth grade. When students receive their test results at the eleventh grade level, they also receive a list of those objectives which they have not mastered. The remediation teachers then work with them for mastery level in preparation for the next test administration. There are four opportunities for the students to take the test. If they are not successful, another administration may be requested.



GREETING SIGNS of red, green and white welcome drivers to Marshall. The signs were presented to the town by the governor in recognition of the work done by the local people in winning the Community of Excellence Award.

renovate an older building on Main Street; they learned that to bring such a building up to government standards would cost far more than they had budgeted.

As a branch of the Madison County Library System, the new library plans to offer:

- *Reading areas for adults and children;
 - *Specialized areas for senior citizens and the visually handicapped;
 - *Listening areas for records, talking books, etc.;
 - *An expanded children's program featuring story hour, puppetry, films and other material;
 - *Exhibits;
 - *A community meeting room for large or small groups;
- Anyone wishing to donate additional funds so that the library may be completed as planned is encouraged to contact Dr. Underwood. The committee welcomes not only cash gifts, but also donations of labor, earth-moving equipment, and so on. Every donation of any kind will be recorded in a special book of gifts to remain in the library.