

# Editor's Column

## A Bargain With Technology

Last year, Madison County distinguished itself by suffering fewer highway deaths per mile of highway than any other county in the state.

This year has begun differently. As of the beginning of this week, there had been only three highway fatalities in the entire state — far lower than the more than two dozen by this time last year. But all three were in our area — one in Buncombe County and two in Madison.

First in our county came the tragic death of young Michael Ammons, when the car he was riding in left the road at high speed. Then, on Monday of this week, we learned of the equally sad demise of McKinley Riddle, who stepped unaccountably into the path of a pickup truck on the river highway between Hayes Run and Marshall.

In addition, Betty Wood, of Mars Hill, was killed by an automobile in Tennessee.

Nobody wanted these deaths; each was accidental; each was a waste of precious human life. A death by automobile seems the most shocking kind of death, partly because of its violence and partly because no one "deserves" or expects to die that way. A soldier killed in battle, or a logger killed by a falling tree, or a canoeist killed by rapids is a person whose death we can comprehend. But when a car — our technological slave, our necessity, in some cases even our "best friend" — turns on us, we are stunned and outraged.

One reason for our outrage is that it is so hard to find anyone to blame. Ralph Nader's findings

notwithstanding, most automobiles made today are far safer than those made 20 or 30 years ago. Likewise, highways are straighter, wider, better marked, and better patrolled than they have ever been. And I would venture to say that most modern drivers, who put in more miles from an earlier age, are more skillful behind the wheel than their parents or grandparents were.

If we can't blame the people who make our cars, or the people who make our roads, or ourselves who drive, whom can we blame for the 50,000 or more deaths caused by automobiles every year in this country? It is true that every accident has a specific cause — high speed, drunkenness, driver error, a blowout, ice. But isn't there a cause that is broader than any of these?

Of course, if none of us drove cars, none of us would be killed by cars. Likewise, if none of us used electricity, no one would be electrocuted. But technology has come too far; we as a society can't live without it. We can't live without airplanes, trains, toxic pesticides, strong medicines, large power tools, carcinogenic food additives, fire, and many other things that kill us.

There is some quality of human nature that makes us unable to refuse a new technological tool. If something is available, we'll make it and sell it and buy it. And it will be the biggest, fastest, most powerful model we can afford. Not the longest-lasting, safest, most economical model. This power frees us of many physical burdens, and makes our lives more materially comfortable. But it also can turn on us with the same power we ourselves long to have. When we make this Faustian bargain with technology, we must be willing to pay.

# Ramsey Will Record

(Continued from Page 1)

palachian studies curriculum, the Appalachian Room in the library, and the Bascom Lamar Lunsford collection of scrapbooks, letters, song texts and recordings. We hope that eventually we will have a comparable collection of Obray's work."

Wayne Pressley is an admirer of Ramsey's playing technique and notes its innovative quality. "It's a unique style," he says. "Obray can play the old mountain techniques, with two- and three-finger picking, and he can play bluegrass, like Earl Scruggs. But beyond that he's sort of developed a style of his own."

"He keeps going past what the other players are doing," Pressley went on. "When he's accompanying his own singing, he'll invent complex harmonies — almost the way a jazz musician does. It surprises musicians who hear him. He is more than a fine technician; he's imaginative. He hasn't had any formal music training, but he still knows pretty well what he's doing in terms of theory."

To an archivist, one of the astonishing qualities of Ramsey is his archival memory. "He has a wealth of ballads and versions of ballads and hymns and folk songs in his head," says Pressley. "The Library of Congress approached him

about taping for them, and he turned them down. That's why Lewis and I are so pleased that he's agreed to do this with us."

Ramsey himself is looking forward to the experience, and for the past few months has been rehearsing and thinking about technique.

"Years ago," said Ramsey, "I was told by leading authorities like Bascom Lunsford that there hadn't been any music written down for these old folk tunes because most were sung in the old church chant, in minor or modal chords. I've found that I could write down the chords, but I couldn't account for all the sounds that were coming out of the banjo."

"So over the years of fooling with the five-string I've picked up a finger motion that gives more the idea of the beat of our old tunes. In the process I say to my fingers, what is it that you're doing. I slow down my playing more and more until I can hear what it is they're each doing. I almost have to stop to isolate each one. Now I'm going to try to explain that to the tape during these recording sessions. I'm going to tell the tape, downstroke, upstroke, downstroke, pause, second finger, third finger, and so on."

Ramsey stopped playing in public more than a year ago, moving into an indefinite "retirement." Part of his unhappiness with recording and performing in public stems from worries about copyrights and unsatisfactory relations with the big-money world of professional music making. "I got fed up with producers," says Obray, "so I quit writing songs and playing music and started bear hunting."

"Fortunately, about 15 years ago I met a lady who taught me how to copyright songs the cheap way. You write the song, make two identical copies of the music and seal one of them in an envelope with sealing wax. You take that copy and mail it to yourself. The date on the postmark shows how old the song is, and something closed with sealing wax can't be tampered with. I have a whole box of songs like that."

Much of Obray's distrust of producers stems from his work with Arthur Gorson, who produced Ramsey and Byard Ray under the name "White Lightnin'." Gorson used a backup band with a rock beat behind the two Madison County musicians; the subtitle of the album is "File Under Rock." Traditionalists can barely hear the traditional music through the heavy beat.

Two years after the release of the first White Lightnin' album, Ramsey and Ray played in New York on a twin bill with Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys. Reviewer John S. Wilson wrote in the New York Times that he liked Ramsey and Ray — despite their backup group. "...they were backed by a trio — guitar, electric bass and drums — that was ...not particularly in tune with Mr. Ramsey and Mr. Ray. It provided clumsy and heavy-handed backing but, despite this, Mr. Ramsey and Mr. Ray got things going with so much basic vitality that they had the audience clapping and stomping along with them."

"Mr. Stanley and his three associates... offered a glib surface, studded with backwoods show-biz mugging, that never got down to any of the musical reality that Mr. Ramsey and Mr. Ray achieved despite their sodden accompaniment."

Fortunately, when Ramsey records at Mars Hill, there will be no backup, sodden or not.

# Heard and Seen

By POP

Someone asked me last week if I watched any of the bowl games on New Year's Day (and night) — I thought they must be kidding asking me such a question — anyway, I told them I watched all four games which included the Sugar Bowl, Cotton Bowl (switched from one to the other since they were both televised at same time), Rose Bowl and Orange Bowl. In addition to the New Year's games, I also either watched or listened (by radio) to the Sun Bowl, Liberty Bowl, Tangerine Bowl, Blue-Grey game, Fiesta Bowl, Gator Bowl, Hall of Fame Bowl, Peach Bowl, and Blue Bonnet Bowl. In addition to these, I enjoyed watching the professional playoff games, too; and enjoyed several college basketball games. I'll admit my eyes became mighty tired at times but I thoroughly enjoyed the games. I'm mighty glad that Alabama was No. 1 — the Crimson Tide deserved top rating in my opinion. I was also delighted that the Tar Heels of UNC defeated the Michigan Wolverines in the Gator Bowl.

"Dube" and Mamie Deaver returned last Thursday from a trip to Florida and enjoyed visiting several relatives and friends, including Mr. and Mrs. Abner Wild — they had a fine trip and enjoyed it very much. However, Dube and Mamie said it was always nice to return home here.

After 42 years as owner and operator of Teague Milling Co., at the upper end of Marshall, Ernest is retiring this month. It will be hard to realize that Ernest will no longer be at the mill nor in Marshall — he is a valuable and popular citizen here and in Virginia will enjoy "the new life." Mike and Rosemary Allen have purchased the Teague Milling Co., and the firm is now known as Allen Farm Supply — here's wishing the young and popular couple every success.

America was saddened last week when it was announced that Richard Rodgers, the composer who helped revolutionize the American musical theater, had died Dec. 30 at his Fifth Avenue apartment in New York City. He was 77. Among his more than 1000 successful scores, he composed the music "Oklahoma", "South Pacific" and "The Sound of Music." His death was felt keenly by music lovers of Madison County, especially for Susan Sherard, wife of Alan Anderson, of Mars Hill. Susan was a member of the cast in "Oklahoma" when it was presented in Vicksburg, Miss., in 1966. Rodgers commended the production and sent the following telegram following the Vicksburg presentation: "May I congratulate Mr. Bittick and his company for the amazingly successful production of 'Oklahoma' in Vicksburg. This astonishing achievement is a great tribute to our musical play and I would like everyone concerned to know that I am very proud and deeply grateful. I send my kindest regards." The telegram was signed, Richard Rodgers.

The new \$58,000 fire truck is a great addition to the already adequate fire-fighting equipment in Marshall and the Smoky Mountain Fire District. With its all-aluminum body, extra large engine, air brakes, and Hale pump capable of pumping 1,000 gallons of water per minute, it is one of the best fire trucks made. I congratulate the firemen, officials, and citizens of the SMFD for securing the new truck. As fire chief many years ago, I can remember well when we had only one pumper. It's thrilling to see the present equipment which affords so much more protection.

# The News-Record

NON-PARTISAN IN POLITICS (USPS 388-440)

ALAN H. ANDERSON, Editor  
JAMES I. STORY, Editorial Consultant  
And Columnist

Published Weekly By  
Madison County Publishing Co. Inc.  
BOX 369 MARSHALL, N.C. 28753  
PHONE: (704) 649-2741

Subscription Rates	Subscription Rates
In Madison And	Outside Madison Co.
Buncombe County	
12 Mos. \$4.00	12 Mos. \$8.00
6 Mos. \$3.00	6 Mos. \$6.00
	3 Mos. \$4.00

(PLUS 4 percent U.S. Sales Tax)  
Second Class Privileges Authorized  
At Marshall, N.C. 28753

This official form must be received by January 22, 1980.

## Let Your Concerns Be Known

### White House Conference On Families

North Carolina has a statewide Task Force studying concerns of families in our state. This study is a part of the White House Conference on Families. Let the Task Force know what you think by completing the form below. Your information will be used by the Task Force when writing North Carolina's report for the White House. Only this official form printed in commercial newspapers will be accepted. Unauthorized duplicated forms will not be counted.

Please Circle The Number To The Right Of The Correct Information And Fill In The Blanks

I am:	female 1	male 2	My race is:	black 1	white 2	other 3					
I am:	employed 1	a homemaker 2	My family income is:	less than \$6,000 1	\$6,000 - 9,999 2	\$10,000 - 14,999 3	retired 3	unemployed 4	\$15,000 - 19,999 4	\$20,000 - 24,999 5	\$25,000 or more 6

\_\_\_\_\_ is the county where I live.  
\_\_\_\_\_ is my age.  
\_\_\_\_\_ is the number of adults (18 yrs. or older) in my household.  
\_\_\_\_\_ is the number of children (under 18) in my household.  
\_\_\_\_\_ is the number of adults helping to complete this poll.

Indicate how you feel each item affects your family. Please circle 1 if you feel the item is of no concern, 2 if you feel it is of some concern, and 3 if you feel it is of serious concern.

No Concern	Some Concern	Serious Concern	No Concern	Some Concern	Serious Concern	No Concern	Some Concern	Serious Concern
1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3

- Cost of Energy
- Availability and cost of quality child care
- Family violence
- Single parent households
- Need for help in "parenting"
- Cost and availability of adequate housing
- Cost of food
- Divorce
- Fixed incomes of elderly
- Adolescent pregnancies
- Availability of public transportation
- Availability, cost and quality of health services
- Family life education
- Family planning
- Alcoholism
- Adoption/foster care
- Lack of family income
- Availability of quality education
- Employment for teenagers
- Home/school relations
- Preventive health care education
- Sales tax on food
- Need for more than one working person per family
- Availability of good jobs
- Drug abuse
- Financial planning skills
- Adult and continuing education
- Mental illness
- Public understanding and accountability of Social Services
- Maternity and infant care
- Interest rates
- Government responsiveness to family needs
- Marriage penalty in tax policies
- Family counseling
- Home care assistance for elderly
- Social Security benefits
- Family adjustment to death and dying
- Retirement adjustment
- Equal Rights Amendment
- Mid-life adjustment
- Welfare programs
- Child care tax deductions
- Availability and cost of nursing facilities
- Vocational education
- Cost of education
- Government support of child care
- Tax exemptions for dependents
- Education of persons with special needs
- Abortions
- Availability and accessibility of Social Services
- Overall government support of family
- Lack of on-the-job training
- Cost of clothing
- Employment for persons with special needs
- Management/labor relations in employment
- Accountability of government to families
- Housing discrimination
- Food stamp programs
- Chronic illnesses
- Homosexuality
- Cost of transportation
- Need for new industry
- Government funding of Social Services
- Retirement age
- Unemployment benefits
- Information about education options
- Too much government interference in families
- Disability of family member
- Cost of Social Services
- Limited job promotion opportunities
- Other
- Other
- Other

Please comment on what you believe should be done about some of the concerns you have chosen. Write the number of the concern on the left and comment in the space provided to the right.

Number	Comments

This official form must be received by January 22, 1980.  
Mail to: North Carolina Families  
Raleigh, North Carolina 27626

## Would You Like To Be A Delegate?

The White House Conference on Families will be in Baltimore, Maryland, June 5-7, 1980. Twelve of the 40 delegates from North Carolina will be randomly selected from those who express an interest in attending. You may nominate only yourself by completing the form to the right. To be a delegate, you must be at least 18 years old and agree to (1) attend the conference sessions, (2) carefully study the materials prepared by the Task Force, and (3) work with the other delegates in presenting the materials from the people of North Carolina. Expenses can be paid by the White House Conference.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU!

## Conference On Families

During January, North Carolina citizens are invited to voice opinions about the concerns of their families and at the same time nominate themselves to a national conference on families.

The opportunity to voice opinions and nominations takes the form of a newspaper survey being used by the North Carolina Families Task Force to compile a record to the White House Conference House Conference in Baltimore, Md., in June.