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A winter storm that dumped more than a foot of snow on Madison County last week gave cars a somewhat less than aerodynamic look.

Their Business Is Snow Biz

By ANNE KITCHELL
Staff Writer

Most Madison County motorists would be quick to agree that the men and women of the N.C. Highway Department deserve a round of applause for their tireless efforts to keep the county mobile during last week's monster snowstorm.

Some 44 state employees have been responsible for clearing 647 miles of ice-packed roads in the wake of the most crippling storm of the year.

"You have to be obligated to this job or you won't do it," said state highway employee Lawrence (Dugan) Treadway. "People just don't realize how dangerous pushing snow is."

State road crews, beginning late last Wednesday, worked night and day removing snow and ice dumped on the area by the storm. Some parts of the county received as much as 20 inches of heavy, wet snow as temperatures plummeted into the teens over the weekend.

"We have to work as a team," said Treadway. "We don't have radios or CBs so everybody has to look out for each other. One mistake could cost you your life."

Road crews work 12-hour shifts, seven days a week until the snow emergency is over. Some people might think the dangerous business of pushing snow is strictly a man's job, but that's not the case. Madison County has three women employees

who work shoulder-to-shoulder with the men.

According to state worker Marrita Chapman, the women have few problems with their male co-workers.

"Some men don't think it's a woman's place out here," said Chapman. "Most of the guys we work with are real good, though."

One male state worker said, "Women do the same jobs as the men. Anything we can do they can do as well."

The first thing a visitor to the highway shed notices is a sense of comradery among the employees. Several employees attribute this to the dangerous nature of the job.

-Continued on back page

Winter Storms Hit WNC

By ANNE KITCHELL
Staff Writer

Madison County is still digging out from the aftermath of the season's first major snow storms.

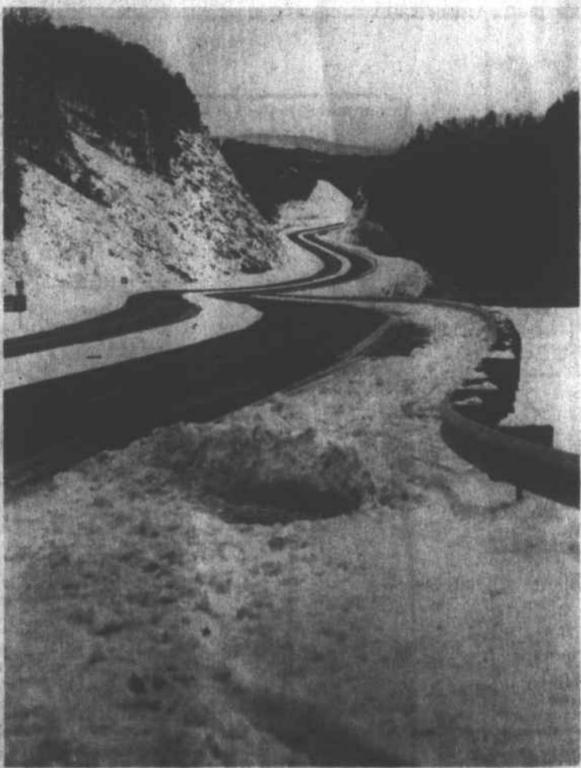
More than 16 inches of heavy, wet snow fell in parts of the county, paralyzing residents and bringing traffic to a halt.

State highway workers' efforts to clear main arteries seemed, at times, futile as ice, sleet and sub-freezing temperatures frosted the roads, causing near-impassable conditions.

By Saturday morning, the roads had two inches of ice with a dusting of new snow on top, making for treacherous driving conditions all across Western North Carolina. Snow that had melted during the day Friday re-froze, turning roads into veritable skating rinks.

WNC residents awoke Monday morning to find that Mother Nature had left yet another light dusting of snow on the ice-covered roads. And overnight temperatures in the single digits did nothing to help the situation.

-Continued on back page



Photos by Bill Studenc

The U.S. 25-70 Bypass became a ribbon of black set against a white background, thanks to last week's snowstorm. The bypass was one of the first roads cleared by state highway crews.

State Rests; Defense Begins In Chandler Sexual Abuse Trial

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

After more than three days of testimony, the state has rested its case in the trial of Andrew "Junior" Chandler, charged with 21 counts of sexually molesting seven pre-school children in Madison County.

The state completed its presentation of evidence Tuesday afternoon, after snow and ice forced the cancellation of Madison County Superior Court last Thursday and again on Monday.

Chandler's attorney, Talmadge Penland of Asheville, began to call defense witnesses Wednesday morning to counter testimony from the alleged victims, their parents and a pair of codefendants. Chandler, 29, is expected to take the witness stand in his defense.

Chandler, from Marshall, is a former van driver with the Madison

County Transportation Authority. He is accused of sexually molesting seven children who rode the van to and from Marshall Day Care Center from January to May 1986. The children - five girls and two boys - were between the ages of 2 and 5 at that time.

Chandler has pleaded not guilty to seven counts of first-degree sexual offense, taking indecent liberties with a minor and crime against nature. He faces a mandatory life sentence if convicted of first-degree sexual offense.

Penland asked Superior Court Judge James A. Beaty Jr. late Tuesday to dismiss the charges against his client, contending that the state had presented insufficient evidence of the charges. Beaty refused to dismiss the sexual offense and taking indecent liberties with a minor charges, but reserved his ruling on Penland's mo-

tion to dismiss crime against nature charges.

Some of the most damaging testimony against Chandler came Tuesday from State Bureau of Investigation agent Lloyd Crisco, chief investigator in the case.

Crisco told the jury about his questioning of three mentally retarded adults who also rode on the van driven by Chandler to and from Mountains of Madison, a workshop for the retarded.

Testifying from transcripts of those interviews, Crisco graphically described sexual acts, including oral and anal intercourse, allegedly performed by Chandler on the children, as told to him by the retarded adults. At one point during Crisco's testimony, some of the children's parents became visibly upset and left the courtroom.

-Continued on back page

Audits: Budget Problems Nothing New In Madison

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

Recent charges that Madison County finances from Dec. 1, 1985, through Nov. 30, 1986, should come as no real surprise.

Past audits of Madison County finances - including a recently completed audit of the 1985-86 fiscal year - have indicated that improper accounting methods may have been "standard operating procedure" for several years.

A 68-page audit report of the county's financial records of the 1985-86 fiscal year listed several instances of non-compliance with generally accepted accounting procedures, including at least one problem that had been reported in previous audits.

Here's a look at some of accounting problems pointed out by the audit of Madison County's 1985-86 budget. The audit was performed by Greene, Skidmore, Smith & Co., an Asheville accounting firm:

* State law requires the county to operate on an annual balanced budget, but allows for amendments to be made to reflect changing circumstances. Certain budget amendments in 1985-86 were not made at the appropriate time by the Madison County Board of Commissioners. In some cases, that meant that money was spent before it was actually available.

Former finance officer David Caldwell, however, signed a pre-audit certificate as though the budget ap-

propriation was available. At the end of the fiscal year, Caldwell recommended one omnibus budget amendment, to cover the entire fiscal year.

* The commissioners did not adopt a separate budget for the various special revenue funds of the Madison County Housing Authority.

* State law requires any construction or repair work costing more than \$30,000 in public money to be performed under a contract awarded through the public bid process. A review of minutes of the county commissioners' meetings revealed no taking of bids or opening of bids for one contract that represented the majority of a renovation project at Madison County Courthouse.

-Continued on back page

County Names Committee To Search For Landfill Site

By BILL STUDENC
Editor

The Madison County Board of Commissioners, faced with a landfill that is fast approaching the overflow point, has appointed a committee to help find a new location for the disposal of the county's garbage.

The county's current landfill is expected to reach capacity by April, said Jim Brown, director of the county's landfill operation.

Brown has, for the past several months, been searching the county for a suitable location for a new landfill, but without success.

"There's just not that much land available, that's for sale and that

meets the state requirements (for landfills)," Brown said.

The commissioners, meeting Friday in Madison County Courthouse, appointed an eleven-person committee to help Brown in his search for a new landfill site.

"As many of you know, we have had some problems locating land for a landfill," said Robert Capps, chairman of the board of commissioners. "We're getting to the point where we not only need help from elected officials, but we need the people in the county to give us help."

Capps made a motion that the board appoint a committee, to include several elected officials and

five residents.

On the committee will be commissioners Capps, Reese Steen and John Hensley. The mayors of Madison County's three municipalities - Owen Tilson of Mars Hill, Anita Ward of Marshall and Kenny Ramsey of Hot Springs - will serve also serve on the committee.

Town officials should be especially interested in the county's progress in finding a new landfill site. Larry Leake, county attorney, has said that state law does not require counties to operate a landfill. But disposal of garbage is a responsibility obligated by

-Continued on back page

Tobacco Sales Down In '86

By RICHARD SHUMATE
The Mountaineer

Last summer's drought, plus a 6 percent cutback in the federal tobacco allotment, caused a plunge in sales activity at the Asheville tobacco market in the recent season.

This year, about 8.78 million pounds of tobacco changed hands at the four Asheville warehouses, compared to 11.5 million last year - a drop of 23.3 percent. And with prices down slightly, the total revenues dropped even further, down 24.1 percent from \$13.1 million last season to \$10.7 million in the sales season just completed.

"It was down all over," said Bill Woody, sales supervisor for the Asheville Tobacco Board of Trade. "Our market even did better on

some of the others."

The only figure that remained relatively stable was the price. This year, tobacco sold for slightly more than \$1.56 per pound, down about a penny and a half from last year's price.

Woody said the yearlong drought which dried Western North Carolina fields and a cutback in the allotment (the amount of tobacco farmers are allowed to grow by the government) combined to cause the decrease.

Frank Leatherwood of the U.S. Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, said most of the decrease was due to the drought.

"I think probably 80 percent of the decrease was due to the drought and, although he said damage was

spotty in Western North Carolina - some farmers did relatively well while some had as much as 60 percent of their crop wiped out.

The overall allotment was decreased by 6 percent, which was the maximum decrease allowed by law, he said. This year was the first year that the tobacco growing companies had a say in setting the allotment figures, Leatherwood said.

There was at least one bright spot in this year's sales season, Leatherwood said - the amount of tobacco bought by the stabilization system was down from 12.2 percent of total production to 7.5 percent.

During the season, when tobacco is selling for under a certain set price, -Continued on back page

Burley Sales Asheville Market

85-86
11,456,936 pounds
\$18,089,829
\$1.5789 per pound

86-87
8,784,469 pounds
\$13,722,549
\$1.5633 per pound

'Burgled' Bucks In Bank

Madison County officials are still shaking their heads over the case of "The Burglary That Never Was."

"I don't know what happened," said Jan Franklin, Madison County finance officer. "It's very strange."

Franklin, upon reporting to work last Thursday, discovered that \$4,654.30 which had been in her desk drawer Wednesday evening was no longer there.

The money - \$4,652.20 in checks written to the county and \$2.10 in cash - had been in a bank deposit box in Franklin's desk.

Brown began investigating the incident as a burglary, and county officials made arrangements to cancel payment on the checks and receive new ones.

But on Friday, when Franklin came to work, she found a deposit slip for the amount on her desk.

"The next day (Jan. 28), there was a deposit slip on my desk saying it had been deposited into Wachovia Bank on the 21st (last Wednesday)," she said.

"I reported the money stolen on Thursday morning, and there was a deposit slip on my desk Friday morning," Franklin said. "It's strange."