



MADISON COUNTY LIBRARY GENERAL DELIVERY MARSHALL NC 28753

Week's Edition

THE NEWS RECORD

Serving The People Of Our Communities Since 1901

Vol. 87 No. 12

Thursday, March 19, 1987

25¢

Governor Visits Mars Hill; Discusses Sheriff, Prison

By BILL STUDENC Editor

North Carolina's Republican governor, Jim Martin, ventured far from the state Capitol building Saturday when he paid a visit to the home territory of his chief political rival, House Speaker Liston B. Ramsey.

But Martin didn't come to Madison County for an after-hours debate with the powerful Democratic legislator. He was in Mars Hill Town Hall as part of a weekend swing through Western North Carolina to hear what's on the minds of residents of the mountain counties.

Among the concerns Martin addressed during his hourlong stop in Mars Hill were the Madison County Sheriff's Department and the General Assembly's recent decision to keep a medium-security prison in Buncombe County.

Martin told a crowd of about 75 people that he had spoken earlier Saturday with Madison County Sheriff Dedrick Brown, a Republican, about the possibility of helping Brown obtain state funding for his department.

"I will lend my support to help him find some resources, and I ask for your help, as well," Martin said. "He needs your help in talking to the coun-

'You don't need a rivalry. Politics are for the election season only.'

'We had asked for an emergency bill for our prisons. When the decision came back, we got everything we asked for except one thing — where it would be built.'

— Gov. Jim Martin

ty commissioners so that they can help him as much as possible."

Brown had asked the Madison County Board of Commissioners for some \$27,000 in additional funding shortly after taking office in December. The commissioners then said they could not commit the funds to Brown until they examined the county's budget.

The commissioners now say that Brown's department may exceed its budget by some \$30,000.

Martin told the crowd of mostly Republicans at Saturday's gathering to help Brown convince the Democratic board of commissioners to put any political differences behind them.

"You don't need a rivalry," Martin said. "You need to say, 'We're a county.' You need to say, 'We're a team.' 'Politics are for the election season

only. That's the time for partisan politics. But we are between elections now," he said. "After the election is over, we're supposed to work together for the people."

Martin promised Brown that he would talk to state officials about the possibility of state funding for drug education and other law enforcement programs in Madison County.

Martin also heard from a delegation of North Buncombe County residents concerned with the legislature's recent emergency prison package calling for the construction of aging Craggy Prison's replacement in North Buncombe.

Land in Madison County had also been considered for the 300-inmate prison until the General Assembly made it clear earlier this month that the replacement for Craggy Prison, located in Woodfin, should remain in

Buncombe County.

That decision has prompted opposition from some residents of the North Buncombe area. Martin told the group that there was little that could be done about the legislature's action.

"The final decision is the decision of the General Assembly, and we have to abide by the law," he said.

"If a law is passed, we have to abide by that law. I can't pick and choose what law I will enforce," he said.

Martin reminded the crowd that he had asked that Craggy's replacement be built on state land in Burke County, but the General Assembly did not agree.

"We had asked for an emergency bill for our prisons," he said. "When the decision came back, we got everything we asked for except one thing — where it would be built."

Martin also reminded the Buncombe County group that in "any place that gets picked (for a prison), there will be people like yourself who are against it."

The N.C. Department of Corrections had looked at land near Marshall and Weaverville before the General Assembly's prison package.

—Continued on back page



BILL STUDENC PHOTO

Gov. Jim Martin listens to Earl Ramsey during a stop in Mars Hill Saturday.

Marshall Man Charged With Murder Of Wife

A 43-year-old Marshall man has been charged with second-degree murder after his wife died from a gunshot wound to the head Sunday evening, according to the Madison County Sheriff's Department.

Authorities are also investigating the possibility that the shooting was suicide.

The sheriff's department had originally charged John C. Thorsen with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to kill inflicting serious injury.

But when his wife, Claudia Ann Thorsen, 42, of 100 S. Bear Creek Road, died four hours after receiving a single gunshot wound to the head, the charge was upgraded to murder, Sheriff Dedrick Brown said.

"She was shot at close range with a .32 caliber pistol," Brown said. "The gun was pressed up right against her head."

Authorities believe the shooting stemmed from a domestic dispute between the Thorsens.

"It (the shooting) appears to be the result of a family problem, but as to exactly what set it off, we don't know," said Chief Deputy Dal Peek.

The shooting apparently occurred shortly after 8 p.m. Sunday, Brown said.

Mission Air Medical Ambulance (MAMA), a rescue helicopter from Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville, responded to the call.

—Continued on back page

DA Refuses Investigation Unless Formally Requested

By BILL STUDENC Editor

Unless the Madison County Board of Commissioners formally requests an investigation of the previous county administration's finances, there will not be one.

That's the word from J. Thomas Rusher, district attorney for the 24th Judicial District, in a letter last week to the Madison County commissioners.

"I know each of you personally to be honorable people and if you feel it appropriate for me to investigate this matter, then I will do so," Rusher said in the letter. "Otherwise, the matter from our point of view is now closed."

The commissioners agreed earlier this month to pass to Rusher a controversial audit report outlining a number of questionable financial transactions that took place during the final days of the past board of commissioners.

The current commissioners, however, specified that they were not requesting an investigation, but merely "making the report available to him."

But Rusher said it has been his policy to allow governing bodies to

decide if an investigation of elected officials in warranted. Without a decision from the county commissioners, there will be no investigation.

"During the time that I have been district attorney, I have followed a policy calculated to give maximum discretion to local governing bodies," Rusher said in the letter.

"In areas where local governing units have felt that an officer has acted in a way to unjustly enrich himself at public expense, it has been at all times our opinion that the elected officials should first decide whether they feel the matter ought to be pursued before we have taken any action," he said.

A letter to Rusher from Jan Franklin, clerk to the board of commissioners, "makes it clear that the letter should not be interpreted as a request for any action on my part ... " Rusher said.

"If the illegal acts involve dangerous or violent conduct toward citizens of in anyway involve the citizens in its commission or if there appears to be some cover-up, then our attitude may be different," he said.

Robert Capps, chairman of the board of commissioners, said Tues-

day he did not know how the board would respond to Rusher's letter.

"I couldn't tell you I talked to the board," Capps said. "I don't know what their feelings are going to be. We'll probably bring it up at the next meeting."

Commissioner Reese Steen said he believed the commissioners would have to make a formal request for an investigation.

"I feel like we're going to have to ask him to look into it," Steen said. "It's the people's money, and if we don't investigate it, we'd be setting a bad precedent."

Roger Gregg of the Asheville accounting firm Gregg & Lasher, PA, told the commissioners in January that he had found numerous discrepancies in records of county finances during the last year of office of the former commissioners.

Gregg's report of county finances from Dec. 1, 1985, to Nov. 30, 1986, raised several questions about the financial practices of the past board.

According to his report, there was "a significant increase" in county payments to the then commissioners — and their employees — following their defeat in the May 1986 primary.

Marshall Buys Water Filters

By BILL STUDENC Editor

The town of Marshall has taken what municipal officials believe to be a major step toward improving the quality of the town's supply.

The Marshall Board of Aldermen unanimously agreed last week to spend nearly \$50,000 to purchase an iron-manganese filtration system for the town's water treatment plant.

The filters should remove the unpleasant taste, odor and color that has characterized Marshall's drinking water for the past several years, said engineer Heath Dobson.

The filters, which will cost \$48,235, will use an air-injection system and chemicals to oxidize the iron and manganese in the town's water.

The system will cause the iron and manganese to turn into rust, which

can easily be removed from the water by a filter, Dobson said.

The town will use Senate Bill 2 money and local matching funds to pay for the filter system, to be purchased from Refinite Water Conditioning Co. in Rock Hill, S.C.

The filters will be custom-built for Marshall's water system, represen-

—Continued on back page

Weaverville Tries For Grant Money

By ANNE KITCHELL Staff Writer

The Weaverville Town Council heard from Land-of-Sky Regional Council Advisor Jane Miller of plans to proceed with an application for \$164,450 in community revitalization funds.

Miller told the council during a public hearing Monday that the grant money must serve one of three purposes: prevention of slums and community blight; reconstruction of slums or blight; or, benefit to low- or moderate-income families.

City officials were told the timetable for the federal grant money calls for another public hearing before the May 19 deadline.

Weaverville officials have requested \$164,450 in federal funds and have contributed \$67,714 in matching money for a total of \$232,164 to be used for community revitalization. The community would be allowed to use 25 percent of the grant money for any

project the town wants, Miller said.

The state has between \$32 and \$37 million available for community development projects. Of this money, 73.5 percent must be used for community revitalization, 20 percent for economic development, 5 percent for discretionary purposes and 1.5 percent for emergency funding.

The maximum grant allocation is \$750,000.

During the regular meeting of the town council, which followed Monday's public hearing, Weaverville officials learned that before they can enforce the town's sign ordinance in the one-mile extrajurisdictional zone surrounding the town, they must amend the municipal zoning ordinance.

Jeff Willette, a representative of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources Community Development, told the council that the town's extrajurisdictional zoning ordinance

—Continued on back page



ANNE KITCHELL PHOTO

Beverly and Bill Barutis, owners of Trust General Store, say their store offers a little something for everybody.

Off Beaten Path

Trust General Store Features Menagerie

By ANNE KITCHELL Staff Writer

Where in Madison County can you eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, shop for hardware and groceries, get gasoline and see a llama — all in one stop?

For those fortunate enough to live in the Spring Creek area, a short drive to the junction of N.C. 208 and N.C. 63 is all it takes. For everyone else, it may be a little off the beaten path, but the owners of Trust General Store hope you'll make the trip.

The recently constructed store is the product of Bill and Beverly Barutis, who moved into the area three years ago.

"We actually came up here to retire," said Mrs. Barutis. "We got the idea for the store when we were renovating our home."

Mrs. Barutis said there were no many times they had to drive to Asheville when they needed a nut or bolt that they grew tired of the in-

convenience.

"Everyone we talked to said the same thing," she said. "We needed a

—Continued on back page