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## GOP-Led School Board Takes Office

### Mother Wants Teacher Removed

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

A Walnut mother is circulating petitions calling for the removal of a teacher at Walnut Elementary School following an alleged altercation between the teacher and her son last month.

The mother, Ernestine Haynie, also appeared before the Madison County Board of Education on Monday to talk about the alleged incident involving her son and Larry Wyatt, a teacher at Walnut

School.

Haynie, who met with the school board in a closed executive session, said that Wyatt choked her son, Billy Dean Rice, during a pickup soccer game at Walnut Elementary School on March 13. The boy's arm was in a cast "from the tip of the finger to the back of the wrist" at the time of the incident, she said.

"From what one of the teachers and several of the students told me, he strangled Bobby Dean twice -- once on the ground and

once when he got up," Haynie said Monday as she waited for the public meeting from executive session.

The board took no action on Haynie's complaint Monday, but has called a special meeting for 7 p.m. today (Thursday) to continue discussion of the alleged incident.

"We'll hold a special meeting Thursday night to hear both sides of this," said Jim Baker, newly elected chairman of the school

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### Members Select Baker As Chairman

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Members of the Madison County Board of Education unanimously agreed to select Jim Baker, one of three new Republicans to take office Monday, as their new chairman.

The board also agreed to hold their monthly meetings in the evening rather than in the mornings, as had previously been the case.

Those decisions came Monday

night, after the three new Republican board members and two Democrats re-elected in November took office in front of a crowd of about 100 people in Madison County Courthouse.

The new board had several items of business to take care of, including several topics that had been tabled by the previous board at its last regular meeting, saying the new board should handle those items at a special meeting after being sworn in.

But the first item of business for the new board was selecting its new chairman, to replace R.Z. Ponder, the school board's chairman for 16 years before failing to win re-election in November.

The board unanimously agreed that Baker, an assistant district attorney in the 24th Judicial District, would be the new chairman.

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## Freak Snowstorm Dumps On WNC

By ANNE KITCHELL  
Staff Writer

Unless you spent last weekend in Florida, it would have been hard to not notice that it snowed in Western North Carolina. To say it snowed is an understatement. It snowed a lot.

Beginning Friday, Old Man Winter made a last-ditch effort to stay alive by conjuring up the worst snow storm of the season.

Parts of Madison County were buried under up to 30 inches of heavy, wet snow that fell over a four-day period, putting the N.C. Highway Department on overtime, bending fenders and forcing area residents to stay at home.

Burlin Coates of the N.C. Highway Department said the road crews were called in at 2 a.m. Friday and worked around the clock through Monday.

"It was bad," Coates said. "We'd clear the main roads every day, but the wind would gust up and bury them as fast as they were cleared."

Coates commended the highway crews for their diligent efforts.

"All the crews did a number one job pushing all that snow," he said.

The Madison County Sheriff's Office reported no major accidents over the weekend, but said many of the side roads were virtually impassable.

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BILL STUDENC PHOTO

Early blooms had to battle heavy snows in last week's surprise winter storm.

## Former Mars Hill Mayor Blasts Current Town Board

By CHERYL KOENIG  
General Manager

Former Mars Hill Mayor William Powell criticized the current town administration of Mars Hill, singling out Mayor Owen Tilson, during Monday's meeting of the Mars Hill Board of Aldermen.

In what turned into a battle of the mayors past and present, Powell and Tilson traded barbs for nearly two hours during the meeting. It took the board 40 minutes to complete other items on the agenda.

Powell originally questioned a number of the town board's recent decisions and activities in a letter

dated April 3 that he distributed to Mars Hill residents who have Asheville Citizen newspaper boxes.

The letter, addressed to "citizens of Mars Hill from William P. Powell, former mayor and concerned citizen," was an attempt to make the town's residents aware of the actions and activities of the mayor and aldermen, Powell said.

Although this is a municipal election year, Powell said he has no plans to run again for mayor of Mars Hill.

"I resigned in June (before the last municipal election) to accept my post as chairman of the Madison County Board of Elections, and that's the on-

ly reason," he said.

In the letter, Powell urged residents to attend Monday night's meeting and question the board's actions concerning town garbage pickup, legal fees, the expenditure of excess sewage grant funds and a change of town auditors.

A standing-room-only crowd, apparently the result of the letter, packed the Mars Hill Town Board, prompting Powell to remark that it was the most people he had ever seen attend a town board meeting.

Powell first questioned the cost of

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## Chandler Retrial Continues

From Staff Reports

ASHEVILLE — Prosecutors are expected to continue through the week their parade of witnesses in the second trial of Andrew "Junior" Chandler, the 29-year-old Marshall man charged with sexually molesting seven Madison County preschool children.

Several witnesses, including two retarded adults who have previously pleaded guilty to related charges, took the witness stand as Chandler's trial continues in its second week in Buncombe County Superior Court.

Chandler, a former van driver with the Madison County Transportation

Authority, is charged with seven counts each of first-degree sexual offense and taking indecent liberties with a minor and two counts of crime against nature.

Chandler is accused of molesting seven preschool children while driving them to and from the Marshall Day Care Center between January and May 1986. He has denied the charges against him, and is expected to testify in his defense when prosecutors conclude the presentation of their evidence.

A Madison County jury, after a nearly three week trial in Marshall in January, was unable to reach a un-

animous verdict in the first trial of Chandler. Superior Court Judge James A. Beatty Jr. ordered the retrial moved to Buncombe County because of security problems and threats surrounding the first trial, and because the amount of publicity in the first trial made it difficult to find an impartial jury for the second.

Testimony in the retrial has been mainly a rerun of testimony during the first trial, although there have been some new twists.

An Asheville child counselor testified last week that children who use sexually explicit language often have

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## Marshall Gets Depot Agreement

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Southern Railway has offered to give the town of Marshall the historic train depot on Main Street and to lease the property on which it sits for \$1 a year.

The offer virtually guarantees that the depot, on the verge of going under the wrecking ball last year, will remain at its current location.

Marshall Mayor Anita Ward received over the weekend a copy of an agreement drawn up by Southern Railway officials. All that remains now is for the agreement to be approved by the Marshall Board of Aldermen and signed by the mayor. Then the depot will finally belong to the town, after several months of

uncertainty about the structure's future.

Ward has called a special meeting of the board, scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, for approval and signing of the agreement.

"I am so glad about this," Ward said Monday. "I think I'm going to send them my own dollar just to be able to get it. If I have to, I'll borrow the dollar."

Ward said she wanted to have an attorney look over the 12-page agreement before it is approved.

"There's a lot of legal stuff in there," she said. "I'm afraid to sign it until I have an attorney look at it."

The agreement from Southern Railway comes after about two months of negotiations between company

officials and the town.

Marshall had asked the railroad to turn over the depot to the town, rather than destroy it, after it closed the facility in May 1986. Town officials hope to convert the building into a museum of railroad history.

Southern Railway said it would sell the building to the town, but only if it was moved to another spot. The depot's proximity to the railroad tracks and to U.S. 25-70 makes the building a safety hazard and could result in lawsuits, railroad spokesmen said.

But Marshall officials said the town could not afford the expense of moving the depot. Members of the Friends of the Marshall Depot, a

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Kenny Ramsey  
Hot Springs mayor

## Getman Named To Replace Barrett

By ANNE KITCHELL  
Staff Writer

The town of Hot Springs has officially installed a new police chief.

During the regular meeting of the Hot Springs Board of Aldermen Monday night, town officials agreed to hire Officer Terry Getman as the full-time police chief and to raise his salary to reflect a chief's status.

Getman has been serving as the interim police chief in the wake of former chief John Barrett's abrupt departure March 18.

Hot Springs officials have not heard from Barrett since he left town -- apparently with another woman -- leav-

ing his wife and job behind.

"He's (Getman) very well qualified with good credentials," said Hot Springs Alderman Gene Autry. "I say we hire him."

The board also agreed to hire officer Randy Moore on a full-time basis.

Getman said Moore has recently passed his initial officer tests and is working on his probation certification.

The newly installed chief told the board of several long-term goals to improve the town's law enforcement.

"I will be keeping a daily log of all

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## Ponder Asks State Court For Ruling

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

In an unusual legal move, Madison County Democratic leader Zeno Ponder has asked the N.C. Court of Appeals to dismiss a conspiracy charge against him before the case ever comes to trial.

Ponder, in a petition filed with the appeals court last week, has asked that the court consider whether his indictment on a conspiracy charge violates his constitutional rights.

Ponder's petition is unusual in that such appeals are generally made

after a trial.

Asheville attorney Herbert Hyde, who represents Ponder, admits that an appeal at this stage of the case is unusual.

"No absolute right of appeal exists, but the case is extraordinary and affects the constitutional rights of the defendant so drastically that the writ should be issued," Hyde said.

The petition was filed last Monday. Court officials in Raleigh said earlier this week that the appeals court has not yet decided whether to order a

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ANNE KITCHELL PHOTO

A sign of the times in Hot Springs advertises homecoming activities.

## A Homecoming

### Hot Springs Gears Up For Festivities

By ANNE KITCHELL  
Staff Writer

The town of Hot Springs is a busy place these days as residents prepare to come home.

It may sound strange for people to come home to where already they live, but that's precisely the point, says homecoming chairman Kenny Ramsey, who also doubles as mayor of Hot Springs.

"I got the idea from a former Hot Springs resident, David Kirby, who returned often because he was homesick for the people and the scenery," Ramsey said. "In ap-

preciated the town and showed it by coming home. That's what we want to do."

The Hot Springs Homecoming, scheduled for May 8-10, is as much a state of mind to area residents as it is an event. Throughout the town, people are pitching in and working to raise money and coordinate activities.

Several events already lined up are an appearance by Miss North Carolina, the town's first beauty queen, and a parade featuring the town's brass band.