

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD, HOKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

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Thursday, May 17, 1984

A.M. shopper apprehended on Main St.

By Ed Miller

A Raeford man was arrested around 3:30 Tuesday morning after he was allegedly apprehended inside of a Main Street store.

John Bradley Gordon, 22, was arrested after a Raeford Police officer on routine patrol allegedly found him inside Fashions Unlimited, Police Chief Leonard Wiggins said.

Sgt. Michael Dial was on patrol when he found the back door of the old Shoe Chest store was open, as well as the rear door of Fashions Unlimited.

Gordon was arrested and charged with two counts of breaking and entering, Wiggins said.

The suspect was released Tuesday morning after he posted a \$5,000 secured bond, court records show.

"It was a good job on Sgt. Dial's part," Wiggins said.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The weather for the past week has been about normal for this time of year and it should suit about everyone. Of course some farmers cannot get into certain fields because of the heavy rains in April but most of them are catching up fast.

The forecast for the remainder of the week is for fair weather and the temperatures in the 80s during the day. This is ideal!

Steve Parker, president of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce was by the office Monday and asked that I remind people of the Annual Meeting of the Chamber which will be held on Tuesday, May 29 at the Gibson Cafeteria. The meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$6.00 per person. Tickets can be obtained from the chamber office or you can contact Parker at the Southern National Bank. We don't know the deadline for the purchase of tickets, but will inform you next week.

The new directors and officers will be installed at this meeting and the annual report for the chamber will be given.

The speaker for the evening will be Hal Siler, Executive Director of the Sanford Chamber of Commerce. We understand that he has been in the county before and was well received.

So be sure to purchase your tickets at once, so you won't forget and join everyone for a super evening.

In a conversation Monday with a member of the Hoke Heritage Hobnob Committee, it was good to hear that the event cleared approximately \$3000. It seems that the event that fell short of expectations was The Embers that performed on a Saturday afternoon at Armory Park. This event was in the hole about \$1200. The dinner at the MacDonald Cafeteria and the auction in the gym after the meal netted a profit for the Hobnob.

The committee will meet in the near future and they hope to get more of the community involved in the Hobnob next year. It is also some of the committee members' wishes that the time of the Hobnob be shortened.

Congratulations to everyone for a job well done.

The graduation section that has been appearing in *The News-Journal* for many years will do so again this year. It is appearing this year in the issue of June 7. The deadline for ads will be Thursday, May 31.

If you haven't been contacted in the next few days and would like to be in the section, call the office.

(See AROUND, page 2A)



Someone lived here

At about 1:30 Tuesday morning, the North Raeford and City of Raeford fire departments responded to this house fire. The owners, reportedly at work at the House of Raeford, were not at home when the

blaze broke out. Sources say that the trailer was totally engulfed when the fire departments arrived at the Vass Road residence. No one was hurt in the fire. (Photo by Pam Frederick)

More school funds asked

By Ed Miller

During the next few weeks, members of the Hoke County Commission will be attempting to balance a 26.9% hike in the school budget for the coming year.

Commission members heard the proposed budget, which includes a 15% pay raise for all school personnel, from members of the County Board of Education during a mid-month meeting Monday night.

Commissioners were told that the board is seeking an overall total increase of \$265,169 in county funds over last year.

The majority of the hike is in anticipation of passage of a pay raise for teachers by the North Carolina General Assembly.

A "summary" by Hoke Superintendent Dr. Robert Nelson, included in the budget, said a 15% increase in teachers' salaries has been calculated into the budget as well as \$75,000 for building maintenance recommended by the "Blue Ribbon" Facilities Study Committee.

With the \$99,277 for pay raises and maintenance costs subtracted, the total increase is cut to 8.77% or \$86,392.

Of that figure, the report says that \$23,000 are "promised" to the ROTC program and without that, the increase is only 6.4% over last year.

The summary report ends by saying that the bottom line figure

of \$265,169 is not changed but that Nelson feels it "helpful to know the full picture of where the increases are coming from."

The total state, federal and local budget is set at \$10 million for 1984-85.

From the County of Hoke, the board is seeking a total of \$1.3 million.

Most of the Hoke County school funds will come from the state. Those revenues are budgeted at \$6.8 million and the federal revenue is budgeted at \$1.9 million.

Nelson presented the revenue sharing part of the proposed budget, noting that the school system needs such things as new electric typewriters, a new school bus, a new travel van and repair on old audiovisual equipment.

A total of \$371,100 is being asked for in revenue sharing funds.

At the end of the presentation, Commissioner James Albert Hunt asked school board Chairman Bill Cameron: "How much fat can you cut out?"

"We are not willing to cut anything at this time," Cameron said.

In other business, the commissioners once again tabled action on the First Responder Program.

Insurance matters remain the concern. It will cost \$100 per volunteer to obtain mal-practice coverage, County Manager James Martin said in a report.



Dr. Robert Nelson

For all of the projected volunteers to be covered, it will cost the county \$4,500, the report said.

It was suggested by Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch that perhaps some of these costs could be cut by not having fire departments close to the city involved in the service.

North Raeford, Hillcrest and Tylertown were targeted as being close enough to the city services not to require First Responder volunteers.

"I am for coverage out (in the far reaches of the county)," Upchurch said.

(See SCHOOL, page 3A)

Chamber position on hold

No interim replacement will be employed to fill vacancy created by the death of Hoke-Raeford Chamber of Commerce Director Earl N. Fowler, the group's president said this week.

Before a new director is selected, members of the Chamber Board of Directors will assess the county's "needs" and determine the type of qualifications required to fill the position, President Steve Parker said.

"Basically the Chamber's position is that we're not going to make any quick decisions," Parker said.

The determination of the "needs" is expected to take 30 to 45 days, and then the selection process will begin, Parker said.

Until a new director is hired the (See CHAMBER, page 2A)

College in bank 'not practical'

By Ed Miller

A recently conducted study by a Southern Pines architectural firm recommends the use of the old National Guard Armory over a suggested downtown Raeford site to house the proposed Hoke County branch of Sandhills Community College.

In addition, the report points out that the costs of renovating either structure for college use could run more than \$700,000.

Initial costs could run between \$180,000 and \$200,000 to begin to make the United Carolina Bank building in Raeford suitable for classrooms and instruction and between \$150,000 and \$200,000 to do the same to the old National Guard Armory, says the report from architects Hayes, Howell and Associates.

According to the report, the total cost for the needed renovations could be around \$800,000 for the bank building and \$700,000 for the armory.

In a letter to County Manager James Martin, Sandhills President Dr. Raymond A. Stone said that the armory would be most "preferable for college use."

Stone said that "interior space, access and parking are all favorable considerations" to the the armory.

Stone also said that there are a number of avenues that could be pursued to obtain the funds needed to get construction under way.

"As I remember, under the Community College Act, the county is responsible for obtaining the funds," Stone said Tuesday in an interview.

One way this can be done is for

the Hoke County Board of Commissioners to appropriate the funds outright, Stone said.

Another way would be for the commissioners to "float a bond issue" if they feel the public will support it, he said.

A third possibility would be for the county to take the "special bill route" whereby commissioners will ask the county's Legislative Delegation to try and obtain the funds directly from the State Legislature.

This approach is not a popular one with state law makers, the college president added.

As a final alternative, if some funds are obtained from any local source, commissioners could try and get state matching funds at a rate of 50-50, Stone said.

To be able to get matching funds, the county would have to have its money up front, he added.

James Martin could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

In the report from Hayes, Howell and Associates, the strong and weak points of both proposed sites for the satellite were outlined.

According to the report some of the weaknesses of the bank building are: •No enclosed stairs for fire escape purposes.

•There is a vault in the center of the ground floor.

•The upper two floors are not suitable for classroom occupancy because they are constructed of highly combustible material.

•There is an inadequate number of plumbing fixtures on the ground floor.

(See SANDHILLS, page 3A)

'Friends' bail out jump school owner, court reduces bond

Raeford parachute school owner Gene Paul Thacker, who is charged in connection with the smuggling of \$14 million in cocaine allegedly brought into the Raeford Airport last summer, had been reporting to local authorities on time following his release from jail last week, a spokesman for the Hoke County Sheriff's office said Tuesday.

As part of the condition for reducing the bond from \$500,000 to \$250,000, 12th Judicial District Superior Court Judge E. Lynn Johnson required Thacker to report to local authorities prior to 9 a.m. daily.

The jump school owner is charged in an indictment by a statewide Florida grand jury with one count of trafficking in cocaine and one count of conspiracy to traffic cocaine.

Florida authorities have said earlier that the alleged smuggling occurred last June and involved about 700 kilograms of the drug.

If convicted, Thacker could face up to 30 years in jail without chance of parole, assistant District Attorney John Dickson said during a bond reduction hearing on Friday.

Thacker was released from the Hoke County Jail Friday, after about 20 "friends" pledged their homes, cash and property to raise the required \$250,000 bond.

Most of those pledging assets were Cumberland County residents and have worked with Thacker through his parachute school.

During the Friday hearing, about 70 supporters, including a number of prominent Hoke County residents, jammed Courtroom 3-A in the Cumberland County Courthouse on Thacker's behalf.

After hearing testimony from seven witnesses, including former Hoke County Superintendent Raz Autry, Raeford City Councilman Bob Gentry, Raeford Heating and Plumbing owner Mack Sessoms

and Hoke Auto owner Younger Snead Jr., Johnson ruled in favor of reducing Thacker's bond.

As part of the ruling, Thacker was also to have surrendered his passport and was required to remain in Hoke and Cumberland counties.

"Gene Paul Thacker's character is excellent," Autry said, testifying that he had known the jump school owner about 17 years.

Autry noted later that he did not condone the use of cocaine, and that he believed Thacker to be innocent of the charges.

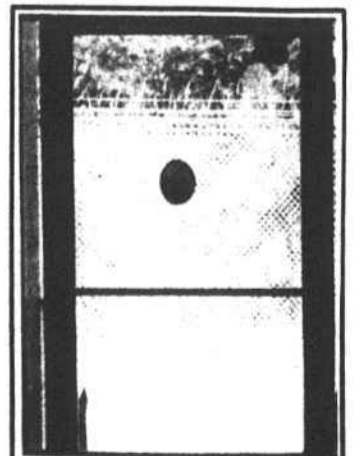
"I am willing to go on his bond. I'm satisfied that he will be where he is supposed to be," the former superintendent added.

(See THACKER, page 3A)



City Manager sworn in

Notary and Tax Supervisor, Betty Smith gives the oath of office to Tom Phillips, Raeford's new City Manager. The ceremony was held at 9 a.m. Monday in the council chambers at City Hall. "I'm going to spend the day and the next couple of weeks getting to know my way around," Phillips said.



Inside Today

Among wire McCain Hospital correction officers are maintaining the spirit and dedication of the facility's 70-year tradition. We take a look at the prison hospital and some recently honored officers on page one of section B in today's News-Journal.