

# The News-Journal

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## Man given 5 years for child scalding

By Ed Miller

A Hoke County man, who is currently serving a term at McCain Prison, was given an additional five years in jail last week after he was found guilty of child abuse in Hoke County Superior Court.

During the sentencing, Judge D.B. Herring gave James Alton Watkins the maximum five-year sentence, but said that if he could, he would give him more.

Watkins, 26, was accused of sticking a three-year-old Hoke County child's hands in scalding water and causing second and third degree burns over her hands and wrists.

The child is now recovering from the burns. She is still wearing an "orthopedic" or elastic glove on her left hand and has just received permission from her doctor to take its mate off the right hand, said Assistant District Attorney Jean Powell.

Although the three-year-old girl was not allowed to testify in the trial, she was in the court room and would wave occasionally at the jury.

Her hands still bear the scars of the incident, Powell said.

She is now living with her natural father and appears very happy, said Powell.

Watkins was reportedly baby sitting with the child when the burning occurred.

According to Watkins' story, the pair had just finished eating, and the little girl wanted to wash her hands.

Watkins had to go to the bathroom at the same time, court testimony revealed.

While he was out of the room, he said he heard the chair she was standing on fall as the child hollered "hot" and when he re-entered the room, he found her holding onto the faucet to keep from falling.

Raeford's Dr. Robert G. Townsend testified that, because of the burns on the child's hands, the incident could not have occurred as the defendant described it.

If it had, there would have been splash marks higher on her arms and broken blisters on the palms of her hand from holding onto the faucet, he said.

Instead, the burns stopped just above the wrists at about the same place all the way around the arm forming bands at the top.

The burns were "glove type," Powell said.

Townsend also said that the burns were very typical of those of

someone whose hands had been held in hot water.

Cape Fear Valley Medical Center pediatric ward Head Nurse Nancy Payne also cast doubt on the testimony of Watkins.

During a hearing held away from the jury, Payne said she had heard the child say "Punky did it."

Punky is a nickname for Watkins, Powell said.

Although Judge Herring heard the testimony, it was not allowed in court, Powell said.

The defense offered no evidence in the case, Powell said.

Watkins is now serving a prison sentence for food stamp fraud, driving with his license revoked third offense, possession of stolen goods and possession of a fictitious license, records show.

When his time is finished on those charges, he will begin serving the latest five-year sentence, Powell said.

Watkins has appealed the case to the North Carolina Court of Appeals, said Powell.

Judge Herring set no bond for the appeal so even if his case has not finished being appealed by the time his past sentences are up, he will not get out of jail, she said.



Preparing to search

Hoke County Rescue Squad members Greg Beard and others prepare Dick McNeill for a cool dive in Rockfish Creek to search the contents of a car discovered sunken last week in a deep bend in the creek. McNeill dove on the car for about half an

hour before discovering that no one or nothing was inside. Three hours later, the car was pulled up. McNeill was able to read the license plate of the car allowing sheriff's deputies to determine that the vehicle was stolen from Cumberland County.

## New policies governing foster homes adopted by DSS

By Ed Miller

Members of the Hoke County Department of Social Services (DSS) Board of Directors adopted a foster child care policy Monday which is designed to improve rights of a child to confidentiality and to upgrade the qualifications of foster parents.

The county has needed to revise the policy for a number of years because there have been problems

incurred that were not covered by the old directives, DSS Director Ken Witherspoon said.

One of the major new provisions in the policy deals with the confidentiality of why a child is placed in a foster home.

"The foster parents must in no way violate within the community the confidential nature of the child's situation or the circumstances of his parents causing

exploitation of the child by his peers, his school, or the community at large," the policy reads.

In the past, the department has had to remove children from foster homes because the rights of confidentiality were abused, Witherspoon said.

Another of the new directives deals with the spiritual upbringing of a foster child.

This area has caused some prob-

lems in the past, said Witherspoon.

The new policy says that the opportunity for spiritual development must be present without imposing the religious beliefs of the foster parent onto the child.

A third important part of the policy says that foster parent applicants should not apply out of selfish reasons.

Loneliness or "because I like children" are not good reasons to

apply to be a foster parent, according to the policy.

Part of the regulations had to be changed to keep up with recently passed laws.

"All persons transporting a foster child of less than two years of age shall have the child properly secured in a child passenger restraint which is of the type (and which is installed in a manner) approved by the Commissioner of

Motor Vehicles," the new policy says.

In other business at the meeting, Witherspoon noted that over 1,200 Hoke County households received free commodities during last week's distribution.

According to the director, 1,277 households were given cheese, butter and other goods by the DSS.

About 707 were serviced in the first day, Witherspoon said.

## Around Town

By Sam Morris

The weather has turned hot again and the temperature is getting near the 90° mark. It was foggy Monday morning and some places on the highways the visibility was around zero.

The forecast is for this kind of weather to be with us for the remainder of the week.

The Hoke County Historical Association met at the Hoke Library last Thursday night. The group voted to work with the City of Raeford to establish a historic district for the downtown area including one block east and west of Main Street. A letter was forwarded to Tom Phillips, city manager.

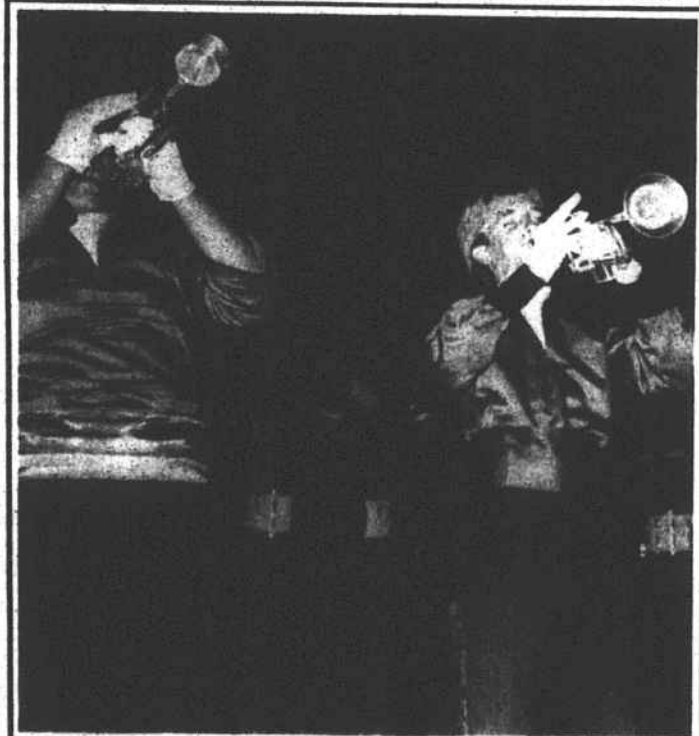
In most cities where the downtown area has been revitalized, historic districts were established as a first step. We hope that this project will meet with the city council approval and maybe something can come from this start.

To make any organization strong, it needs members. So if you are interested in downtown Raeford or preserving the history of Hoke County, then join the association. Contact Kay Thomas for information.

## Something to Remember:

The Mill Prong Preservation Society, Inc. will hold its annual meeting at the Antioch Presbyterian Church on Sunday, Sept. 30. A buffet lunch will be served. Reservations must be made by mail, by sending \$5 before Sept. 27 to: The Mill Prong Preservation Society, P.O. Drawer 1087, Lumberton, N.C. 28338.

Judge Henry A. McKinnon, Jr. of Lumberton will be the guest (See AROUND TOWN, page 7A)



Sounds of victory

The Hoke High Band members were blowing a victory tune during Friday night's halftime performance. The Bucks topped Cape Fear High 31-8. We take a look at the game and other county sports on page 8 in today's News-Journal.

## Skydiver killed at airport

By Ed Miller

The death of a Fayetteville parachutist, who was killed at the Raeford-Hoke County Airport Sunday after he apparently did not pull his reserve chute during a skydiving competition, has been ruled accidental.

David Croomer Barlow, 41, of Fayetteville died just before noon Sunday after his main chute failed to deploy, Hoke County Sheriff Dave Barrington said.

"The pins, or whatever it is that holds the reserve chute in place had not been disturbed when they found him," Barrington said.

The death was apparently accidental, the sheriff said.

The Fayetteville construction company owner was the second parachute fatality this year at the Hoke County facility.

Barlow was part of a four man team that was jumping from about 7,500 feet, witnesses to the accident said.

There appeared to be no foul play involved in the death, Barrington said.

Barlow, who was Vice-President of the Raeford Parachute Club and who had about 1,000 jumps to (See SKY DIVER, page 7A)

## Three county residents arrested charged with business break-ins

By Ed Miller

Three Raeford men have been arrested and charged with at least two recent break-ins of county businesses, local authorities said Monday.

Robin Wayne McVicker, 18, and 21-year-old Jack Goodwin were out of jail on \$10,000 bond each Monday, while John Bradley Gordon (also known as Yogi) remained in custody under \$60,000 bond.

Gordon's bond was set higher than the other two men's because he is considered to be a risk, a Sheriff's Department spokesman said.

Gordon is currently on probation after being convicted of drug charges in Cumberland County, Detective Ed Harris said.

He was also out of jail on bond

pending drug charges in Hoke County, two breaking and entering charges and a possession of stolen goods charge, Harris said.

Last Tuesday, Raeford Police received a report of a break-in and larceny at the Universal Sporting Center on Highway 211.

Taken in that robbery were guns, knives, ammunition and cash totalling \$8,888.20, Police Chief Leonard Wiggins said.

About \$1,500 worth of the stolen material was recovered near the scene of the crime, Wiggins said.

The stolen goods had been put somewhere else in the store perhaps so the perpetrators could come back and remove it later, Wiggins said.

The men were arrested this past Sunday, Harris said.

Sheriff's deputies also received a

report last Tuesday that The Little Whale Restaurant was broken into and robbed of a total of \$1,317.37 in food stuffs, reports say.

According to the reports, one and a half cases of rib eye steaks were taken and were valued at about \$470.79.

Gordon and McVicker were charged with both break-ins, while Goodwin also faces additional charges of possession of stolen goods, Wiggins said.

According to Wiggins, the Universal Sporting Center was broken into again Sunday night, September 23.

An undetermined amount of merchandise was taken in that case, said Wiggins.

Neither Gordon nor McVicker had been charged with that break-in as of Monday afternoon, the chief said.

## Raeford historic district eyed

By Ed Miller

If plans by the Hoke Historic Association are approved and implemented by the Raeford City Council, the city could have a downtown historic district, City Manager Tom Phillips said Tuesday.

A letter, which outlined a resolution adopted by the association to support the creation of a district, was given to Phillips last week by Project Chairperson Kay Thomas, the city manager said.

"Basically, they're asking to create a historic district," the manager said.

The area is to encompass the downtown area including Main Street and one block east and west. A meeting has been scheduled between Thomas and Phillips

Wednesday afternoon to discuss the feasibility of the idea.

Although Phillips has never been involved with creating a historic district, he is aware of some places that have, he said.

One such town is Kenansville, Phillips said.

That town has dated and researched background on many of the old buildings and homes in the town, he said.

According to Phillips, a building - by - building tour to establish which are of significance would have to be implemented as a part of putting in the historic district in Raeford.

"I would imagine that there would have to be an inventory of buildings," he said.

Such things as types of construc-

tion, how old a building is, whether it is uniquely built, and if anyone of historic significance had anything to do with the building will need to be examined, said Phillips.

A building that has "something that modern-day craftsmen don't do" or was the site of an historic event would be considered important, he said.

If the city council approves the district, it would then have to be created and then the council could "make it attractive for people to refurbish old buildings," Phillips said.

Some Raeford residents feel that the creation of the district could be the first steps in an aggressive downtown revitalization effort.