

The News-Journal

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Foggy hall

This is not fog, it is smoke. When part of a basketball uniform apparently slipped behind the basket of a gas dryer, it burst into flames and smoke at Hoke High Friday. Raeford Fire Department members turned out for the flames in full gear and

little damage was done to the building. The fire started during Friday night's basketball game. Many of the spectators did not even know about the fire, witnesses said.

Fire damages gymnasium, home

A fire Monday night destroyed 85% to 90% of the downstairs portion of a Raeford home.

Quick reactions by the Raeford Fire Department saved the upper half of the home belonging to West Hoke School Principal Milton Williams and school Administrator Gloria Williams.

No one was injured in the blaze, according to Raeford Fire Marshall Terry Tapp.

In an unrelated fire Friday night, the Hoke High Lady Bucks played on despite a fire which broke out in the rear of the school's gym.

The fire was confined to a laundry area, and smoke and flames did not reach the gym arena where the local team lost its bid for a conference tourney title to Reid Ross.

Quick action by four Junior ROTC cadets saved the school from further damage, Superintendent Dr. Robert Nelson said.

The cadets, who were on patrol at the game spotted the smoke and reported the fire.

Tapp pegged a possible cause of the Williams' fire as grease on the kitchen stove, although he said Tuesday he is

not sure what caused the blaze.

According to Tapp, the fire department was on the scene about two minutes after receiving the call with 19 fire fighters.

The call came in about 9:15 p.m. and firemen did not return to the station until after 11 p.m., Tapp said.

There were some children in the house, but no adults were at home, he said.

"It really could have been a whole lot worse," Tapp said, adding that the walls in most of the downstairs area are still sound.

Raeford motel approved

By Ed Miller

Following a lively discussion, Raeford City Council members cleared the way for construction to begin next week on a new motel.

Council members assured a Lumberton firm that water and sewer hook-ups will be on site by the time they are needed, but efforts will be made by the city to get Hoke County to share the cost of the services.

The 30-unit motor inn will be located on the corner of Palmer Street and Highway 401, across from St. Elizabeth's of Hungary Catholic Church, and will be called "The Colonial Motel," said Robert Ballard, a partner in the project.

Councilmen were told that the project had the full support of the Raeford-Hoke Economic Development Commission and the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce.

Economic Development Commission Chairman Tom Howell also told councilmen that a group representing Raeford's industries met last week and voted to support the facility.

"They agree it is a needed project," Howell told councilmen.

According to Ballard, his firm has been looking at the feasibility of a Raeford motel for two or three years.

"We plan to basically start immediately," said Ballard, adding that he hopes to have the project

finished in time for the First Annual North Carolina Turkey Festival scheduled for September 21 in Raeford.

Arguments erupted among council members over where the money will come from to run the water and sewer lines.

With City Manager Tom Phillips absent from the meeting due to a death in his family, council members were not sure about the outcome of discussions between the city and county over splitting the costs.

It was decided at the end of the meeting that the county be approached for half of the costs of running the lines.

"We need a motel, but we don't need to foot all of the bill," Mayor John K. McNeill said.

The lines will cost an estimated \$35,000 to \$40,000, McNeill said.

"If we're going to grow in Hoke County, we've got to have a motel. I think we need to get him his water and sewer," Councilman Bob Gentry said.

"The costs (of installing the lines) will come back eventually through water and sewer rates and taxes. How can we refuse it?" Gentry said.

"We're certainly ready to do our part," Councilman Vardell Hedgpeth said.

Benny McLeod, the only councilman to vote against Hedgpeth's motion to assure the services said: "It's not that I don't want a motel

here; I do. It's just that before I spend \$40,000 of my money or the city's money, I need to be sure where the money is coming from."

At one point in the meeting, members of the council spoke of putting off giving assurances of utilities.

"We would like to see you make a commitment tonight," Tom Howell said.

"It would be good to know where you are going and if, in fact, you can go," said Ballard.

After the motion to run the lines was passed, councilmen decided to approach the Hoke County Commission through the Economic Development Commission.

During his explanation of the motel, Ballard told the council that the "Colonial Motel" will include a restaurant and a swimming pool.

"Our feasibility studies show that it would be impractical to build a motel without a restaurant," said Ballard.

"If we are going to ask people to stay here, it is not fair to ask them to go to Fayetteville to eat," he said.

The motel will be of a colonial style with small windows, in contrast to the larger ones usually installed in motor courts, Ballard said.

The motel will not be affiliated with a chain, he said.

The lodge will also have a con-

(See MOTEL, page 2A)

Hoke High named college site

By Ed Miller

Contingent upon funding, the Hoke County Board of Education will allow a satellite branch of Sandhills Community College to hold classes in Hoke County High School, board members said Tuesday night.

The move came after a request from the Hoke County Higher Education Foundation.

According to Foundation Presi-

dent Bill Archer, members of the group appeared before the Board of Education to request two things.

Permission to use the high school buildings for classes was foremost, Archer said.

The Foundation also asked school Business Manager Don Steed to draw up a schedule by which payment may be made to the school board for utilities and

maintenance services used at the facility.

Members of the Foundation say they will approach the Hoke County Board of Commissioners on March 11 with a request for \$15,000 to cover the costs.

"We are requesting \$15,000 for utilities and maintenance cost for the use of the high school. We are also asking for the county to pro-

(See COLLEGE, page 2A)

Carolina Telephone: Extended service will take campaign

In order to establish extended local telephone service between Hoke County and Fayetteville, supporters of the change must wage an extensive promotional campaign, a Carolina Telephone Company spokesman said Monday.

"It's like selling a bond issue or running for office," Local Revenue Planning Manager David Tharrington said, noting that Carolina Telephone was not op-

posed to extending the Fayetteville local service to Hoke County.

However, the telephone company will have increased costs to provide the service and would need higher rates, Tharrington said.

Carolina Telephone currently controls the lines between Hoke County and Fayetteville and receives the long distance charges for calls made between the exchanges.

Recent rulings by the North

Carolina Utility Commission will probably result in the long distance rates between the counties going up, Tharrington said.

In order to extend the service, Carolina Telephone would poll Hoke County and Cumberland County customers to determine if the move was wanted.

"It's going to be difficult to get a favorable vote in Fayetteville," Tharrington said.

Supporters must also overcome

the negative Hoke County vote, which was returned on a 1976 ballot, he added.

During that local balloting, 3,487 ballots were mailed to customers in the 875 exchange. About 59% or 2,056 customers returned the ballots. The final vote showed that 1,344 were against the change and 711 were for it.

"It's going to be hard to convince Raeford customers too," Tharrington said.

In order for Carolina Telephone to order the customer poll, the company must believe that there is a genuine interest by both service areas.

Despite Tharrington's suggestion that ballots would be needed in both service areas, supporters feel the vote will only have to be conducted with Hoke County customers and that Fayetteville telephones will not be affected by higher rates.

Although Tharrington was unsure of how expensive the new equipment would be to make the change, he said the company had developed projected rates by using average costs from areas where service had been extended.

Hoke County residential customers would see the basic rate increase from \$7.78 per month to \$12.39 per month under the projections from the company. The

(See PHONE, page 2A)

Trial set for airport operator

By Ed Miller

Over a year after he was indicted, Raeford Aviation owner Gene Paul Thacker will be in a Florida Circuit Court facing charges of trafficking in cocaine on May 13, a spokesman for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) said Monday.

The court date has been set 12 months after the parachute jump school owner was arrested on warrants alleging that he conspired to allow \$14 million worth to be

smuggled through the Raeford-Hoke County Airport, Case Agent for the Florida DLE, Bill Wolfe said.

Thacker has entered a plea of not guilty and strongly maintains his innocence in the case, the defendant said Monday.

According to Wolfe, 18 people connected with the case are scheduled to appear in court on that date, but that number will probably decrease by court time.

As late as last week, rumors that

the charges against Thacker had been dropped were reported by local sources.

"That is totally erroneous," Wolfe said.

Thacker had allegedly been providing a landing area for airplanes carrying cocaine and providing fuel for the aircrafts, Wolfe said.

"He was (at the airport) according to witnesses" when the planes landed, said Wolfe.

(See THACKER, page 2A)

Depot restoration to start soon

Preliminary work on the restoration of the old Aberdeen Rockfish Depot began last week.

A community service worker was commissioned by the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce to clean the building and remove trash.

Plans for the interior of the building are being drawn and construction is expected to start soon, a Chamber spokesman said.

Contributions for the restoration has cleared the \$4,000 mark, as restoration committee members

are contacting area businesses and individuals.

The Chamber has set a goal of \$30,000 to improve the circa 1900 structure.

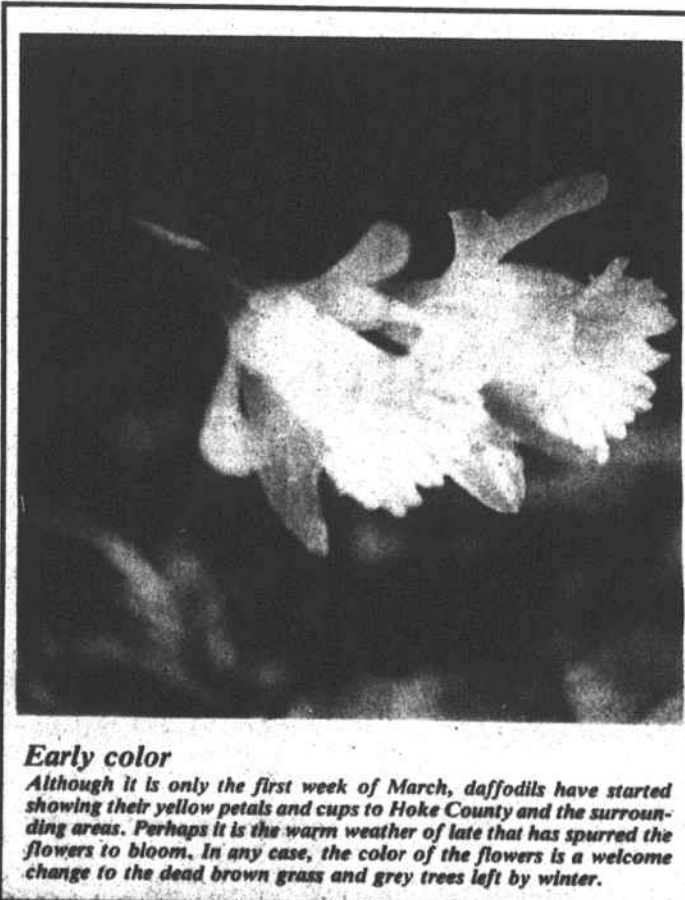
The facility is expected to house the offices of the Chamber and the economic developer, and will require major renovations in order to be useable.

Members of the committee hope to arouse public spirit for volunteer labor in the restoration effort.

Contributions have been made by Mrs. C.L. Thomas Sr., Mr. and

Mrs. W.L. Howell, Mr. and Mrs. Younger Snead, H. R. McLean, Eugene Carter, Caroline Parker, W. LaMont Jr., Bobby Carter, Barbee Pharmacy, C.P. Kinlaw Jewelry, Hosteler & McNeill, Attorneys, McNair Cleaners, Arabia Golf Club, Leach's Auto, The Party Shoppe, Hoke County High School, Tyler & Dial Construction, Diehl & Gibson, Enviro-Chem, Auto Parts & Equipment, S. Satterwhite, J. Currie, M. Jones, M. Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Terry

(See DEPOT, page 2A)



Early color

Although it is only the first week of March, daffodils have started showing their yellow petals and cups to Hoke County and the surrounding areas. Perhaps it is the warm weather of late that has spurred the flowers to bloom. In any case, the color of the flowers is a welcome change to the dead brown grass and grey trees left by winter.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The weather is still nice and the temperatures have been in the 60s most days. I believe we can expect some more cold weather, but not like it has been for the past two months.

According to information passed on to me last week, it seems that the Hoke Recreation Committee is now ready to put two little league ball fields on the lot in front of Raeford Oil Co. This is the land that was donated by Burlington Industries recently.

The old baseball field will be restored at Armory Park like it was several years ago. The field had been divided into two little league fields and the fence between the fields stopped the playing of baseball at the park.

I don't know the conditions of the lights, but they should be fixed so night baseball could be played again at the park.

Wouldn't it be good to get college games back in Raeford and maybe some of the minor league teams would come through and play.

(See AROUND, page 2A)