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School board heading out to California

By Ed Miller

On March 29, the National School Boards Association will be holding its annual conference in Anaheim, California, and three members of Hoke County's Board of Education will be there.

Hoke County Board of Education Chairman Bill Cameron and board members Bobby Wright and Walter Coley will attend the conference.

Hoke School Superintendent Dr. Robert Nelson will also be attending the meeting.

Registration for the conference for all four men amounted to \$1,050, according to Hoke Schools Business Manager Don Steed.

Plane fares and motel accommodations are \$3,007, Steed said.

It costs the taxpayers of Hoke County \$4,057 for the representatives to go to the conference.

According to Wright, board members only attend one "out of state" function per year relating to the school board.

Trips like this year's to California and last year's to Las Vegas, Nevada, save the school system far more money than it would ever cost to send board members and administrators, said Wright.

While at the conference, Nelson and board members will attend a number of meetings including seminars on school law, educational assemblies and board self evaluation clinics.

The entire conference will be entertained by Danny Thomas and Crystal Gayle on Saturday and Sunday nights.

Included in the conference agenda are programs for the spouses of board members and administrators.

The conference will be over on Tuesday, April 2.

The regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting, originally set for that night, has been postponed until April 4, at 7:30 p.m.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The weather has been cooler for the past few days and the forecast is for freezing weather Monday night. I hope that it doesn't get low enough to kill the peach crop. Peaches, according to an expert, can stand temperatures down to 27 degrees. Maybe it won't get that low in Hoke County.

We can expect a few cool days and cold nights until after Easter, which is April 7 this year.

The rainfall for the month of March is very low and this is the reason for all the forest fires in the county and state.

The Raeford Junior Woman's Club is sponsoring beach bingo every Saturday night beginning at 7:30 o'clock at the Civic Center. Now beach bingo is so that you can win a prize of only \$10 per game. There were larger prizes in past years, but the legislature passed a law prohibiting larger amounts in North Carolina.

The crowds have been small so far this year and the ladies want more people to come out and enjoy the games and fellowship. They have several projects in mind to use the money made from bingo and they include planting trees on Main Street and giving a donation to the restoration of the old depot. These are worthy projects, so if you enjoy bingo go out Saturday night and win a few bucks.

The Hoke County Agricultural Extension Service, in cooperation with other agencies, is sponsoring a Family Fun Frolic on Saturday, March 30 at Gibson Gym, Hoke County High School.

There will be exhibits by Hoke County Schools, 4-H Clubs, Agricultural Extension Service, Health Dept., Mental Health, Ministerial Association, Recreation.

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Just after the crash
Members of the Ft. Bragg Fire Department examine the remains of a crashed helicopter four hours after the accident.

Photo by Pat Wilson



The next day
A full investigation has been mounted into why a UH-60A Army Blackhawk helicopter crashed last Wednesday in the western part of Hoke County in the Ft. Bragg military reservation. The cause of the

crash had not been determined as of Tuesday morning. Pictured, another Army helicopter takes off to shoot some aerial photos of the crash site. The crash killed 12 soldiers.

Photo by E.W. Miller, III

Hoke Airport gas consumption under scrutiny by commission

By Ed Miller

A survey will be taken to determine if fuel is needed by pilots visiting the airport before 11 a.m., according to a motion passed by the Raeford-Hoke Airport Commission Thursday.

If there is a need, A. J. Furches, who leases a hangar from the Airport Commission, will have to provide personnel to pump the fuel or his lease may be in danger.

According to Furches, who was present at the meeting, 90% of the fuel pumped at the airport is bought after 4 p.m.

The rest is purchased after 12 p.m., he said.

Furches was requested to appear before the Airport Commission in reference to a clause in his present lease saying that he would provide fuel "during normal operating hours."

Since he works late into evenings, Furches usually does not

come into work until after 10 a.m., he said.

"It just wouldn't be feasible for me to hire somebody and to pay them out of my pocket if they are not going to pump any gas," Furches said.

"When we get the results from the survey, and if the need warrants, we should have somebody out there," Commissioner L.E. McLaughlin said.

"If it is not feasible, then I say no," he said.

"When there is a demand, we should supply (gas)," Commissioner Wayne Byrd said.

Two ways of polling pilots buying fuel at the airport was discussed at the meeting.

According to Byrd, pilots already fill out forms telling the amount of gas, the amount to be paid and whether they needed oil and how much.

"It would not be any problem to

get them to put the time of the purchase down there either," he said.

Commissioner McLaughlin volunteered to make up a tear sheet to be posted at the airport for the poll.

The sheets may be filled out by those pilots who regularly buy fuel at the facility but will not buy any during the polling period, said McLaughlin.

McLaughlin also said that most small airports in this area do not start pumping fuel before 11 a.m.

As a result of a motion passed in the meeting, action to force Furches to pump fuel in the morning hours was tabled until after the surveys are back.

In other action taken at the meeting, Commissioner Byrd was placed in charge of "doing what is required" to get the taxiway at the airport in usable shape.

(See REPAIRS, page 11A)

Hoke writing scores 2nd highest in area

By Ed Miller

Hoke County sixth graders achieved the second highest scores in the region on statewide writing tests, recent results show.

About 3.7% of the local sixth graders, or 15 students, scored 3.5 on a four point scale.

That percentage is higher than any other school in the region, except for the same aged children in Moore County Schools, according to a report from the Division of Research of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Although only .7% of the students taking the test in Hoke scored a perfect four on the test, Director of Instruction for the Hoke County Schools Marilyn Semones is pleased with the results of this year's test as compared with last year's.

"Hoke County was near the bottom of the region last year," Semones said.

Even though many more

students than last year scored well on the test, still, 86.4% of the students in Hoke's sixth grade scored at or below the mid-point of the scale, according to the report.

The reports shows that 402 students took the test at grade level six.

Students in the ninth grade around the county also took a form of the same test.

Of the 384 students who took the test, 3.9% scored the maximum 4.

About 5.2% scored at the 3.5 level and 20.6% of the students placed at the 3 mark.

With 12.2% of the ninth graders placing at the middle mark of 2.5, 58.1% of this county's ninth graders still write below average on the scale, the report shows.

In the region, five school systems had a greater percentage of ninth graders score at the top of the scale than Hoke County. They

(See SIXTH, page 3A)

Nursing home seeking final state approval

By Ed Miller

A final state decision on the certificate of need which will allow Britthaven Nursing Home to build a facility in Hoke County is expected on March 30, a spokesperson for the company said Tuesday.

Before construction can begin, the certificate will have to stay at the state level for another 30 days to give time for appeals after it has been approved by Division of Facility Services of the Department of Human Resources, Britthaven Planning and Development Specialist Kathy Matthews said.

"Our assumption is that there will be no appeals in Hoke County," said Matthews.

There will be another wait of about 30-60 days before people from Britthaven actually come to Raeford to start looking over sites for the construction of the only nursing home in the county, she said.

Earlier Matthews said that Britthaven hoped to have the certificate of need back from the state by the end of January.

"Apparently, (the state) had so many applications that they have had to spend more time than expected," said Matthews.

The certificate was approved by the Cardinal Health Board in mid-December.

Getting Britthaven approved as the company to build the facility

was a battle won through the joint efforts of Hoke County and Raeford governmental officials.

Cardinal Health Agency, covering a 15 county area in North Carolina, gave a staff recommendation endorsing an Autumn Care Corporation.

After a week-long battle during which representatives of Hoke County officials appeared at numerous hearings, the Board of Directors for Cardinal overturned that recommendation in favor of Britthaven.

The key to overturning the staff's recommendation was the public support put behind Britthaven, Raeford City Manager Tom Phillips has said.

According to a proposal from the company, Britthaven is planning to build a 100-bed facility that will include 38 resthome beds and some nursing home beds.

Britthaven has done much to build public support for their company.

Last year, members of the Hoke County Commission were taken on a tour of a Britthaven facility in Raleigh.

When the site for construction is finally chosen, the company is allowed a year for construction. However, it may only take from eight to ten months to build the facility, Matthews has said.

Community service labor help ready depot rehab

Community service workers are serving their time readying the old Aberdeen Rockfish Depot for the upcoming restoration effort.

Workers are scraping paint from windows and removing debris from the building prior to the beginning of remodeling, Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce Executive Secretary Beverly Pasternak said.

Planned for the depot, which is now little more than a shell inside are offices for the Chamber and the economic developer, along with a conference room-public meeting room.

The Chamber-sponsored Restoration Committee is attempting to raise \$30,000 to restore the building. Just over \$6,000 had been raised as of Monday.

The building will need new wiring, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, as well as interior walls, ceilings and floors before it can be used to house the offices of the Chamber and the economic developer.

The depot, which was constructed around 1900, was once the hub of the community and was a key shipping point Hoke County



which led the world in watermelon production.

Contributions are tax deductible and can be made to the Raeford-Hoke Depot Restoration Fund. Donations can be mailed to the Southern National Bank at P.O. Drawer B, Raeford, N.C. 28376 or dropped by the bank at

(See DEPOT, page 3A)