

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

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From left, discussing land use are Col. Al Aycock, Fort Bragg garrison commander, Raeford city attorney William Fields, and Raeford Mayor Bob Gentry.

League panel to address buffers

Local leaders attend first meeting in hopes concerns will be heard

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke and City of Raeford officials attended the first meeting in Clinton last Wednesday of the League of the Local Government Military Base Advisory Committee.

The new committee, formed by the League of Municipalities and the N.C. Association of County Commissioners,

is comprised of city and county representatives across the state and will form recommendations on military land use. They will present a plan to the N.C. General Assembly, intending to look out for the best interests of taxpayers while coexisting with the military.

This, after Hoke, Cumberland County, and the City of Raeford did not endorse the controversial Fort-

Bragg Pope Air Force Base Joint Land Use proposal that would limit commercial and residential growth in a one mile buffer around the bases. Studies at other bases are also requiring buffers of land around military facilities to protect training exercises. Since some county and city officials do not agree with these plans that have been endorsed by the Governor's Advisory Commission

on Military Affairs, they hope to reach a compromise with counter-recommendations to the state legislature.

"The work you are about to undertake is vitally important for the future relationship of military bases and local communities in North Carolina," Ronald Aycock, executive di- (See **BUFFERS**, page 7A)

Citizens polled by phone about McPhatter case

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke residents are baffled by a telephone survey currently underway about Bernice McPhatter, Hoke's former county manager, in connection with her upcoming October 6 trial on embezzlement allegations.

No one will say who hired Focus Group Inc., a Chapel Hill-based research firm, to conduct the poll.

"Guilty, not guilty, probably guilty or no opinion?" FGI-identified surveyors inquired of many surprised residents, concerning the criminal charges against McPhatter.

McPhatter is charged in connection with four counts of alleged embezzlement and 64 counts of alleged forgery and uttering, involving \$269,347.90.

Neither Newton nor McPhatter's defense lawyer, Raeford attorney Gregory Thompson, will comment if they are involved in contracting FGI to conduct a study on McPhatter. Newton said last week there might

be a possibility of a request for a change of venue to another county to hold the trial.

FGI representative Lenny Lind confirmed its firm is performing a study on McPhatter.

"We guarantee confidentiality," Lind said. "I cannot tell you the name of our client, or when the survey will end."

Numerous questions were asked of local people by FGI surveyors. Thus far, no one seems to know the reason for the survey, whether it is random, or if it is being targeted toward a specific group of the Hoke population.

Surveyors did not ask for names and announced they were doing a survey — that they were not selling anything. Respondents were asked if they had been notified to serve on a jury in the near future in Hoke County.

The surveyor wanted to know if respondents had read the last four issues of *The News-Journal*, or if they listened to a local radio station. The caller also inquired if respondents were related to, or had personal (See **PHONE POLL**, page 4A)



March of the teddy bears

The Sandy Grove Elementary kindergartners' beginning unit was on self-esteem and that brought a warm, fuzzy connection from home. As a finale, a teddy bear march around the school introduced pupils to their new school environment.

This Week



Fowler honored for service to VFW page 3A

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Hoke's top stories are on the web; send us stories, subscribe

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Burlington sale expected to have minimum impact here

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

It could be a win-win situation for Burlington Industries after the textile giant was recently sold to WL Ross & Co. It could benefit 635 local employees, Hoke County and the City of Raeford.

Local workers are among 1,700 Burlington employees who continue holding manufacturing jobs at four plants in

North Carolina. Financier Wilbur Ross plans a transition for Burlington from a publicly-owned corporation to a private, profitable firm.

"We would expect minimum changes to occur at our plant as a result of WL Ross acquiring Burlington," Calvin House, Raeford plant manager, said on Monday.

"That is what I am being told. "As a whole, we feel better because with this venture we know the doors should

remain open."

Hoke Tax Collector Judy Pittman and Raeford Assistant Manager Betty Smith are optimistic that more than \$300,000 in delinquent taxes owed to the county and the city by Burlington could also be paid before the end of the year. These payments would boost the treasuries of both governments. The unpaid taxes were listed as debts when Burlington officials filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2001.

"Burlington has been and remains a very important part of Hoke County," County Manager Mike Wood said. "From what I have heard, I am very optimistic about their future here."

The Bankruptcy Court approved the acquisition proposal of WL Ross & Co., the highest bidder, for \$614 million on August 1. A plan of reorganization will be reviewed by the court in late August. (See **BURLINGTON**, page 3A)

New information in Kent Jacobs case prompts Hoke search

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

There is evidence that the body of Kent Jacobs, a 42-year-old retarded man who disappeared from his home in Hope Mills 17 months ago, may be in Hoke County.

Based on information received through the Cumberland County Sheriff's Department two months ago, authorities began yesterday searching for Jacobs on private property in Hoke using ground-penetrating radar. Their work lasted until 8 p.m. last night, according to Monica Caison.

founder of CUE (Community United Effort in support of missing children).

Caison said this morning efforts so far had "eliminated space," but no body was found.

Members of Jacobs' family; Hoke County law officers; Henry Davis of Search and Rescue, based in South Carolina; Caison; and geophysicist Terence M. Hamill gathered yesterday for a brief press conference at the Hoke County Sheriff's Office.

The wait has been hard, but Kent's family is prepared for whatever they find

relating to their missing relative, said sister Jackie Jacobs. "We need to find Kent," she added.

For those who may have caused his death, his sister promised, "We will not give up until we find you."

Jacobs, who has the mental capacity of a nine-year-old, left his home March 10, 2002 to visit the neighborhood he had lived in as a child that was two miles away. Wearing a Harley-Davidson sweatshirt, blue jeans and Reebok sneakers, he was last spotted in the Colonial (See **JACOBS SEARCH**, page 3A)



Jackie Jacobs, flanked by Hoke's chief deputy, Troy McDuffie, talks about her missing brother.

Lumbees complain to feds about repairs

Allege home improvement program was mismanaged

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Some Lumbee Indians from Scotland and Hoke counties have complained about substandard home repairs they received from the N.C. Indian Housing agency in Fayetteville and other Lumbee tribal agencies. They want to see corrective action taken, according to the Rev. Elisha Dial, leader of the group.

"Signatures are being gathered on a petition to send to the Inspector General at the U.S. Housing and Urban Development, requesting an audit and investigation into allegations of inferior renovations on homes," Dial said. "For the safety of our senior citizens, these repairs need to be made before people are injured."

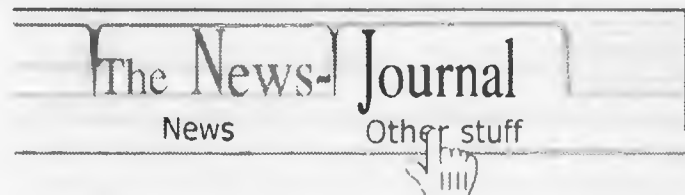
"The Lumbee tribal agencies that administered

these funds are putting our older Lumbees in a hardship position."

Dial is urging HUD to investigate the Lumbee tribal agencies — particularly N.C. Indian Housing. He has gathered more than 50 signatures of Lumbees dissatisfied with home rehabilitations, and continues to collect signatures of disgruntled tribal members.

"The Lumbee leaders in charge of the rehabilitation of homes have been mistreating their own people," Dial said. "Some of the people that manage these tribal agencies need to be removed from office before we get tribal recognition from the federal government."

Barbara Melvin, director of the N.C. Indian Housing, said her agency no longer supervises the home repair program for low-income Lumbees. It (See **HOME REPAIRS**, page 4A)



By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

"Compassion is sometimes the fatal capacity for feeling what it is like to live inside somebody else's skin. It is the knowledge that there can never really be any peace and joy for me until there is peace and joy finally for you too."

— Frederick Buechner

Glenda Lester, "Grandma," as we call her, just returned from a trip to Ecuador. She went to meet

the child she sponsors, and at least partly, I imagine, to see if she was being hoodooed by the organization that accepts her money each month.

It is natural to be skeptical in this day and age. I remember reading years ago, a confession by an employee of a sponsorship organization. She said it was her job to write fake letters from children to their sponsors to keep the money flowing. Since that time, at numerous conferences and conventions I attended, I (See **OTHER STUFF**, page 7A)