

# Duplin Times

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## Area Growers To Receive Baby Chicks

Coastal Production Credit Association will continue to deliver all baby chicks now in the Watson Seafood and Poultry Co. hatcheries to the firm's contract growers but it will place no eggs in the hatcheries, PCA President Roy Houston said last week.

The PCA, a major creditor of the financially ailing company, took over broiler operations April 12 under a voluntary liquidation plan.

The company filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code. Following a six-hour hearing last week in federal bankruptcy court in Raleigh, Judge A. Thomas Small issued a preliminary order Tuesday allowing the company time to perfect a reorganization plan, but leaving the PCA in control.

All of the broilers now on hand will be grown out and the growers' houses empty by late June unless Watson is able to develop a financial plan satisfactory to its creditors and the court, Houston said.

If the company closes and its production is not picked

up by another firm, the estimated loss to the county's economy would exceed \$15 million a year.

Failure of the company would have a disastrous effect on Duplin County's already depressed economy, county Economic Development Director John Gurganus said.

Under the court order, the company must have the PCA's permission to place any eggs in the hatcheries for continuing chick production.

Houston said all the baby chicks will be moved out of the hatcheries in four or five days. Unless Watson can get permission to set more eggs, the growers' broiler houses will gradually empty as the matured flocks are sold.

"We will allow the company to set eggs in the hatchery if it can cover the expenses of doing so," Houston said. "Everybody would benefit if the company can survive, especially the creditors."

He said Coastal PCA has never been involved in a situation having such potentially adverse economic impact in the area. "It's a

tragic situation for everybody," Houston said.

The county's unemployment rate was 13.7 percent in February, according to the state Employment Security Commission.

The company has 125 contract growers, 120 employees and produces 285,000 broilers each week, providing employment for about 220 employees of the Rose Hill Poultry Corp. broiler processing plant.

Under the usual broiler programs, farmers pay for utilities and provide the houses and labor for growing out the chickens. The program operators provide the birds, feed and medication and pick up the matured flocks. The growers are paid so much per bird plus some bonuses for efficiency.

The PCA has been paying between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a day for feed for the broilers since April 12, Houston said.

The company now owes creditors about \$6 million, nearly \$3 million of which is owed the PCA.

Houston said the PCA would do everything possible to help growers who owe

money to the credit association for their broiler houses in case the Watson company is forced to close. About 40 of the company's contract growers are among the PCA's 2,500 members, he added.

Despite the depressed agricultural economy, he said, the PCA has been involved in only two farm foreclosures in the past year. One of those was forced by action of another creditor, he said.

The PCA renewed or extended payment time on loans totaling \$42 million in the past year. Houston said most of the borrowers are keeping up with the new terms despite the condition of the farm economy. He said the PCA made \$34 million in new loans during the past year.

PCAs are member-owned cooperatives that provide operating capital for farms and rural businesses. They obtain funds from the Intermediate Credit Banks, which get money through the sale of bonds on the nation's financial markets.



**EAGLE SCOUTS RECOGNIZED.** - The Duplin commissioners presented four county residents with certificates of achievement in reaching the rank of Eagle Scout. The Scouts and their families met with the Duplin commissioners during their meeting May 2 for the

presentations by Chairman William Costin. Pictured above, left to right, Costin, Mark Sloan of Chinquapin, Craig Sybrant of Beulaville, Lee Whaley of Beulaville, and Herbie Tucker of Teachey. Craig and Lee are 14 years of age and Mark and Herbie are 18.

## Depot Backers Won't Give Up On Restoration

The tale of a historic depot with more than a cat's proverbial nine lives continues as supporters of restoration seek funds to move the structure.

If it is to be saved, the building must be moved from railroad property to a lot owned by the town.

The Magnolia Town Board had planned to demolish the depot last year after finding the cost of moving it was more than the town could afford.

Interested people from Magnolia and other parts of Duplin County came to the depot's rescue and prevailed

upon the board to delay action pending efforts to raise money to move the 120-year-old brick structure.

The town obtained the abandoned depot several years ago from the then-seaboard Coast Line railroad, now Seaboard Systems Railroad Inc. Saying they may need the land in the future, the railroad company officials refused to sell or give the town a long-term lease on the site.

The town pays the railroad \$136 a year in land rent and an insurance firm \$100 a year for \$1 million in liability insurance.

A hearing on the depot was held Thursday night at Town Hall. Nan Fesperman of Faison, who was instrumental in saving the Faison depot, told the board that a building mover had estimated moving the 8,000-ton structure would cost about \$42,000, including construction of a new foundation.

Mayor Melvin Pope said the town's property tax revenue last year was only \$20,000.

The building, which is 30 feet by 84 feet, would require extensive renovation after being moved.

Pope said Seaboard is anxious to have the building moved. He said the town is supposed to put a fence between the building and railroad tracks and board up windows and doors on the side by the track while the structure is on railroad property.

The board took no action Thursday, pending a report at its May 10 meeting from Melba Laney of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development on sources for funding the move.

Only two local residents, besides town officials, attended the hearing.

**\$18,000 In Flatwear Missing**

## Warsaw Silver Thefts

By Emily Killete

Silver thefts from Warsaw homes during the last two weeks of April have amounted to \$18,000 in losses, according to town police department reports and Detective Sergeant Gary Cook.

"Only silver flatware was taken," Cook said. "None of the silver serving pieces were taken even though they were located near the flatware. In my opinion, the silver thefts are not professional jobs. Professional thieves would have taken everything, guns, brass, jewelry and portable appliances."

"There is no evidence in

the cases of breaking and entering the home. And, I feel the theft may have been someone who knew the victims," Cook said. Stolen silver can be sold to pawn shops or on the streets of large cities, Cook pointed out. However, pawn shops are provided information on stolen items.

As a precaution against burglary, Cook suggested strong locks on home windows and doors, an alarm system, a guard dog, placing valuables in bank safety deposit boxes, and the community watch program. In the event of a theft, Cook suggested, all property be listed individually on an inventory and filed with photographs of

the items, and insured. Inscriptions and engraving patterns should be listed for silver and gold items.

"Many times a photograph works like a fingerprint when identifying stolen silver," Cook said. "Even though there are many sets of the same pattern of silver, each will have unique features." According to Cook, the police department is working on some leads in the Warsaw silver thefts, but currently has no suspect.

"We have tried in the past to organize a community watch program, Cook said. "And, the program will work if the people in Warsaw get involved and watch their neighbor's house and report

any unusual activity." One of the two silver thefts happened during mid-day. The second theft happened at a determined time, Cook said.

To organize a community watch, Cook advises neighborhoods to plan a meeting and a member of the Warsaw Police Department will attend with information on the program. Organizational meetings can be held in the Warsaw town hall. Additional information on a community watch program is available at the Warsaw Police Department.

The recent silver thefts are the first in three years, Cook said. The 1980 thieves were caught and the silver returned, he added.

## Truck Drivers Charged With Racing Near Wallace

The drivers of two 10-wheel log trucks were charged last week with racing on a rural paved road east of Wallace after one of the trucks swerved off the road and hit a ditch bank and tree.

Albert Douglas Dixon, 31, and Richard Burton, 31, both of Route 2, Wallace, were

changed with "engaging in spontaneous speed competition," according to Trooper R.N. Johnson of the State Highway Patrol. Burton was also charged with driving under the influence, Johnson said.

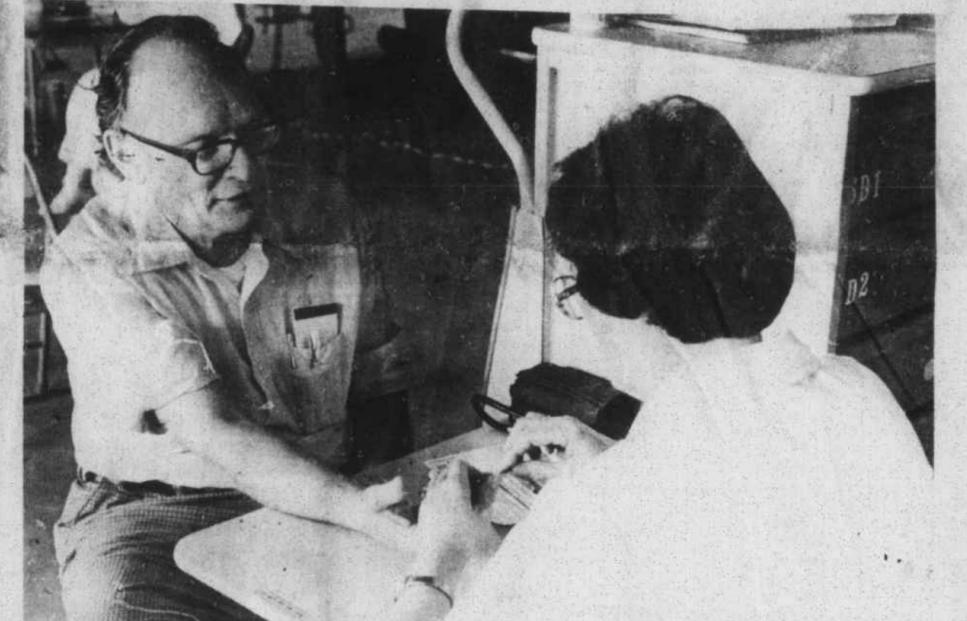
Burton's 5-year-old nephew, Ernie Burton of

Wallace, was a passenger in his truck and was slightly injured in the accident, Johnson said. They were treated and released from the hospital, he said.

Both trucks were "bob-tailing," the trooper said, driving the cabs without the trailers. They were traveling

on rural paved road 1827 in the Deep Bottom section of Duplin County, 11 miles east of Wallace.

The accident occurred about 6:40 p.m. when Dixon was passing Burton, Johnson said. Burton lost control of his truck and went off the road on the left side and hit a ditch bank and tree, he said.



**DONATE BLOOD** - The Faison Fire and Rescue Departments sponsored the Red Cross Bloodmobile in their town May 2. Annie Brown, a member of the rescue squad, said the drive had reached more than half of its

goal of 100 pints of blood by midday. Pictured above, Alvin Hackman, a Cates employee, is being tested before giving blood. By Mary Lee of Faison.

## Late Produce Planting Could Leave Farmers With Low Market Prices

By Emily Killete

Area farmers have just begun to plant produce crops, a job usually completed in early April. Northern farmers are beginning to plant for their produce season and the outcome could leave Southern growers the low market prices, Duplin Agricultural Extension Service agent Phil Denlinger said.

Duplin's main produce crops are cucumbers, squash and pepper. Once a produce crop is planted, a yield can be expected within six to eight weeks, Denlinger pointed out. Horticultural crops in Duplin do not represent the highest income agricultural commodity, but almost \$14,000,000 came into the county from horticulture in 1982.

"This year will be a late season for produce farmers," Denlinger said. "The southern farmer's advantage has been the early market, but due to rain and late frosts, produce crops have not been planted on time. In this area, farmers usually expect the last hard frost during the first of April and Northern farmers the first of May. There is the chance of a late frost in the North, which would help keep the demand high for southern produce."

"Everyone is planting at the same time this year and

northern markets will buy the local produce to avoid the cost of shipping southern crops," Denlinger said.

Along with produce, Duplin is expected to have lost as much as 50 percent of the local strawberries. Denlinger pointed out strawberries in full bloom will suffer damage in temperatures 30

degrees and below. Duplin only produces 25-30 acres of strawberries each year, much of which is grown in one- or two-acre patches.

Blueberries suffered from the late frosts, but only a 20 percent loss is estimated by Denlinger. Duplin has 500 acres of blueberries. According to Denlinger, blueberries

will bear cold to 28 degrees before suffering losses. Duplin's peach crop, approximately 10 acres, suffered the greatest damage from the late April frost. While the state peach crop has been estimated a 98 percent loss, Denlinger feels Duplin's peaches came through with less damage.



**DEMOCRATS EXPRESS APPRECIATION** - Melvin G. Williams served two consecutive terms as chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee, 1979-83. During the 1983 Democratic Duplin County Convention held April 29 in the Kenansville courthouse, Williams was presented two plaques ex-

pressing appreciation for his leadership. Williams is pictured above, right, during the presentation of a plaque from the Democratic Executive Committee by Charles Ingram, chairman. A plaque of appreciation was also presented to Williams from the Duplin County Convention.