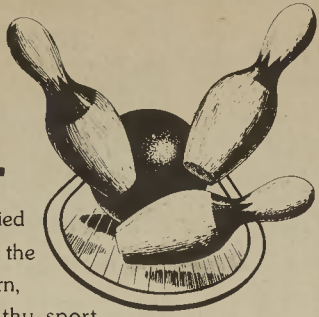


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Cougars Continue Winning Streak

The Cougars of Mountain Heritage broke open a close first half with a strong third and fourth quarter that saw them lead by as many as twenty points to defeat the Hendersonville Bearcats by a score of 64-56. The Cougars used an exciting fastbreak, directed by Bobby Joe Young and started on the boards by David Hoilman, Chris Tipton

and Tommy Biddix accompanied by an aggressive man-to-man defense to build their fourth quarter lead.

Anthony Randolph led the Cougar scoring with 16 while David Hoilman added 14 and Chris Tipton 10 for the Cougars. David Hoilman had 12 rebounds and Chris Tipton had 8 to lead the Cougar board

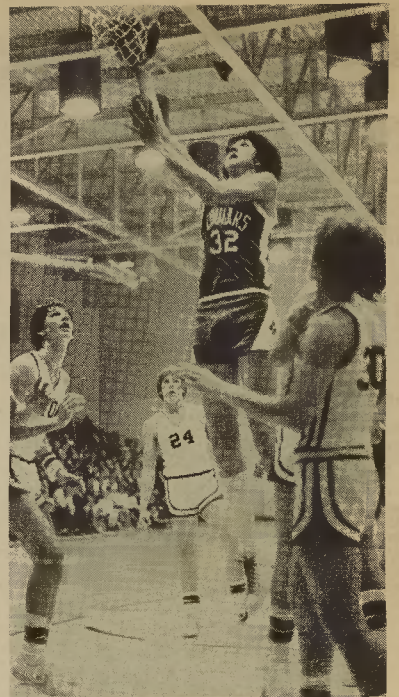
play. Gary Holcombe led the Cougars in assists with 6 and added 5 rebounds of his own in a good effort.

The Cougars now stand at 4-4 in the conference and 8-9 overall.

COUGARS 50-MITCHELL 47

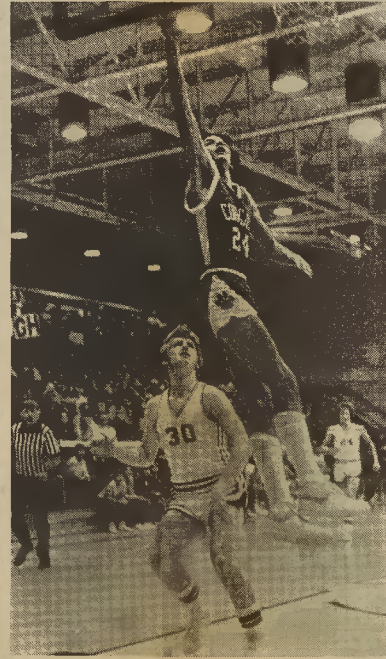
The Cougars of Mountain Heritage made it 4 in a row winning their 5th game in 6 outings in the second half of the season with a big win over rival Mitchell by a score of 50-47. Some hot shooting by Tommy Biddix and a sticky defense that didn't allow but 6 points in the fourth quarter keyed the Cougar victory. Biddix led all scorers with 19 and was helped by David Hoilman with 11 and Chris Tipton with 9. Hoilman and Tipton led the Cougar board play with 10 and 9 rebounds respectively. Bobby Joe Young dished out 5 assists as Randy Proffitt, Gary Holcombe and David McFee continued their fine play in supporting roles.

"The boys are playing loose and with a lot of confidence," commented Coach Walker. He added, "The fan support has been tremendous the last couple of games—it really helps the boys to know the crowd is behind them."



CHRIS TIPTON added 2 of his nine points in the Cougars' 50-47 win over the Mountaineers last Friday at Mitchell High School gym.

Photos by Jeff Yuziuk



ANTHONY RANDOLPH goes in for a layup to score for Heritage in the Cougars' 4th win in a row—the fifth win in the last six games played.



ask about Wildlife

A cooperative effort of the North Carolina Wildlife

Question: I am a deer hunter who has hunted here in North Carolina most of my life. I'm curious to know how this past season's deer harvest here in western North

Carolina compares to the past few years. Can you tell me?

Answer: Looking at western North Carolina as a whole, the reported deer kill is up again this year. Preliminary figures show hunters reported taking 4,015 deer this past season in Wildlife Districts 7, 8 and 9—the foothills and mountain counties. That compares to a reported harvest of 3,486 deer last year, a 13 percent increase. The reported deer kill, which is lower than the actual kill because not all deer taken are reported, has been averaging around a 10 percent increase per year since the mid 1970's when the tagging and reporting of deer taken by hunters was first reported. That upward trend in the harvest reflects an expansion of the deer herd that has occurred in most counties in the region.

Dividend Declared

At their regular quarterly meeting in Wilkesboro, Northwestern Financial Corporation's directors declared a quarterly cash dividend of \$.21 per share on North-western common stock.

This was an increase of 11 percent over the prior quarter's \$.19 per share dividend and represented the corporation's sixth dividend increase in the past four years. The dividend is payable April 1, 1982 to shareholders of record as of March 15.

Husky Muskie Helps Poacher Meet His Match

BURNSVILLE — It had been my assumption that the ol' boy was long dead. Seems I'd heard that a couple years back from a mutual acquaintance.

Imagine my surprise, then, when during a phone conversation a few days ago with my dad, M.B. "Pappy" Higgins of Burnsville, he said, "Oh, have I got a fishin' tale for you! Your ol' pal got his tackle tore slap all to pieces the other day out on the lower Cane River. He hooked this huge . . . Wait a minute . . . Before I go on, why don't you come up and get the tale first hand from him?"

Pap knew I couldn't resist. Almost two decades ago, I first wrote of this Yancey County character — and he developed quite a following in *The Observer*. In print, he was called simply "the Poacher," and never identified further. To name him undoubtedly would have brought indictments trespassing. Revealing his deeds infuriated those whose property he violated.

Thing was, the Poacher and a lot of others didn't consider what he did a violation of the law per se, because there was something, well, Robin Hoodish about it.

The places he trespassed were woods and streams that had been leased by wealthy outsiders in mountainous Yancey County, in western North Carolina. The property was posted, and the county's best deer hunting and trout fishing denied to the natives.



Outdoors Tom Higgins

His response was illegal. But the no-trespassing notices simply served as invitations to the Poacher.

He hunted and fished at his leisure — only in open season, mind you, never exceeding the bag and creel limits — and all the while, he matched wits and woodsman's with the guards hired to patrol posted grounds.

Several times, when guards seemed to be closing in, he'd cover himself with leaves and "lay there stiff as a corpse until they'd give up and go off a-cussing."

One summer, the exasperated guards killed rattlesnakes and copperheads and hung them on bushes along trails in an effort to scare the Poacher. He retaliated by hanging larger snakes alongside.

That's why I should have known word of his death at about 65 was greatly exaggerated. He's too tough to die at that age.

"Yeah," said Pap, when I made that observation. "But he wasn't too tough for that big fish, or whatever it was."

We found the Poacher splitting wood behind his neat, modest frame home in a picturesque valley. Mount Mitchell towered in the distance, its peak snow-capped and sparkling.

(Reprinted from the Charlotte Observer, Sunday, January 31 edition)

The Poacher's eyes twinkled in recognition of what he called his "former press agent." He needed Pap — a retired N.C. Wildlife Commission game warden — about the times he'd helped the property patrols try to catch him.

Pap blushed, stammered something about luck and quickly changed the subject to the big fish.

"Tommy, I've seen some wild things in all the time I've spent outdoors — charging boars, for example — but this thing beat all," the man said. "I've got a near 7-pound brown trout in there on a board (mounted) and it couldn't hold a light on the end of a line to the fit this thing pitched."

"How it happened, I'd got tired of sitting around this house here listenin' to the ol' lady's soap operas. I decided I'd go out to the lower part of the Cane — down below Bee Log, around Ramseytown — and try to catch a fresh mess of honeyheads for supper. They might not look like much, but they eat good."

"Well, about the third 'un I hooked and started in with, something grabbed it. I mean just brought my retrieve to a flat stop. My rig sort of shuddered a little bit, then come a jerk that almost wrenched my arms out of the sockets."

"The reel started whining and line peeling off. Then, out there in a big pool about halfway across the river, maybe 25 yards from me, this thing jumped that looked like a log. Honest to God, it was long as my leg, and I ain't never exaggerated about a fish or a deer braggin' or nothin'."

The Poacher spat a stream of Levi Garrett and continued:

"You know, then the thing started back toward me. Looked like a damn torpedo! I was winding, but it was an automatic reaction, I promise, 'cause I didn't know for sure whether I wanted that thing on the bank with me or not!"

"About this time, it made a swerve downstream, took up the slack like lightning and broke my rod about a fourth way down from the tip. In just a second the line broke, too."

"I lost big fish before, so I ain't got no regrets. Except I'd like to know what that thing was. You got any ideas?"

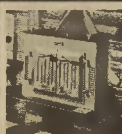
Sure do.

Mr. Poacher, meet Mr. Muskie. In recent years, the N.C. Wildlife Commission has been restoring muskellunge in several mountain rivers where they were found before pollution forced them out at the turn of the century. Included is the Nolichucky, of which the Cane is a tributary. Muskies up to 12 pounds have been pulled from the lower Cane River.

"Hooking a muskie will provide you with fishing stories that will keep friends on the edge of their chairs for months," the commission contended in a recent release. For sure.

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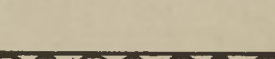
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