

# County Coroner Faces Cemetery Violations



THOMAS GILBERT  
County Coroner Charged

**BY TERRY POPE**  
Brunswick County Coroner Thomas Gilbert IV and his wife, Linda H. Gilbert, have been charged with various violations by the N.C. Cemetery Commission involving the operation of their business, the Cape Fear Memorial Gardens in Southport.

William M. Gladden III, administrator of the N.C. Cemetery Commission, filed the charges in Brunswick County District Court last Thursday. According to the warrants filed, the Gilberts are charged with failing to make monthly financial reports to the commission, failing to

pay fees to the commission for grave spaces and crypts sold to individuals and failing to make deposits from the sale of grave spaces or crypts into perpetual care funds or required trust accounts.

Gilbert, as co-owner and general manager of the Cape Fear Cemetery Corporation, and Linda Gilbert, president of the corporation, have each been charged with six violations of the N.C. Cemetery Act.

All charges facing the couple are misdemeanors, punishable by fines or imprisonment as determined by the court. A court date has been set for April 17 in Brunswick County

District Court.

Both were placed under arrest last Thursday by Sheriff John Carr Davis and released without bond. The charges are the result of an investigation by the commission of violations that occurred "over a period of months," Gladden said. "I don't even have the dollar amounts, but there were quite a few people in the Southport area that bought plots that were affected."

Gilbert was licensed by the commission to operate the cemetery on N.C. 211 south of Southport in December 1981. Under the N.C. General Statutes, cemeteries are re-

quired to file their annual financial reports within 60 days of the end of the corporation's calendar or fiscal year, or as needed as determined by the commission.

Cemeteries are also required to pay a fee for every vault, crypt or grave space sold into a special fund that keeps the commission operating, since no general funds are appropriated by the state to support that office.

"When they don't do that, not only do they owe us for the fees, but for a penalty as well," Gladden said. The penalty for failing to pay commission fees is \$1 per day for each violation.

The Gilberts were also charged with failing to make deposits for grave spaces and crypts into perpetual care or merchandise trust accounts.

When individuals invest in spaces or vaults before they are actually needed, Gladden said, the money paid to the cemetery should be invested into a perpetual care fund or trust account or used immediately to go ahead and develop the cemetery.

"When a person buys a grave space and gets a deed for it, so much money goes into the perpetual care fund," he added. "In this case, the

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# BRUNSWICK BEACON

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GUNPOWDER DRY conditions pushed fire danger levels to their highest this week across Brunswick County and all of North Carolina. A ban continues on all open burning.

## Woods Blaze Held To 45 Acres

Wildfire scorched 45 acres of young pines west of Shallotte Tuesday afternoon before forestry teams brought the blaze of unknown origin under control about 4:45 p.m.

Several fire plows, as well as volunteers from Shallotte, Waccamaw and Supply Fire Departments were released at 5 p.m.

An adverse wind profile had pushed fire conditions to "blow up" proportions, according to Assistant Brunswick County Ranger Philip Inman of Ash. "It's called that because under these conditions the fire tends to blow up."

High winds were gusting from the west-southwest initially but shifted to the northwest in late afternoon as the fire burned along a course almost paralleling N.C. 130.

If the fire had crossed the highway, Inman said, its potential danger would have increased greatly, posing a threat to broad stretches of pine plantation as well as homes and other structures.

A report from Riegel to County Ranger Miller Calson Tuesday indicated fire danger was at its highest

level to date, Inman said.

Seven fireplows, owned by the N.C. Division of Forest Resources and three local paper companies, played the major role in containment, aided by a contract fire bomber that dumped chemical fire retardant on the blaze and all over a Supply VFD truck in the Gollie Holmes Road area.

Officers of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department and the N.C. Highway Patrol aided in traffic control as occasionally heavy smoke drifted across N.C. 130.

At 5 p.m. several plows continued to work the perimeter of the blaze. The International Paper Co. plantation of three- and four-year-old pines was formerly a bay area. It has the peat-type organic soil that fuels groundfire, Inman noted.

The fire apparently began about 3 p.m. along N.C. 130 across from its intersection with Big Neck Road. It was the third woods fire in the past month between Big Neck Road, about midway between Shallotte and Ash, and the Shallotte Fire Tower on N.C. 130.

A Waccamaw volunteer firefighter was apparently the first to report Tuesday's fire.

When John B. McCumbee passed the Big Neck Road intersection on his way home from Shallotte, the fire to his left was "about the size of that pickup truck," he said, pointing to a blue truck parked nearby.

He reached Grissetown resident Harry Somerset on citizen's band radio and Somerset reported the fire to the Shallotte Fire Tower. Tower operator Ruby Hawes radioed Inman, telling him "somebody's thrown a cigarette out."

Inman said he's not certain that is actually what happened, that it may have been incendiary, or a deliberately set fire.

McCumbee said he suspects a smoker started the fire.

"People shouldn't be throwing out cigarettes when it's so dry like this," he added.

For the past week, fire danger has been extreme, at Level 7, the highest point on the scale used by the N.C. Division of Forest Resources. Because the danger level was up, In-

man said, the division had a lot of equipment readily available to fight the fire.

### Ban Still On

A statewide burning ban imposed for the second time this year on April 1 had not been lifted as of Tuesday. Under the ban open burning is allowed only within 100 yards of an occupied dwelling and then only if specific precautions are taken.

Statewide, forest fires have taken their largest toll in a single season since the early 1960s, with fires in both the mountains claiming more than 8,000 acres and a single fire near Creswell burning about 70,000 acres as of Sunday evening.

Along the stretch of N.C. 130 between Big Neck Road and the Shallotte Fire Tower, a mid-March blaze scorched about 75 acres, an April 1 fire blackened another 546 acres and then Tuesday's fire added another 46 acres to the loss.

Woods arson is suspected in at least the April 1 fire and is a possible cause of all three fires, forestry resources officials have indicated.

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## Sunset Beach Mayor Resigns By Telegram

**BY TERRY POPE**  
Sunset Beach Mayor Frances Kanoy has sent a telegram to town officials, saying she has resigned her position as mayor effective immediately with a "letter to follow."

However, by late Tuesday evening, town officials were still waiting for an official letter of resignation to arrive addressed from Ms. Kanoy, who is in Florida caring for her sick husband.

"The intentions here are plain enough," said Town Manager Wallace Martin Tuesday evening. "I'm going to recommend that the council go ahead and accept the resignation at the next meeting."

The town council met last Monday night, but having received no official notification of Ms. Kanoy's resignation, the board took no action on the matter. Last Tuesday, a telegram arrived addressed to Martin and the council members.

"Don't understand you not receiving my letter of resignation for the February meeting," it began.

According to one newspaper account of the recent incident, Ms. Kanoy was quoted as saying she had mailed a letter of resignation prior to the February meeting of the board. However, Mayor Pro-Tem Ed Gore and Martin both stated at the meeting last Monday that no letter

has arrived at the town hall.

Martin stated he did talk to Ms. Kanoy by telephone, who said she would send a telegram to the town immediately, notifying them of her intentions to resign. Kanoy, who has served as mayor of Sunset Beach since 1981, has not attended council meetings for many months while caring for her husband in Florida.

"To confirm my telephone conversation this date with Wallace," the telegram stated, "due to circumstances beyond my control, I must resign as mayor of Sunset Beach effectively immediately. I do so with deepest regret. Letter to follow. Frances W. Kanoy."

Town council members now must accept the resignation and declare a vacancy in the office before deciding when or if the seat should be filled prior to the November election.

By not filling the office prior to the election, Gore would serve out the remainder of the term.

The matter is expected to come before the board at its May 6 meeting.

## Democrats To Convene Saturday

Brunswick County Democrats meet 1 p.m. Saturday in the public assembly building at the Brunswick County Government Center to elect party leaders for the next two years.

Glen Peterson, outgoing chairman, said delegates to the convention will elect a chairman, three vice-chairmen, a secretary and treasurer to serve on the county executive committee. A nominating committee composed of W.T. Bowen, Robert Robinson, Jim Poole, Barbara Young and Bobby Brown will present a slate of officers for consideration.

When announcing his decision last month not to seek re-election, Peterson said the name of Shallotte attorney Rex Gore had been mentioned as a possible candidate for the chairmanship.

Delegates also will elect two members to serve with the chairman on the state executive committee.

Peterson said he has received several resolutions from the precincts for consideration. The deadline for submitting resolutions is past, but Peterson said he would consider any additional resolutions that were inadvertently not turned in on time.

"We'll probably allow them all on the agenda," he said.

### A TRUST VIOLATED

## Shallotte Board Fires Police Chief

**BY SUSAN USHER**  
Shallotte began looking for a new police chief last week after aldermen fired John Wayne Campbell by a unanimous vote Wednesday night.

At least one board member privately described the situation leading to Campbell's dismissal as "a trust violated."

Campbell had apparently secretly taped a March 14 meeting between he and Mayor Beamon Hewett.

Aldermen talked about what Mayor Hewett called "sort of a delicate matter" behind closed doors for 1½ hours before returning to open session.

After a statement by the mayor, there was a long pause before Mayor Pro Tem Paul Wayne Reeves made the motion.

Calling it a "tough thing to have to do," Reeves said, "I have to make a motion we terminate the chief's position—or the chief in that position."

Board members, most looking as though they were under severe emotional distress, supported the motion unanimously. Later, they expressed regret for having to dismiss Campbell. He is the second police chief dismissed by the board within a two-year period. Mayor Hewett will act as police chief until a successor to Campbell is hired.

Campbell, who had worked previously with the Lee County Sheriff's Department, assumed the chief's position on August 1, 1983. His

predecessor, Hoyal "Red" Varnam Jr., was fired the previous March after being indicted on federal drug conspiracy charges. He later pleaded guilty to conspiring to possess with intent to distribute 1,100 to 1,400 pounds of marijuana. He was sentenced to three years in prison and fined \$10,000.

Hewett had suspended Campbell with pay as of March 25, pending a hearing before the board at its meeting.

At Wednesday's meeting—attended by the media, Campbell's family and officers and former officers of the police department, Hewett gave his account of what had happened. Campbell did not comment during the open portion of the meeting, and left quickly afterwards, shrugging his hands as he said, "No comment."

Hewett earlier had said he suspended Campbell because of an incident that occurred on the 14th, but that he did not become aware of until a week later. That was when he was given the tape made of that meeting with the chief. Hewett would not reveal the identity of the person who brought him the tape.

"In that particular meeting I asked the chief if he had ever bugged any of the police cars. He said he never had."

"At that very meeting, unknown to me, he was taping that meeting." They had also talked about other internal problems in the police

(See TAPE, Page 2-A)

## Gas Chamber Survivor Gets Second Chance

If the staff of the Brunswick County Animal Control shelter has anything to do with it, one puppy in their care will die of old age.

The 2½- to 3-month-old mixed breed female survived the gas chamber Friday morning.

That's a first since the pound began using direct carbon monoxide gassing about four years ago, said Zelma Babson, animal control supervisor. "It kind of undoes you for a while, especially after four years."

The only thing we can figure out is that there must have been an air pocket," she added.

The pup, whose big feet and light coloring suggest golden retriever blood, was under a larger dog that died.

Gassing takes 45 minutes to an hour from start to finish at the shelter, which is located on the first dirt road (a paper company road) to the right on N.C. 211 traveling from Supply to Southport.

Once the gas is turned off, animals are left inside 10 to 15 minutes before an air valve is opened to allow some gases to escape. After another 10 to 15 minute wait, the doors at either end are opened. Then, after another 10 to 15 minute airing, the animals are pulled out for disposal at the county landfill.

"They heard her whimpering. When they removed the big dog, she poked her head up and walked out," Ms. Babson explained.

The staff may never know how the pup survived the gas chamber, but they do know it gave her a new lease on life.

She's up for adoption—again.



THIS GOLDEN-HAIRED PUPPY, held by Animal Control Supervisor Zelma Babson, survived the gas chamber Friday, winning a second chance for adoption.