

# Local Police Departments Battle High Turnover Rate

BY DOUG RUTTER

Sunset Beach Police Department is one officer short. Holden Beach will soon be losing one of its veteran patrolmen. It's business as usual with Brunswick County's small-town police forces.

This scene is common. A young officer comes to town straight out of certification school, learns the profession from a veteran chief and moves on to a bigger department offering more money and other benefits.

Shallotte Police Chief Rodney Gause said most officers will leave small-town police forces because of working conditions or personal conflicts within the department.

He said the combination of long shifts, low salaries, inadequate equipment and a lack of room for advancement can lead officers to seek work in other departments.

Sunset Beach Police Chief William Hill agrees. He said officers will usually leave smaller departments seeking better working conditions, namely fewer hours and better pay.

When an officer leaves a department, there is a time the force has to operate shorthanded while a replacement is sought. This temporary shortage, according to Hill, adds to the workload of the remaining officers and is another factor which leads them to seek employment with larger departments.

"The biggest thing I have encountered in my 28 years of law enforcement is not enough manpower," he added.

Hill, who worked six years as chief of police at Holden Beach before taking control of the Sunset Beach department, said he witnessed the same trend in both communities. He attributes none of the turnover to tourist-related problems.

Raymond Simpson, police chief at Holden Beach for the past six years, said the bottom line is salary. "More money. That's the name of the game," he said. "Everyone's looking for greener pastures."

And officers usually don't have to travel too far for those greener pastures. The Brunswick County Sheriff's Department starts all of its officers with a salary of \$15,462, said Sheriff John C. Davis.

Wilmington Police Department officers start out with a salary of \$16,494, which the chief can increase at his discretion, according to spokesperson Donna Safra.

The Town of Shallotte, meanwhile, offers its officers



SHALLOTTE POLICE CHIEF RODNEY GAUSE looks over the stockpile of uniforms the town has accumulated over the years as officers of all shapes and

sizes pass through on their way to positions with bigger departments. Due to the high turnover rate with patrol officers, most local towns have similar storage areas.

a starting salary of \$14,456, while Holden Beach starts its patrolmen out at \$13,650.

In addition to money, larger departments can also provide more opportunity for advancement and more training. In smaller departments, police chiefs cannot afford to send one of their officers away for a week or two to training school.

"I'm never surprised when I get a resignation," added Simpson. "I've gotten enough of them over the years that the shock has worn off."

In his seven years with the Shallotte Police Department, Gause said he has seen more than 20 officers come and go. Most, he added, leave for the sheriff's department or larger cities such as Wilmington.

"Most of mine have left for advancement," added Hill, who estimated that he loses one officer each year. He said three of his former patrolmen have gone to work for the N.C. Highway Patrol.

Like most other local police chiefs, Simpson said there is little that can be done to reverse the turnover

"I'm never surprised when I get a resignation."

—Raymond Simpson  
Holden Beach Police Chief



trend. Higher salaries are the key, he said, because working conditions at the local beach communities are not extreme.

"The work here is not bad at all," he said. "It's quiet, very quiet, except for a few months out of the year."

While the salaries are out of his control, he said he does examine applications to see how long officers stay in one place. He said he will not hire someone who jumps from one department to the next in a matter of months.

Although many small-town departments seem to serve as training grounds for larger law enforcement agencies, Chief Gause believes there is a way to buck the trend.

He said providing officers with opportunities to advance within the department is vital to keeping them in the department. This includes advanced training courses and additional responsibilities.

"If they feel they're achieving their goals and moving up, they're not gonna leave," he said. "As long as you can keep them motivated, they're gonna stick around."

If patrol officers can work and look forward to promotions to sergeant, lieutenant and detective, they will do a better job and stay with the same department. Gause said he has also started an Officer of the Year award which will be given at the end of each calendar year as another means of motivating the officers.

Due to the growth of Shallotte, Gause said he may have a slight advantage over other local chiefs who are trying to retain officers.

"We're a small department now but we're going to grow as the town gets bigger. In the years to come, that will mean there will be more room to move up," he said.

## 76 Marijuana Plants Found Near Shallotte

The Brunswick County Narcotics Squad this month has seized an estimated \$121,600 worth of marijuana plants growing in two areas near Shallotte.

No arrests were reported as of Monday in either case, according to Sheriff's Det. Mike Speck. Both cases remain under investigation.

The detective noted that 40 plants

were found Friday in a wooded area on Gray Bridge Road. Some 36 plants were located earlier this month in the Boone's Neck area, he said.

The marijuana plants found near Gray Bridge Road were about 3½-feet tall and were scattered throughout a wooded area midway between N.C. 130 and Shell Point Road, Speck said.

The detective said the property is leased by a local hunting club. However, lawmen do not suspect that the hunters planted the illegal crop.

"We have suspects, and we're following it up," he said, adding that the sheriff's department found the plants after receiving information from an unidentified citizen.

According to Sheriff John C. Davis, the plants found near Boone's Neck also were in a wooded area. The plants ranged in height from 18 inches to three feet. Additional information on the seizure was unavailable Monday.

Speck said local authorities this year have seized approximately 1,500 marijuana plants in Brunswick County. The marijuana would have a

street value at maturity of \$2.4 million, based on the SBI's estimated value of \$1,600 per plant.

### Shallotte Police Arrest Conway Man

Shallotte Police arrested a Conway, S.C., man early Sunday morning for driving under the influence of alcohol.

Donald Guy Messinger, 24, was arrested and charged with one count each of driving while impaired and driving left of the center line. Roy Kohler was the arresting officer.

Messinger was transported to the Brunswick County Jail where his bond was set at \$350.

### Southport PD Charges Teen

A Southport teen-ager was arrested last week in connection with a vehicle break-in and a "Peeping Tom" incident in Southport.

Charles Harvey Lee, 18, of West 9th Street, was charged by Southport Police with breaking and entering a motor vehicle, larceny and secretly peeping into a room occupied by a female person, according to arrest warrants on file at the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office.

The documents stated that Lee was taken into custody after he allegedly looked in the window at the Shirley Clunk residence on Stuart Avenue, Southport, last Wednesday around 2 a.m. Two women were home at the time of the incident.

The vehicle break-in and larceny occurred July 31 in Southport. According to the warrants, stereo equip-

ment worth \$220 was removed from a 1986 Ford pickup truck owned by Raymond Watkins.

Lee was released from custody on a \$1,500 unsecured bond, with a court appearance scheduled for Sept. 27.

### Correction

An article in the Aug. 11 issue of The Brunswick Beacon incorrectly identified a witness to last Monday's fire in Grissetown. The father of the mobile home's owner is James Frink.

**CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**  
**MAC**  
SHALLOTTE, N.C.

**PAVING CONTRACTORS**  
754-6201

we specialize in...

**Parking Lots and Streets**

- Grading •Storm drainage
- Curb and gutter
- Paving

Asphalt plant — 2 miles north of Shallotte Hwy. 17

## YOU'RE ALWAYS A WINNER With A Quality Ford Used Car or Truck!

3-1988 Taurus GL A/C, PW, Tilt, Cruise, Under 9,000 Miles. #8P-76-78. <b>\$11,900</b>	1988 Mustang LX A/C, plocks, cruise, tilt, cassette, sharp 11,000 miles. #8P-95 <b>\$8995</b>	1988 Mercury Tracer New model from Mercury A/C, automatic, p/s, AM/ FM, 13,000 miles. #8P- 101. <b>\$7995</b>	1987 Mercury Lynx A/C, tilt, cruise, cassette, diesel. 50 mpg. #8T-133A <b>\$4795</b>	1987 Tempo 4-dr., tilt, AC, AM/FM, cruise. #8P-23. <b>\$7395</b>	Friendly, Knowledgeable Salespeople On Our Staff.
1986 Ford Mustang LX A/C, AM/FM, and more. #8P-105. <b>\$6295</b>	1986 Ford Escort S/W A/C, P/S, driven by salesperson. #8P-19. <b>\$4395</b>	1986 Escort Ret., A/C, AM/FM, 26,000 miles. #8P-113. <b>\$3995</b>	1985 Mercury Grand Marquis 2 door, Full power, a beauty. #8P-47. <b>\$8595</b>	1985 Escort A/C, good gas mileage. #8P-72. <b>\$2795</b>	1985 Ford T-Bird V-8, full power, A/C. #8P-79. <b>\$6995</b>
1987 Ford Escort GT 8,600 miles. #8P-123 <b>\$8450</b>	1985 Lincoln Continental Beautiful. #8P-93. <b>\$10,900</b>	1984 Mercury Lynx New Tires, 25,000 miles. #8P-99. <b>\$2950</b>	1984 Mercury Cougar Loaded. #8P-106. <b>\$5995</b>	1987 Chevrolet Conversion Van TV, and all the extras. 15,000 miles. #8P-1890. <b>\$16,200</b>	We Buy Right So We Can Sell Right!
1984 Escort S/W A/C, AM/FM, diesel, clean, 50 mpg. #8P-111. <b>\$2595</b>	1984 Toyota Tercel 3-dr., A/C. #8P-110. <b>\$3995</b>	Quality Ford is doing business with quality used cars and trucks.	1984 Mazda RX7 Automatic, A/C, sunroof. #8P-107. <b>\$7150</b>	1984 Mercury Cougar Loaded. #8P-96 <b>\$6795</b>	1984 Ford Escort 4-Dr., automatic, A/C, low mileage. #8P-108. <b>\$3995</b>
1984 Escort S/W Automatic, A/C, low mileage. #8P-104. <b>\$3795</b>	1984 Ford T-Bird V-8, Automatic. #8P-116. <b>\$4995</b>	1986 Chevy Camaro Iroc Z Loaded. 38,000 miles. #8P-116. <b>\$10,400</b>	Just Received - 15 More Used Cars And Trucks, NOT LISTED.	1986 Yugo Clean, 37,000 miles <b>\$2595</b>	1987 Ford Ranger White, Air conditioner One Owner. <b>\$5895</b>
1987 Mazda B-2000 Pickup Sharp. #8P-32. <b>\$5925</b>	Financing Specialists On Duty.	1988 Ranger Pickup 8,000 miles. #8P-73 <b>\$6950</b>	1984 Ranger Pickup 34,000 miles, new paint. #8P-109. <b>\$5295</b>	1987 Ford Ranger LXT A Real Buy. #8P-121 <b>\$7995</b>	Bank Financing With UCB And Wachovia.

## Grand Opening

FREE large Nacho Grande appetizers after 5 PM Aug. 17-23, one order per table.

We serve California style Mexican food. Lunch specials start at \$3.95. Children under 5 eat free. Special prices for Senior Citizens.

Private dining room for groups up to 20. Reservations accepted.

Call 579-4951 for take-outs. Open 7 days noon til 11 PM.

Ocean Isle Beach  
One block south of Causeway  
Hale Beach Road

MEXI

Our apologies to everyone who came by before our opening last Friday. Give us a try now!

We all have one thing in common — we all like authentic Mexican food!

Casa Grande

MEXICAN RESTAURANT

SOUTH WHITEVILLE  
642-7121  
1-800-422-7121

