

Shalotte Wine Sales Still Up In The Air

The status of unfortified wine sales in Shalotte remains in limbo as town and county representatives examine options following an illegal referendum held two weeks ago.

At their regular meeting last week, Shalotte Aldermen agreed to ask the town attorney, Mark Lewis, to investigate the town's options.

Meanwhile, the Brunswick County Board of Elections will meet sometime after this week to discuss the Nov. 8 referendum on the sale of table wines, or unfortified wines, for off-premises consumption. The measure passed by a margin of 293 to 145.

Jim Wallace, chief of the elections branch for the state attorney general's office, said the referendum was invalid in that it violated a state statute that prohibits alcoholic beverage elections on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November of an even-numbered year. He noted that there was no local legislation enacted by the General Assembly to allow the local election to take place.

In defense of local officials who called for and held the illegal referendum, however, he said the prohibition, enacted in 1985, is included in provisions of state law regarding elections and is relatively easy to miss.

"Whoever didn't catch it just didn't catch it," he said. "It just got by everybody."

Wallace said there is no restriction on when the town can call for another referendum. If one is desired, the county board of elections must conduct it between 60 and 120 days after it is requested.

Deaths Join Five Other Unsolved Murders

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forward," he said.

Meetze Murders

Davis recently released additional information concerning the deaths of Marion E. "Cowboy" Meetze, 48, his wife, Ginger R. Meetze, 32, and her daughter from a previous marriage, Michelle D. Arnold, 10. Found Oct. 14 at their home on N.C. 87, the three had been shot to death.

According to autopsy reports released earlier this month, the woman and child both suffered multiple gunshot wounds. Mrs. Meetze was shot nine times in the back, back of the head and forehead. The child suffered six gunshot wounds to the chest, hand, abdomen and leg. The man was shot once in the back.

Both adults were found lying on a large S-shaped lounge chair in the den of the brick, ranch-style house. The girl was found in bed in a front bedroom. The interior of the home was damaged in a fire that apparently was set to destroy evidence but burned itself out. The bodies were not burned.

Davis said investigators speculate that Mrs. Meetze was the first of the three to be killed and that the child was shot last. Due to the locations of her wounds and bullet holes in her bedclothes, the girl might have been hiding under her covers when she was killed, he added.

The sheriff said lawmen have been unable to determine a possible motive and identify any suspects despite extensive interviews here and in western South Carolina, where the family lived until moving to Brunswick County in March.

"We're not leaning toward anything other than we think it was someone they knew," Davis said, when asked if investigators think the murders could have been random killings. "There was no sign of forced entry into the house."

Lawmen believe at least two perpetrators—possibly from outside Brunswick County—were responsible for the murders. He added that the incident apparently happened between 11:30 p.m. on Oct. 12 and 7:15 a.m. the following day. The bodies were found Oct. 14 by one of Meetze's co-workers from the B.F. Goodrich Plant in Wilmington.

Although several weapons were missing from the home, robbery has been ruled out as a prime motive, Davis said. Mrs. Meetze's pocketbook, which contained \$190 and was lying in full view on a table, was un-

touched.

"The main problem is no one saw anything in the neighborhood," Davis noted. While having no witnesses is a common situation, he continued, the problem is compounded in a rural area such as Winnabow.

Davis said Detective Gary Shay has interviewed the family's relatives, including Mrs. Meetze's former husband, in South Carolina. None of them remain suspects.

The Meetzes, who moved here from Gray Court, S.C., had no criminal histories, Davis added. Also, Shay has said no links have been established between the murders and Meetze's former business as a gun dealer in Anderson, S.C.

Freeman Slaying

Although authorities have reported similarities in the Meetze murders and the September slaying of Shalotte area businessman Darwin Kingsley "King" Freeman, Davis said the two cases apparently are unrelated.

Freeman, 74, owner and manager of Anchor Lumber Company on U.S. 17 near Grissetown, was found dead in an office building at his business, where he lived in an efficiency apartment. His body—bound hand and foot—was found by firemen who had been called to extinguish a small blaze that lawmen believe also was set by the killer. The fire did not reach the body.

An autopsy indicated that Freeman died of a single .22-caliber gunshot wound to the head about 30 minutes before the fire was reported at approximately 3:30 a.m. by a newspaper carrier.

"There were just certain similarities at first that alerted us," Davis said, "but really it is not unusual for someone to try to burn a scene to destroy evidence."

Also, Davis said ballistics tests showed that different .22-caliber weapons were used in the King and Meetze murders.

While a \$5,000 reward offered last month by the governor's office has failed to yield substantial leads in the Freeman case, the sheriff said lawmen are "a little closer" to solving it than the Meetze case.

"There's more to work on locally (in the Freeman murder)," Davis explained.

Other Unsolved Cases

Five other murders dating back to 1979 remain under investigation by the Brunswick County Sheriff's

Department. Davis described all but one of the investigations as "very active."

"There's no sign that any of them are connected with the other," Davis added.

He noted that no new information has been received in the past two years concerning the June 1979 shooting death of Benny Eugene Smith, 25, of Tabor City. Smith died at a Wilmington hospital one day after he was shot in the head while riding his motorcycle on Pea Landing Road off U.S. 17 at Thomasboro.

Davis said rewards ranging from \$2,500 to \$5,000 are still offered in the separate, unsolved murders of three Brunswick County residents: Matthew D. Spaulding, 51, of Winnabow; Thomas Gilbert Summer, 32, of Yaupon Beach; and Beverly Potter Mintz, 23, of Leland.

Spaulding was found shot to death July 12, 1985, after he apparently went to his stables to feed horses and

failed to return when expected by family members. He suffered several .22-caliber gunshot wounds to the back.

Summer, who was Davis' son-in-law, was found stabbed to death in his work van on Dec. 30, 1986, in a isolated area near the Orton Plantation entrance. The murder apparently was drug-related, since two pounds of marijuana and a ledge were found near the body.

Ms. Mintz was stabbed to death Feb. 23, 1987, at her home on Villag Road off U.S. 17 near Leland. There were no signs of forced entry, and neighbors reported seeing nothing unusual around the time of the murder.

The sheriff said investigators also continue to receive information on the April 8 shotgun slaying of James Thomas Smith, 38, of Nakina, whose body was discovered on the shoulder of N.C. 904 about 2½ miles from the Columbus County line.

Lawmen Find No Links To Satanism In Teen's Death

BY RAHN ADAMS

In an attempt to squelch widespread rumors, the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department last week continued investigating what so far have proved to be groundless reports that a Southport girl's death was linked to Satanism.

"The only thing we've got now are unfounded rumors," Sheriff John C. Davis said Monday.

The 15-year-old sophomore at South Brunswick High School was found dead Nov. 12 at her Old Bethel Church Road home. Authorities ruled that the death was an apparent suicide, but could find no immediate motive.

"It appears to be just a very unhappy child... She left no note," Crime Prevention Officer Don Gates said Monday, adding that the death could be termed a "stress suicide."

Interviews with family members, friends and school officials, and a search of the teen-ager's belongings turned up no clues to explain the death, said Davis.

The sheriff added that there was "no indication at all" that the death was linked to either Satanism or a suicide pact.

Gates said, however, that a "general hysteria" in the Southport area over the girl's death quickly spread to other sections of the county, with the unsubstantiated rumors being that a satanic cult is active locally.

"It's all over the county now," Gates said Monday. "We've had calls from every district in the county, and they're basically asking, 'Is it true?'"

He also noted that rumors have circulated concerning two other teen suicides which were said to have occurred in the past week in the Long Beach and Shalotte areas. However, those reports also have proven false, he said.

Still, county investigators are checking out the rumors they continue to hear. Gates said lawmen found nothing when they checked an undisclosed site in the Leland area Friday night, after hearing that a

satanic black mass was to be held there. "If there was, nobody showed up," Gates said.

The officer said that although he believes Satanism, in one form or another, is present in Brunswick County, it apparently is no more than a few individuals "dabbling" in the occult.

"I would say there is (Satanism here), but not to the degree that the rumors are indicating," Gates said. "And I don't believe it's an organized thing."

He added, however, that the department's ability to check out certain rumors is limited. "You can't investigate Satanism," he said. "It's a religion protected by the Constitution. What we're doing is trying to prevent the unfounded rumors."

Neither Gates nor Davis said they were aware of any major incidents in the past involving true Satanism in Brunswick County.

Fair Weather Is Forecast

Typical autumn weather is on tap for the Thanksgiving holiday in the Shalotte area, according to Shalotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady.

Temperatures over the next several days are expected to range from the mid 40s at night to the mid 60s during the day, Canady said. Rainfall should measure about one-half inch.

For the period of Nov. 15 through 20, the daily average temperature was 62 degrees, which Canady said was seven degrees above normal.

The daily average high temperature was 73 degrees, and the average daily low temperature was 51 degrees.

The maximum high temperature during the period was 80 degrees, occurring on Nov. 17. The minimum low temperature was 38 degrees, occurring on Nov. 18.

Canady measured .28 of an inch of rainfall during the six-day period.

Commissioners Allocate Funds

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system's second phase.

Other Business

In other matters at Monday's meeting, commissioners:

• Heard a brief report on The Brunswick Hospital and the status of upcoming appointments to the hospital board from its chairman, Donald Noe.

• Okayed Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson's recommendation to establish a permanent tax listing system for real estate. Williamson said no changes in procedure will result immediately, except that owners of real property would not be charged 10 percent late listing penalties.

• Awarded a \$122,630 bid for the purchase of 10 cars to low-bidder Jones Ford of Shalotte. Nine of the cars will be assigned to the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department; one will be assigned to Social Services.

• Agreed to seek new bids on an industrial backhoe loader after receiving only one bid on Oct. 25.

• Approved the first reading of a proposed cable television franchise agreement with GWC Communications Co., which plans to serve the Sandy Creek and Northwest areas.

• Appointed Arthur Knox of Bolivia, George Clemmons of Leland and

Tom Owens of Caswell Beach to three-year terms on the Brunswick County Health Board. Knox and Clemmons were reappointed; Owens replaces fellow pharmacist Fred Lesh, who has served a maximum number of years (nine) on the health board.

• Granted \$2,000 in emergency funds to the Brunswick County Literacy Council, on Commissioner Poole's recommendation.



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