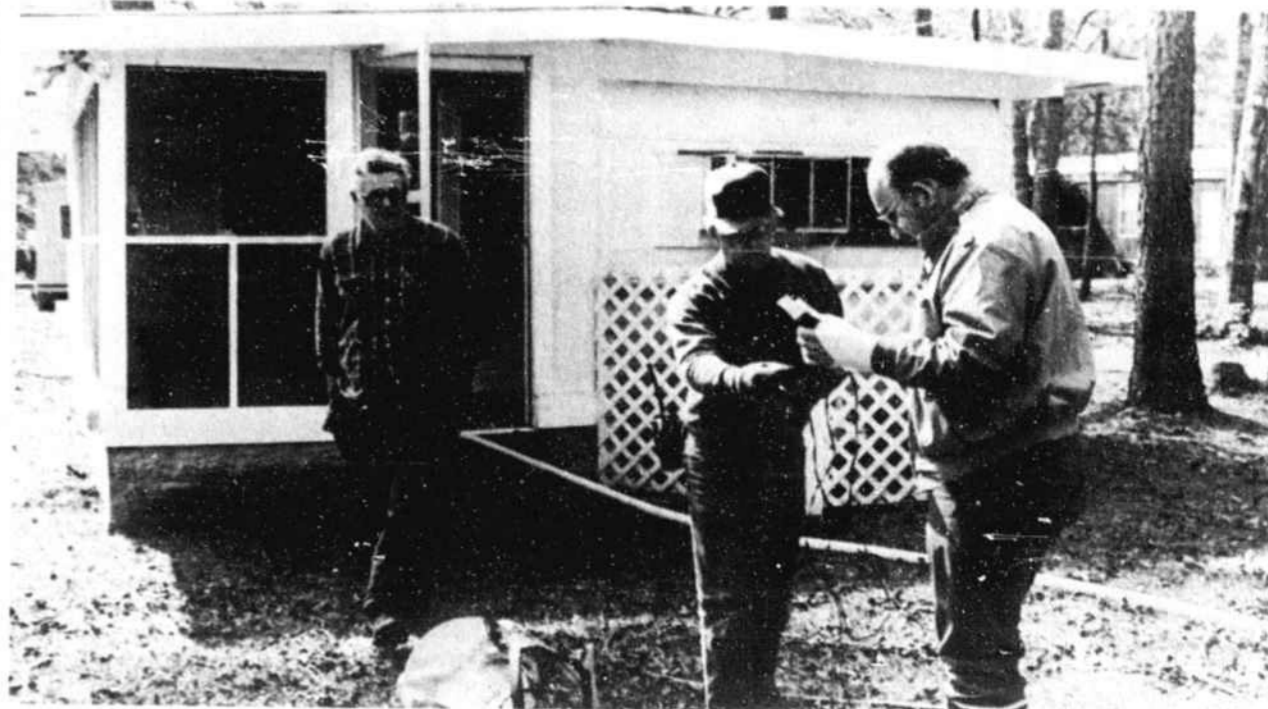




A MAN WAS SERIOUSLY BURNED Friday night when he re-entered this house on No. 5 School House Road after it caught on fire.

PHOTO BY SUSANNE CAIN



BRUNSWICK COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL CECIL LOGAN (right foreground) and Calabash Fire Chief Jerry Prince examine an electrical cord at a scene of a Seaside area fire Friday as a neighbor looks on.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

Man Recovering From Burns Sustained In Friday Blaze

A man who returned to a burning building Friday night to retrieve his wallet remained in the burn center at N.C. Memorial Hospital at Chapel Hill Tuesday in good condition.

Jesse Best Sr. was inside the abandoned four-room house on No. 5 School House Road near Thomasboro Friday night when fire broke out and rapidly engulfed the frame structure. He ran out, but returned for the wallet, firefighters said later.

"He was in the driveway when we got there," said Jerry Prince, chief of the Calabash Volunteer Fire Department. "He was burned from the waist down with first and second degree burns. His left leg was severely burned. His face and arms were covered with blisters."

Best was transported by Calabash Emergency Medical Service to The Brunswick Hospital, transferred to New

Hanover Regional Medical Center and then to the burn center. "His son (Jesse Best Jr.) came up while we were there and went with him to the hospital," said Prince.

N.C. Memorial Hospital public affairs spokesman Liz Baker described Baker's condition as "good" Tuesday, which means his vital signs were stable and within normal limits and that he was conscious and comfortable, with indicators excellent.

Prince said the building where Best was staying was destroyed. "The house was of fat lighter. It was totally engulfed when we got there," he said.

Calabash and Sunset Beach firefighters responded to the 7:50 p.m. fire call, which came in while the two departments were involved in a training program at the Sunset Beach fire station.

The fire is still under investigation, but may have

started from a heater Best had in the building. "We honestly don't know how it started," said Prince. "It was so hot when we went back everything was burnt so much you couldn't tell what was what."

The house had been abandoned and was used mainly for storage, Prince said, but Best was known to stay there occasionally.

One room was a gathering place, while the other main room was used for storage of a variety of items, including a car transmission that blew up in the fire.

Fire Contained

Mid-morning Friday, Sunset Beach, Calabash and Ocean Isle firefighters put out a fire at Seaside in a seasonal home owned by William Parnell of Louisburg.

A Brooks Acres neighbor, George Hoover, was outside working in his yard when he spotted the fire.

"I saw it through the window. Flames were just shooting up. I knew if we didn't get something in there soon there wasn't going to be anything left," he said.

His wife, Margie, said she grabbed a new water hose while another neighbor called the fire department and ran to the home of a fire department member who lives in the same neighborhood. They broke out the window of the bedroom addition where the fire started and were spraying water on the flames when firefighters arrived.

Capt. Keith Logan of the Sunset Beach VFD said the fire was contained to the one room, with extensive smoke damage throughout the two-bedroom residence.

Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan, who assisted in investigating the fire, said an electrical short in a bedside lamp apparently caused the fire in the unoccupied house.

Radio Abuse Prompts Clegg To Order Two-Day Shutdown

BY TERRY POPE

County Manager David Clegg sent a memo to department heads last week just to clear the air, literally.

An "interdepartmental squabble" over the airwaves prompted Clegg to order employees to turn off county-owned two-way radios for all but emergency services. The communications shutdown wasn't a punishment, he said, but gave employees a chance to think about how two-way radios should be used.

"It appalls me that I have to waste my time with people playing on the radio," Clegg said. "We have too many important things to do."

Operations Services Director Darryl Somerset approached Clegg last Wednesday afternoon to complain about county employees from two departments tying up the county's communication band to carry on what Clegg labeled an "interdepartmental squabble."

The radio abuse involved two departments of county government, but Clegg refused to say which departments were involved in the incident.

"Communications were basically crippled," Clegg added.

The county operates two-way radios for a number of departments, including the environmental health, parks and recreation, solid waste, water, planning, public housing, building inspection, garage, mosquito control, operation services, buildings and grounds, emergency management and the sheriff's department.

All radios were ordered turned off from Wednesday afternoon to Friday morning with the exception of the sheriff's department and emergency management office.

"The sheriff uses our channel as a talk-around channel, and he was having problems," Clegg said.

Friday morning, some departments were allowed once again to use radio communications. Departments were advised by the county manager's office when they could resume operations.

"Since the radios have come back on there hasn't been any problem," Clegg added.

Persons with home or mobile scanners can pick up conversations by county personnel operating two-way radios. County employees playing on the radios, Clegg said, are giving county government a bad reputation.

He issued a stern warning for employees to clear the airwaves or that he would have the radios removed from the vehicles permanently.

"If people want to play they can stay home," he added.

Public Meeting Set To Discuss EPA Work At Sandy Creek Waste Dump Site

BY SUSAN USHER

In July 1983 Earl and Pamela Gurkin of Sandy Creek noticed a spot in their front yard where the grass refused to grow.

Using a bulldozer, Gurkin dug down four to six feet, unearthing evidence of No. 6 fuel oil, creosote and septic tank wastes that had been dumped there years earlier.

About a year later, in March 1984, the Gurkins and the families of Ernest Grainer and Judy Church were temporarily relocated from their homes. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) removed 1,770 tons of oily sludge and soils from their yards before the families returned home.

That excavation project began a process that isn't over yet. The three yards now are part of an area known to the EPA as the Potter's Septic Tank Service Pits Superfund Site. The hazardous waste site is eligible to be cleaned up using federal money once a remedy is decided upon, a process that may take several more years.

Eight years and many, many tests after the Gurkins' discovery, the EPA plans to present a progress report on its activities next Thursday, March 28, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Leland Middle School. The purpose of the meeting is to provide the community an opportunity to discuss current findings and future site activity with EPA representatives.

"The only word we've been given is that everything has to proceed along this timetable," said David Clegg, Brunswick County manager and attorney. As recently as 30 to 45 days ago, he said, the EPA was still collecting affidavits from the county health department staff.

While the Superfund process is time-consuming, it is important to the county, Clegg suggested. First, because even if the EPA eventually decides the dump site poses no significant threat to the environment the decision will have come only after a thorough investigation.

Second, rapid and dramatic changes in land use are taking place in the county, changes that need to take into account the history of the property.

"This serves notice to those who are proposing to change the face of

"This serves notice to those who are proposing to change the face of the land that uses from the past can come back to haunt you."

—David Clegg
County Manager

the land that uses from the past can come back to haunt you," said Clegg.

A case in point: A Wilmington company that purchased the old Leland landfill and in the face of state and county concerns, has decided not to sell—for garden plots or any other purpose—13 lots created on the old dump site.

First Study Phase Over

According to an EPA fact sheet on the Sandy Creek site, a field study completed in early 1990 shows the extent of contamination at the Potter's Pits Site to be limited to the immediate vicinity of the two former waste disposal areas, north and south of Joe Baldwin Drive in Sandy Creek, and in the direction groundwater flows from the site toward Chinnis Branch. The dominant contaminants detected included compounds associated with petroleum products or wastes and metals. No PCBs were found.

The EPA studied areas inside the residential town of Sandy Creek near Maco and an area across U.S. 74-76 from the town, but eventually narrowed its scope to include only the area off Joe Baldwin Drive.

Waste disposal pits used by waste

haulers between 1969 and 1980 are the sources of the site contamination. Septic tank sludge, oil sludge and other waste materials were trucked to the site and placed in shallow unlined pits or directly on the land surface, according to the EPA.

The 1990 study also shows:

- The extent of soil contamination around the old pits seems to be restricted to the upper 15 feet of soil.
- Residential air within a house built over one of the waste pits showed no contamination from the site.
- While the Sandy Creek community is served by individual residential wells, no residential well has been effected by contamination from the site.

- Groundwater contamination in the sand aquifer is restricted to the area comprised of the former disposal pits and an area extending toward Chinnis Branch. Concentrations of contaminants decrease dramatically toward the branch.
- Contamination of surface water and sediment within Chinnis Branch is restricted to metals, of which most are naturally occurring elements.

Feasibility Study Next

The next step for the EPA is to develop a risk assessment and feasibility study that summarizes the alternatives it is considering for cleanup of the site.

In April the EPA plans to install additional monitoring wells and to make more soil borings.

When the feasibility study is completed another public meeting will be held and the EPA will explain its proposed plan to remedy contamination at the site and open a 30-day public comment period. Sometime after that the EPA will issue a record of decision. Once approved a remedy with be designed and executed.

Documents relating to the site and the Superfund program are available to the public at an information repository set up by the federal government at the East Columbus Branch of the Columbus County Library in Reigelwood.



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