

OIB Couple Tied, Robbed By Gunman

An Ocean Isle Beach restaurant manager and his wife were hog-tied by a masked gunman and robbed of an estimated \$9,000 cash at their home early Saturday morning, a Brunswick County Sheriff's Department detective said Monday.

The victims, Joe Edward Steele and Sheila Diane Steele of Shipwatch Lane, received only bruises and scratches in the incident, Det. Tom Hunter said. No arrests have been made, but police "have some leads" in the case and are investigating reports of suspicious vehicles in the area, he said.

Mrs. Steele told Deputy Keithan Horne that she was lying on the couch watching television at about 1:15 a.m. when a man wearing a camouflage jacket, a black ski mask and black gloves came into the house through the front door, which she had left unlocked. The man pointed a chrome semi-automatic pistol at her and told her to get on the floor.

The intruder forced her into the back room, where he told her to lie on the bed. He tied and bound her hands and feet with duct tape and a dog leash, the report said. Mrs. Steele said the man rummaged

through the house, then waited for her husband to return from the Islander Restaurant, where he is the manager and son of the owner, Hunter said.

After about an hour, Joe Steele came in and was attacked by the intruder, who had hidden behind the front door. Mrs. Steele told Hunter that while the men were scuffling in the kitchen, she was able to break free and run to a neighbor's home to call 911.

Hunter said he was on his way home from an assignment in Sunset Beach at about 2:47 a.m. when he heard a radio dispatcher report an armed robbery in progress. He arrived at the Steele's home in less than five minutes along with Tommy Allen of the Ocean Isle Beach Police Department.

Other police units from Sunset Beach, Shallotte and the sheriff's department arrived within minutes, Hunter said. Together they surrounded the house.

Next door, Mrs. Steele told police that her husband was still inside the house with the robber. Hunter said he carefully looked through a window and saw Joe Steele lying on the floor tied at the hands and feet.

Hunter, Horne and Sunset Beach patrol officer Anna Dosio entered the house and searched it while Ocean Isle Beach Sgt. Tommy Allen untied Steele. There was no sign of the intruder in the Steele's home, Hunter said.

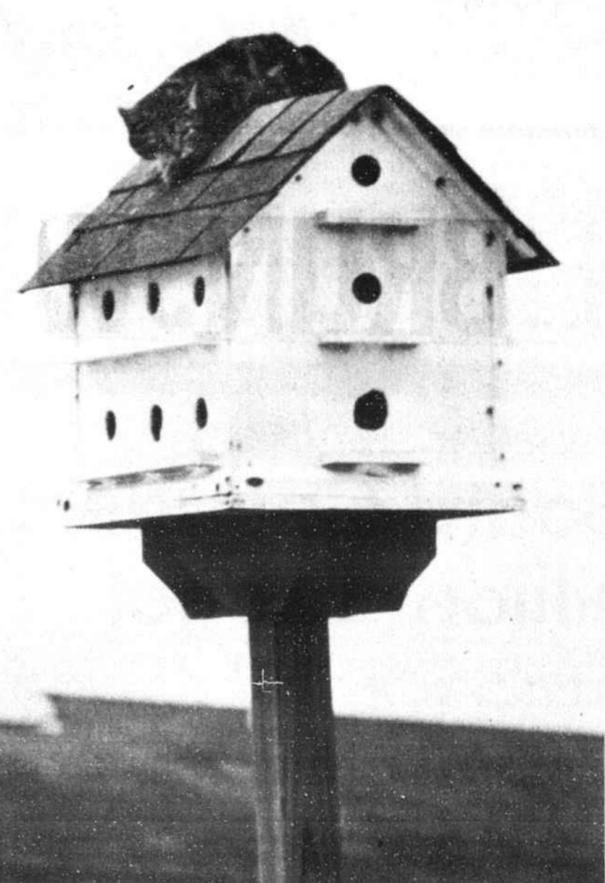
Steele told police that after being attacked, he had struggled with two men in the kitchen, Hunter said. They reportedly left with Steele's wallet, containing about \$675 and credit cards, and the restaurant money bag with about \$8,120 cash inside.

Steele received some bruises and scratches in the incident, but was otherwise unhurt, Hunter said.

An investigation into the robbery is continuing.

"There were some reports of suspicious vehicles in the area and we have a couple people we're looking at," said Hunter. He also praised the cooperation given by the numerous police agencies involved.

Other officers responding to the call included Sunset Beach patrolmen Frank Eaddy and Tom McIntyre, sheriff's deputies Jerry Gray and Sgt. Wendell Bennett and Shallotte patrolman David Edwards and auxiliary officer James Sublett.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTER

There Goes The Neighborhood
Mel Amos of Holden Beach awoke Tuesday morning to the cries of this stray cat that had climbed some 15 feet to get a closer look at her purple martin house. The birds flew the coop, but returned when the feline was shaken from his roost. No word on whether the kitty caught his breakfast.

Manager Candidates Subject To Open-Session Interviews

(Continued From Page 1-A) government, political science, business administration or finance" and "a minimum of five years of professional county government administrative work experience in North Carolina."

Under Warren's proposal, copies of all applications will be made available to the five commissioners, who will review them and "decide in open session who to interview."

After the public interviews, the sheriff's department and the personnel office will conduct records checks and "credit reports" on the applicants before a final decision is made, Warren suggested.

Commissioner Wayland Vereen expressed concern that qualified people might not apply if the names of all applicants are made public. "If I already had a good job, I'd be hesitant to give you an interview," Vereen said.

Warren said the intent of his motion was to release only the names of those candidates who are to be publicly interviewed. "Hopefully we can narrow it down to a dozen or so before then," he said.

Warren's motion to adopt the open interview policy was unanimously approved.

In his administrative report to the board, Interim County Manager John Harvey announced to the board that he has allowed Health Director Michael Rhodes and Department of Social Services Director Jamie Orrock to fill "all authorized positions" in their departments. Hirings in other county departments also were approved.

Hiring throughout county government was halted after the board of commissioners approved a Jan. 19 policy statement directing former county manager Clegg to "refrain from filling any nonessential position." As a result, Clegg delayed hiring while the essential need for each requested employee was carefully examined.

Several department heads, particularly Rhodes and Orrock, complained that the policy, as interpreted by Clegg, severely hindered their operations.

Harvey told the commissioners that he had authorized county department heads to fill 32 "vacant" positions. All are included in the current budget and most have already gone through some phase of the advertisement and interview process.

In his report to the board, Harvey did not outline the "essential" nature of any of the 32 vacant positions. Nor did he determine that any of the vacancies were non-essential positions. There was no comment from the board about the hirings.

Among the positions authorized to be filled are 11 in social services, seven in health, three each in solid waste and emergency services, two each in housekeeping, building and grounds, public utilities and operation services and one job each in geographic information services, finance and parks and recreation.

Harvey also announced that he had instructed Orrock to include the former older adults department in his social services budget. Likewise, the former solid waste department will be included in the department of operational services.

The former directors of both former departments, Ronnie Robinson at older adults and Leo Hewett at landfill/solid waste, were fired during the fiscal year. In other business:

Warren announced that Hewett's scheduled personnel hearing to appeal his recent firing has been postponed at his request until April 19.

An expenditure of \$70,613 from the county manager's emergency contingency fund was unanimously approved to pay for corrective actions and fines incurred due to improper maintenance of the county landfill.

The board agreed to allow the public utilities department to furnish a truck and two employees to the town of Holden Beach and two trucks and two employees to Long Beach to assist in cleaning up debris left by the March 13 storm.

The commissioners voted to authorize the purchase of a new car for the incoming county manager. Harvey said the vehicle could be obtained through state government for less than \$15,000. The current budget earmarks \$25,000 for a new county manager's car.

Vereen asked that the board postpone authorization of a new codes administrator position, which would combine the duties of a lead building inspector and a zoning administrator. Vereen again asked that the measure be tabled "until we have time to talk about it." The board agreed to postpone action by a 4-1 vote with Commissioner Jerry Jones dissenting. Harvey said after the meeting that because of the delay, it seems unlikely that the county-wide zoning ordinance could be implemented July 1 as scheduled.

An appropriation of \$50,600 was approved unanimously for the extension of water lines to serve the DuPont plant. The company says it will purchase an average of 144,000 gallons of water per day. The funds will be taken from loan money returned to the county by the Lower Cape Fear Water and Sewer Authority.

The board agreed to spend \$25,000 to move a building currently on the planned site for the Oak Island library branch for administrative use at the Brunswick County Airport.

Warren nominated Chris Chappell to serve as the District 1 representative on the county's board of equalization and review. Vereen nominated Hannon Templeton to represent District 3. Jones chose H.G. Simmons for District 2 and Commissioner Donald Shaw nominated John Thompson for District 5. Commissioner Tom Rabon said his planned nomination for District 4 had bowed out at the last minute. All nominations were approved unanimously.

County Finance Officer Facing DWI Charge

Brunswick County Director of Fiscal Operations Luthia Brooks Hahn was arrested by Holden Beach Police early Saturday morning and charged with driving while impaired by alcohol, according to a citation on file at the Brunswick County Clerk of Courts office.

Hahn, 41, was stopped by Patrolman Michael C. Hamilton at 4:48 a.m. in the 500 block of Ocean Boulevard West. Court records indicate that she told police she was on her way from Myrtle Beach to her home at Captain's Villas on Holden Beach at the time of her arrest. She said she had consumed four beers between 10 p.m. Friday and 2:30 a.m. Saturday.

An Intoxilyzer breath test administered at 5:39 a.m. indicated that Hahn had a blood alcohol level of .12 percent, court records show. Under state law, a driver is considered to be impaired by alcohol when tests indicate a blood alcohol level of .10 percent.

Hahn's case is scheduled to be heard in Brunswick County District Court June 29.

She has served as Brunswick County's finance officer since June 1986.

Rain Forecast

Temperatures should reach normal levels over the next few days, while more rain is expected to fall on already soggy lawns and gardens.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday he expects temperatures to average from the lower 50s at night up to the lower 70s during the day. He anticipates at least another three-fourths inch of rain.

For the period of March 30 through April 5, Canady recorded a maximum high of 81 degrees March 30 and a minimum low of 38 degrees April 3.

A daily average high of 69 degrees combined with a nightly average low of 47 degrees for a daily average temperature of 58 degrees, which is about 3 degrees below average.

He measured 1.67 inches of rainfall for the period.

Clegg To Get Vacation Pay After Request

(Continued From Page 1-A) ed the move so Clegg could stay at work as acting county manager and not be forced to take vacation time.

Since then, Clegg continued to work rather than take all his annual vacation, allowing 16 weeks of leave to accumulate.

In a March 25 letter to county Personnel Officer Starrie Grissett, Clegg asked that his accrued annual leave pay be "processed during the next payroll period." At Monday's commissioners meeting, Chairman Don Warren read the letter and asked the board to take action on it.

Commissioner Wayland Vereen made a motion to delay paying the back wages and asked that the request "be put on the table until the next meeting."

Warren agreed with Vereen that "what was done was wrong" and that Clegg should not have been allowed to accumulate so much leave. But, he said, the county "would have a difficult time proving it."

The board voted 4-1, with Vereen dissenting, to comply with Clegg's request.

"I hope this never happens again," said Warren. "When we hire a county manager, we need to spell out what fringe benefits were going to give him."

Schools' Proposed Budget \$18.8 Million

(Continued From Page 1-A) staff development; and \$20,000 to connect one county school to a fiber optic network that the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and Northern Telecom propose to extend into Brunswick County.

"By this fall we should have all schools on line," Superintendent Ralph Johnston said, noting that Technology Director Gene Zuck was to outline his full plan at the board's next meeting Wednesday, April 7. The system will be installed and in-services provided for teachers before the start of the 1993-94 year.

The plan would provide each school with a lab of at least 15 computers, plus either another 15 computers in the lab or alternative setups in the school, said Donna Baxter, board chairman.

The capital outlay budget includes related expenditures of \$700,000 for technology equipment; \$18,000 toward financing IBM equipment in place at one school; and \$50,000 for media technology equipment.

More Pay For Drivers?

The final expansion item in the current expense budget is \$27,000 to increase supplements for bus drivers to \$300 per year, in conjunction with

a new, four-step salary schedule. "We've talked with some bus drivers and they think the new four-step salary plan is fair. Everybody would get a good increase," said Turner.

The drivers now get a 2 percent of salary supplement, with some drivers earning as little as \$5 an hour.

The board is also reconsidering a related policy that requires teacher assistants to be qualified and willing to drive buses also. The requirement was added at a time when Brunswick County was switching from mainly student drivers and needed to create a pool of adult (age 18 and older) drivers.

"If bus drivers are paid what they should be," said Finance Officer Rudi Fallon, "we would not have to worry about attracting bus drivers. We're rethinking that concept."

The system has not been free of problems, as teacher assistants who drive buses are not always in the classrooms a full school day, not all applicants want to do both jobs, and more accurate record-keeping is needed to make sure dual employees are paid the correct salary for the hours worked on each job on a particular day. Pay for the dual employees varies widely, depending in part

on longevity in each job.

On-Bus Cameras Proposed

In addition to the schools and technology projects, other capital expenditures would include purchase of video cameras for 45 buses, at a cost of \$15,000, to help reduce student discipline problems on buses; a new telephone system for Shallotte Middle School, \$10,000; \$50,000 to finish stocking Supply Elementary School's media center; fax machines and radios for all schools, \$24,000; an "Action" lab for North Brunswick High School, for providing technological training that relates to the needs of local industry, \$100,000; and \$30,000 in equipment for custodians, such as new buffers and vacuums, as well other equipment for schools, the bus garage, central office, cafeterias, publications and maintenance departments and athletic programs.

The system also budgeted \$30,000 for a sewer plant upgrade at Bolivia Elementary, with labor by school system employees. This is the last project needed to fulfill terms of a consent order reached with the N.C. Division of Environmental Management for repair or replacement of faulty sewer systems at county schools.

Sewer Hearing Set At Sunset Beach

(Continued From Page 1-A) work immediately on seeking permits from regulatory agencies in both states. No formal proposal has yet been made to the Little River authority, he added.

The Sunset council unanimously voted to allocate \$2,250 as its half of \$4,500 in preliminary engineering and permit fees to explore the option. The proposal will be presented to the Calabash Board of Commissioners at its April 13 meeting.

Sewer Hearing April 26

Council also scheduled an April 26 public hearing on the engineers' final sewer system environmental study, though the document remains unfinished. The hearing will take place at 6 p.m. in the Maples Clubhouse at Sea Trail Plantation.

Billups said the study should be completed later this week. The engineers promised in February to provide a copy of the final report to the Sunset Beach Taxpayers' Association, a citizens' group which has expressed concerns about the need for central sewage disposal in their

A public hearing on the final environmental report will be held at 6 p.m. April 26 in the Maples Clubhouse.

town. Copies will also be available at the town hall for citizens' use.

Council agreed unanimously to endorse the engineers' recommendation to ask Governor Jim Hunt to fund the "South Brunswick Environmental Management Program" as the first regional sewerage and stormwater management system in coastal North Carolina. Representatives of five towns—Sunset Beach, Calabash, Ocean Isle, Shallotte and Holden Beach—met last week to discuss the advantages of forming a joint treatment system and how to attract state money to pay for it.

Currently, only Sunset Beach and Calabash are the only members of the South Brunswick Water and Sewer Authority, which serves as "funding entity" for the proposed sewer system.

The letter asks the governor to fund a regional sewage disposal plan for all of southwestern Brunswick County and to grant the five-town "environmental coalition" special funding status as a demonstration project that could be expanded to manage sewage disposal and stormwater runoff in a broader watershed, including the Grand Strand area of South Carolina.

Early Warning Proposal

In other business, council agreed to pursue Police Chief J.B. Buell's suggestion that an "early warning system" in the form of a rotating siren be posted in the middle of the island portion of town to speed short-notice evacuations. Buell will be seeking prices on such a system, the need for which he said became apparent during the March 13 storm. High winds rendered the town's one-land floating bridge unusable for nearly ten hours. The bridge had to be closed with only five minutes' notice, the chief said.

Just after Buell finished his presentation, a police officer entered the meeting room to announce that the bridge was being closed Monday night "as soon as we can get a firetruck over." Extreme lunar tides made the bridge unusable by cars during high tides Monday and Tuesday and impossible to open for boat traffic at low tide on Tuesday, according to Town Administrator Linda Fluegel.

Mini-Golf Hearing

Council set a public hearing for 7 p.m. May 3 on an amendment to the zoning ordinance allowing miniature golf courses in the mainland business district. Under the proposal, courses would have to meet 10 criteria including being on at least an acre of land, have two parking spaces per hole, "unobtrusive" lighting, no animated characters or animals and low noise levels. If the amendment is approved, miniature golf courses would be allowable only as special uses permitted on appeal to the zoning board of adjustment.

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE TO

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

POST OFFICE BOX 2558
SHALLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA 28459

NOTICE: Reliable or consistent delivery cannot be guaranteed since this newspaper must rely on the U.S. Postal Service for delivery. We can only guarantee that your newspaper will be submitted to the post office in Shallotte on Wednesday of the week of publication, in time for dispatch to out-of-town addresses that day.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES BY MAIL:		Sr. Citizen
In Brunswick County		
N.C. Sales Tax	\$6.30	\$5.30
Postage Charge	.38	.32
TOTAL	3.68	3.68
Elsewhere in North Carolina		
N.C. Sales Tax	\$6.30	\$5.30
Postage Charge	.38	.32
TOTAL	8.18	8.18
Outside North Carolina		
N.C. Sales Tax	\$6.30	\$5.30
Postage Charge	9.65	9.65
TOTAL	15.95	14.95

Complete And Return To Above Address

Name

Address

City, State

Zip

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Established Nov. 1, 1962
Telephone 754-6890
Published Every Thursday
At 4709 Main Street
Shallotte, N.C. 28459

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

IN BRUNSWICK COUNTY

One Year.....\$10.36
Six Months.....\$5.55

ELSEWHERE IN NORTH CAROLINA

One Year.....\$14.86
Six Months.....\$7.90

ELSEWHERE IN U.S.A.

One Year.....\$15.95
Six Months.....\$8.35

Second class postage paid at Shallotte, N.C. 28459. USPS 777-780. Postmaster, send address changes to:
P.O. Box 2558,
Shallotte, N.C. 28459-2558