

What Goes Around...

Local law enforcement agencies find ways to benefit from the national military downsizing. Page 11-A.

True Winners

Aaron Butler and Emily Gore are named senior athletes of the year at the WBHS sports awards reception. Page 10-B.

Wet A Hook!

Local anglers are bringing in decent catches of spot and flounder as the water warms and the crowds gather. Page 8-C.

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

12/31/99 #1PO
HOAG & SONS BOOK BINDERY
P.O. BOX 162
SPRINGPORT MI 49284



Thirty-First Year, Number 29

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Shalotte, North Carolina, Thursday, June 10, 1993

50¢ Per Copy

36 Pages, 3 Sections, 1 Insert

Former Lincoln Manager Set To Interview For Post Today

BY ERIC CARLSON

Albert Sharp Jr., a former manager of two North Carolina counties and past teacher at UNC-Wilmington, will be the fourth candidate to be interviewed for the job of Brunswick County manager at a recessed commissioners' meeting today (Thursday).

In a telephone interview from his home in Lincoln County, Sharp said Tuesday that he is "very familiar" with the coastal area. He said that while teaching at UNCW, he and his wife lived in Wilmington and Wrightsville Beach for more than three years. Sharp's parents live in New Bern.

"We would love to come back to the coast," he said.

Last December, Sharp gave notice of his intention to resign after eight years as Lincoln County Manager. Calling the decision a "lifestyle change," Sharp said his departure was "an amicable parting" during which he continued working until late April while the county commissioners selected a new manager.

Sharp described Lincoln County—population 52,000—as a diverse area extending from the Charlotte suburbs of Lake Norman to the apple orchards of the western foothills. He said the county is similar to Brunswick in that both are experiencing rapid growth with an expanding retiree population.

Asked to describe his accomplishments as Lincoln County manager, Sharp said he has overseen only one tax increase in six years while the collection rate increased by 5 percent. During his tenure, he said Lincoln established a county-wide water system, adopted a merit-based personnel policy and passed successful sewer and school bond referendums.

Before taking his most recent position, Sharp said he was hired as the first manager of Granville County, where he worked from 1974 to

(See FINAL, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Science Class

Lamar Jones (left) and Roy Stephens, both of Ash, examine the contents of a cast net tossed into the Intracoastal Waterway at Ocean Isle Beach. They were members of an eighth-grade class from Waccamaw School that spent a morning studying coastal ecosystems with science teacher Ellen Milligan.

High Court Decision Paves Way For Student Prayer At Graduation

BY SUSAN USHER

A student-led prayer was to be allowed Wednesday night, June 9, at South Brunswick High School, as Brunswick County's three high schools held simultaneous commencement exercises at 7 p.m.

Senior Jason Lanier of Bolivia's Mill Creek community, an honor student who is considering a career in the ministry, was chosen by South Brunswick High School's student graduation committee to lead the prayer.

It was Lanier who had originally proposed a prayer or blessing as part of the ceremony. He had a petition showing support from almost the entire senior class for the request, which was denied by the school's principal and had not been heard yet by the county school board when the latest federal court decision relating to prayer at graduation was handed down Monday.

He was initially told the school system couldn't officially sanction such a prayer because it would be in violation of a 1992 U.S. Supreme Court ruling. That decision, in a Rhode Island case, indicated that public school graduation prayers violated the principle of separation of church and state.

However, a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court Monday settled the confusion over the issue of students' right to pray at graduation.

The court upheld, without further comment, a lower court decision in Texas that allowed student prayer at graduation under certain conditions. That court decision indicated that graduation prayer was permissible so long as it was led by students, was non-sectarian, did not attempt to convert listeners, and was wanted by a majority of the students concerned.

The Texas suit contrasted with the Rhode Island case in that it did not involve a prayer by clergy or prayer at

the direction of the school district.

If school officials had not changed their opinion, Lanier had intended, during the moment of silence that was to be allowed in lieu of oral prayer, to lead seniors in the voluntary recitation of the Lord's Prayer. He had signatures on petitions from most of the senior class supporting the request.

Last Wednesday, the board had planned to include the prayer issue on the agenda of a special meeting it set Monday, June 7, to begin cutting its budget and reviewing personnel reorganization plans.

However Chairman Donna Baxter canceled that meeting when the school system was invited to explain its technology program funding request to county commissioners, and failed to notify reporters present at last week's meeting of the change in plans.

At its meeting last Wednesday night, the school board also:

■ approved a one-year only contract extension for Assistant Superintendent of Auxiliary Services William Turner, who is in charge of facilities, maintenance, transportation, child nutrition, warehouse and distribution services.

■ delayed until its June 14 meeting reconsideration of the school calendar, and two alternatives. One would have teachers reporting three days earlier but not change the start of school for students, the other would move the start of school up to Aug. 24, with students' last day of classes June 7, 1994.

■ approved on first reading a revised school personnel policy after a three-hour work session with consulting school law attorney Richard Schwartz of Raleigh. A second reading is required before adoption; several more sections will be added later through separate action.

Schools' Computer Program Proposal Gets \$1 Million County Approval

BY ERIC CARLSON AND SUSAN USHER

The Brunswick County Commissioners voted Monday to scrap a previous board's plan for a new \$1 million county warehouse and agreed instead to spend the money on school technology programs.

In a split vote, the commissioners agreed to reallocate the warehouse construction funds set aside in last year's budget to provide for expansion of a fledgling program to offer computer training in classrooms throughout the school system.

"It's certainly not that I'm against the schools," said Jones, explaining his no vote. "I am totally in support of the schools. They just haven't convinced me that we need computers in every classroom in every school."

Gene Zuck, the school system's director of technology, told the commissioners Monday night that the computer program has "made some good progress in past months." He expects to have 15 to 30 work stations in operation at each of the county's 12 schools by Aug. 1. Teachers and other school personnel are also being trained to use computers and to teach students their use.

He said the technology funds requested in this year's school budget would be used to create more student work stations, to expand the computer network into classrooms, libraries and administrative offices and to hire additional computer support personnel. The work is part of a 3- to 5-year plan for increasing the school system's use of computers and other technology for instruction, management and communication.

This fiscal year the school board transferred funds set aside in its 1992-93 budget for design of a new central office to the technology project.

The N.C. Department of Public Instruction has adopted a state curriculum that directs schools to offer computer literacy education for all grades and that will eventually require students to pass a standardized computer skills exam to receive a high school diploma.

The \$1 million had been earmarked in the current budget for construction of a 15,000-square-foot building at the county complex in Bolivia. It was to have housed offices for the public utilities and parks departments with storage space for all county departments.

Architectural work has been completed and the project is ready to go to bid, said County Engineer Robert Tucker.

"It's not a lost effort, because those plans can be used to construct the building in the future," he said.

"It's just a shift in priorities."

Commission Chairman Don Warren and members Donald Shaw and Tom Rabon voted for the proposed re-allocation. Commissioner Jerry Jones voted against it.

Clerk to the Board Kelly Barefoot recorded the vote as 4-to-1, as did Shaw and several members of the audience. But according to Jones, Commissioner Wayland Vereen also voted against it.

Vereen left immediately after the meeting and was unavailable to clarify his vote Tuesday.

In other business the board:

■ Voted unanimously to award four construction contracts for new branch libraries on Oak Island and in Leland. An all-inclusive contract for \$384,000 was awarded to Luther T. Rogers Inc. to build the library at Yaupon Beach. Harnett Construction Co. received a \$343,208 contract for general construction of the Leland branch, with a \$31,869 electrical contract to Watson Electric Co., a \$26,625 ventilation contract to Cannon Heating and Air Conditioning Co. and a \$15,700 plumbing contract going to Kelly Plumbing Co. All the contracted firms are from Wilmington except Cannon, which is based in Wilson.

■ Heard a report from Operations Services Director Derry Somerset that the county landfill can be adequately maintained without hiring a solid waste director. The county has advertised to fill the \$24,818 position left vacant when former director Leo Hewett was fired last March and later rehired in the created position of "solid waste control officer." Interim County Manager John Harvey said he was told to fill the position by Commissioners Chairman Don Warren, who reportedly polled his fellow Democrat commissioners by telephone to establish a voting majority to authorize the move.

■ Took no action on a request for approval of an ambulance service franchise for Northwest Volunteer Emergency Medical Services Inc. Corporation member Artis Bryant told the board that the new volunteer squad was needed to improve emergency service in an area at the north end of the county currently served through a cooperative arrangement with the Acme-Delco-Rieglewood Fire and Rescue squad from Columbus County. Brunswick EMS Director Doug Ledgett recommended that the request be turned down, saying that the proposed squad does not have enough trained staff or equipment to provide adequate service.

■ Heard a progress report on the (See COUNTY, Page 2-A)

Inside...

- Birthdays.....2B
- Business News.....12C
- Calendar.....8B
- Church News.....7B
- Classified.....1-8C
- Court Docket.....9C
- Crime Report.....11A
- Fishing.....8C
- Golf.....11B
- Obituaries.....7B
- Opinion.....4-5A
- People In The News.....5B
- Plant Doctor.....3B
- Sports.....9-12B
- Television.....10-11C

Trial Set July 12 For First Of 2 Defendants In Evans Death

BY ERIC CARLSON

One of the two Shalotte men accused in the abduction and murder of a young Ash man last fall is scheduled to go on trial next month. But prosecutors aren't saying which case will be heard first.

Assistant District Attorney Lee Bollinger has filed notices to proceed with the trials of both William Earl Hill, 18, of Blueberry Farm Road and Bradley Tyrone King, 17, of Route 1, in Brunswick County Superior Court on July 12.

Both men are charged with first-degree murder, kidnapping and armed robbery in the shooting death of 20-year-old Ronald Everett Evans, who was reported missing after he left home to pick up dinner for himself and his girlfriend at a Shalotte fast-food restaurant on the night of Oct. 12. He never returned.

Six days later, a horseback rider found Evans' decomposed body on a ditch bank beside a dirt road leading into the Green Swamp. He had been shot twice from behind with a 9mm pistol.

Hill and King have been held without bond in the Brunswick County Jail since they were arrested less than a week after Evans' body was found. Both defendants have undergone psychological testing and expert medical testimony is expected at both trials.

"We have yet to make a decision as to who we will try first," Bollinger said in an interview the day after he filed the motions to proceed with trial.

Bollinger said he is ready to go ahead with either case and will not decide which one to call until pre-trial negotiations with defense attorneys have been finalized. Michael Ramos and Stephen Yount have been appointed to represent King. William Fairley and James Payne will defend Hill.

As in most cases that could result in a death-penalty verdict, the defense has filed numerous motions on their clients' behalf. Lawyers have asked the court to declare the death penalty unconstitutional, to allow the defendants freed on bond and to prohibit the district attorney from dismissing potential jurors on the basis of race, sex, religion or because they are uncertain about imposing the death penalty.

Hill's lawyers have asked that his trial be moved to another county, claiming that Hill could not get a fair hearing here due to local news coverage of the murder investigation.

"It would be exceedingly difficult to find someone in the area who had not heard of this case, who had not heard opinions concerning it and who had not been

tainted by this publicity and speculation," the motion states.

District attorney Rex Gore has said that he will oppose any motion to move either trial, noting that "there was not a lot of pre-trial publicity in this case." Ramos also has said he was prepared to proceed with King's trial in Bolivia.

Police say both Hill and King have given statements indicating that on the night of Oct. 12, they rode together in a Honda automobile down a dirt road and stopped. Both defendants said Evans was ordered out of the trunk at gunpoint, led to the front of the car and shot twice from behind, according to police. But each man has said that the other one pulled the trigger.

Evans was driving his champagne-colored 1986 Honda Accord when he left Ash at about 7:30 that Monday night, according to police. He bought dinner at the Shalotte Burger King and took it to the Revco store on Main Street, where his girlfriend worked.

His car was found the next day in the marsh behind Brick Landing Golf Course. Inside was a Burger King bag with a receipt recording a purchase time of 8 p.m., Oct. 12.

Investigators say they believe King and Hill were planning to steal a car that night; that they allegedly

met Evans in the Revco parking lot and got into the car with him shortly after 8 p.m.; that at some point in the evening, one of the two defendants pulled out a pistol and forced Evans into the trunk; and that Evans was let out on the dirt road shortly before he was shot.

Brunswick County sheriff's detectives claim State Bureau of Investigation laboratory tests have determined that bullets removed from Evans' body and shell casings found at the scene were fired from a 9mm semi-automatic pistol owned by Hill.

The SBI is also analyzing fingerprints found on the weapon and on items recovered from Evans' car. Investigators have requested that highly detailed "major case inked impressions" be taken from the hands of both Hill and King.

Both King and Hill could face the death penalty even if it is never proven who did the shooting, Bollinger said. A person convicted of committing a felony that results in a person's death can also be guilty of murder no matter who did the killing.

Bollinger has overseen the local investigation into the Evans killing and is expected to be the lead prosecutor at next month's trial. He said he expects that District Attorney Rex Gore or another of his assistants will help present the state's case.