

Mother Claims School Negligent In Child's 1992 Fall From Leland Middle Water Cooler

Two and a half years after her son was seriously injured in a fall while attempting to climb from a water fountain into a hole in the hall ceiling at Leland Middle School, Marion Hewett of Leland is suing the Brunswick County Board of Education for "gross, willful or wanton" negligence.

The complaint was filed Nov. 23 in Brunswick County Superior Court on behalf of Kenneth Anthony Hewett, who was 11 when the accident occurred, and his mother, Marion Hewett. Represented by Wilmington attorney James E. Eldridge, Mrs. Hewett has asked for a jury trial and is seeking damages in excess of \$10,000.

On May 27, 1992, student Hewett was in a hallway when he saw a hole in the ceiling where several tiles were missing. He climbed onto two nearby water coolers and was attempting to climb into the space "when he fell and violently struck his head on the floor below..."

Following the accident Ms. Hewett told The Brunswick Beacon her son had suffered a crack in the cervical spine and a fractured skull.

Hewett's complaint contends the school staff, under the circumstances, should have foreseen that such an accident could happen, and that the school system was negligent because staff:

- failed to inspect the premises to first discover and then remedy the

"dangerous conditions" created by the missing tiles;

- failed to warn children of those conditions and to adequately safeguard them;

- failed to adequately supervise or warn the boy when he was given permission to enter the area unattended by an adult supervisor; and

- failed to properly care for him before the arrival of emergency medical technicians.

Before emergency personnel arrived, school employees did not immobilize the boy, the suit states. Instead they carried him from the hallway into an office and attempted to care for him there.

The ceiling tiles had been missing for at least three weeks, according to

the complaint. It states the school should have known the hole existed, that it was attractive to children and that students had previously "attempted to and had gained access into the space above the ceiling..." and that the situation posed an unreasonable risk of harm to students.

As a result of the accident Hewett received injuries to his head and body that cause him to continue to suffer "great and excruciating pain and suffering of body, mind and spirit" and "great mental anguish and anxiety," the complaint states. The family has incurred and will continue to incur related medical expenses, it states, and Mrs. Hewett has also suffered monetary loss from lost wages.



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Swamped With Calls

Ronald Hewett, newly elected sheriff of Brunswick County, tries to catch up on the huge stack of telephone messages that accumulated during his first week in office. More than 300 calls to the new sheriff were logged in less than five days. "I would ask folks to be patient and I'll get back to them as soon as I can," Hewett said Friday. "Just be sure, if you have an emergency, to let someone else know so it can be handled immediately."

TOWN BOARD REJECTS DRAFT PLAN

Ocean Isle Museum Auditorium Hits Snag

BY SUSAN USHER

Plans to add a 150-seat auditorium to the Museum of Coastal Carolina at Ocean Isle Beach hit a snag Tuesday morning, with town officials and local residents questioning plans for the project.

The Ocean Isle Beach Board of Adjustment, which would need to issue a special use permit for the project, found a proposal presented Monday unacceptable. It cited serious concerns about parking, traffic flow and stormwater runoff as well as the addition's overall impact on its residential neighborhood.

Parking is the single biggest problem the museum faces, both the number of spaces provided and their location.

Building Inspector Drueid Roberson said plans to add 25 parking spaces to the existing 18

spaces would provide 33 total spaces, which he thought adequate. But that estimate was based on six occupants per car, which board members thought unrealistic, and didn't consider that the museum area might be open at the same time as the auditorium.

The plan would also have required an encroachment agreement from the town, which only town commissioners could approve, and relocation of a fire hydrant.

Museum expansion as proposed would "worsen the existing stormwater drainage problem, increase the traffic hazard with cars having to back onto Second Street and increase the dust and heavy traffic," said Fred Gray, speaking on behalf of his family and seven other Laurinburg Street households. "It seems to me the advantages of the museum are outweighed by the

problems. Please do not force us to endure many more burdens."

Betty Causey also objected to the plan, citing traffic problems on Second Street and stormwater runoff on Laurinburg.

The town has asked the state Department of Transportation to take over maintenance and ownership of Second Street. If the street were widened, that would put the proposed museum parking area even closer to the traffic, making "a bad situation worse," said Roberson.

"To my mind that would be dangerous," said Commissioner Kendall Suh.

Ken Proctor and Bill Benton removed themselves from the Board of Adjustment discussion because both serve on the museum's board of directors. When asked by fellow members to comment, however, they concurred with the board's assessment of the parking and traffic problems.

Sterile Oysters May Be Fertile N.C. Crop

Reprinted From "Marine Grapevine" N.C. Sea Grant

That old rule of thumb for eating oysters only during cold-weather months with an "r" in their name may become obsolete for some Carolina shellfish consumers.

N.C. Sea Grant is experimenting with a sterile oyster that might be harvestable in summer months and resistant to the diseases that have decimated East Coast oyster crops in recent years.

Skip Kemp, a Sea Grant aquaculture specialist, is testing these oysters—called triploids—for the first time in North Carolina. They will look and taste like normal reproducing oysters, he says, but they are thought to be hardier.

The name triploid refers to an oyster that is genetically altered to have three sets of chromosomes rather than the normal two sets that

other oysters have. This means that triploids don't reproduce. They don't release sperm and eggs in the summertime, which is thought to weaken reproducing oysters and to make them more susceptible to diseases such as Dermo.

Oysters could conceivably be harvested during summer months, but they are not for a couple of reasons, Kemp says. They're watery and less appetizing when they spawn, and they're also more difficult to harvest and handle without spoiling in hot weather.

Although triploid oysters may not be the answer to the second problem, they have a clear advantage over reproducing oysters. They're fatter when they're not taxed by spawning, and they might be used to extend the market year-round, Kemp says. In a recent informal survey of restaurant owners, he learned that there is a summertime demand for

oysters that is not being met.

On average, triploid oyster seeds are more expensive than others. A group of 11 North Carolina aquaculturists is helping Kemp determine if they're worth the extra cost. He purchased an initial batch of 50,000 from the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution in Florida. They're among 250,000 oyster seeds

that are being farmed out to cooperating oystermen who will raise them in chubs on their shellfish leases. Kemp designed the chub system for growing oysters in mesh bags that float on the water's surface.

Results of the experiment should tell Kemp by late 1995 whether the triploid would be a potential oyster crop in North Carolina.

Thank You

Cleve, Sylvia and Amanda Gore, along with the rest of their family, would like to let everyone who showed concern and love during our time of distress to know that it was greatly appreciated.

The firefighters are the real heroes, and no one ever tells them thank you until something like this happens. They are wonderful people, and we will always be in debt to them.

For our church, St. Luke, also thank you for being a wall of strength and love. Thanks to everyone for their prayers and concern, and may God bless you always.

We would also like our customers to know Shallotte Muffler & Brake Shop will be working temporarily out of the back building on Hwy. 179, Shallotte, until things are straightened out.

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