

# The Progress

Morrisville & Preston

Published Monthly

Morrisville, N.C.

June 26, 1996



**Preston Trails resident Don Bowden gets nods and double takes from other drivers when they read the license tag on his black convertible. The story behind the personalized tag may surprise them.**

## Life on the Rock

Great fishing, long distance shopping a daily routine

By Ron Page

The vanity plate at the rear of his shiny black convertible says ALCATRAZ.

Preston's Don Bowden, you see, is proud to have spent three years of his life at the famous prison at a time when the 12-acre island in San Francisco Bay operated under a shroud of secrecy.

Once known as "Uncle Sam's Devil's Island" and "Hellcatraz," and seemingly escape-proof, Alcatraz operated from 1934 to 1963 and is considered the most notorious prison ever to exist in the U.S. It housed the nation's most incorrigible federal convicts — gangsters, kidnapers, killers and bank robbers — and was

designed to crush their very souls.

But to Don Bowden, then in his early teens, life on the famous island was enjoyable. He wasn't an inmate. He simply lived there.

Bowden's family was one of about 60 families who shared Alcatraz with 250 inmates. In the mid-1950s, Bowden's father, Ira, was employed by the federal

prison system and was asked to take a position as Alcatraz general foreman. He was to be responsible for the general mechanical systems on the island.

"It was difficult to get people to go there," Bowden recalls today from his home on Hardaway Court in Preston Trails. A techni-

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## Board split over granting approval for new business

Lobbying pressure, site rules blamed for year-long delay

By Ron Page

A year-long struggle by a Raleigh developer for clearance to build a combination convenience store and gas station in Morrisville is over.

The Morrisville Board of Commissioners has approved the store site plan with stipulations, despite strong reservations by two of its members.

Commissioners Billy Sauls, C.T. Moore and Mark Silver-Smith gave the go-ahead to a facility at the intersection of Airport Boulevard and N.C. 54, while Leavy Barbee and Phyllis Newnam voted against it.

Roy Mashburn of Raleigh and a partner, Treby Proctor Jr. of Chapel Hill, had purchased the two-acre parcel with the understanding that a convenience store with gas pumps was allowable under existing zoning. But they encountered a number of obstacles once the proposal went before commissioners.

"We even faced one suggestion that would have required a pedestrian bridge over N.C. 54," Mashburn said. "It was weird."

Mashburn pointed out that a building on the property, which is slated for demolition, had once been leased by Gary Boyette, whose business is now located directly across Airport Boulevard. Boyette operates a Cigo station and the Triangle Mini-Mart, a convenience store and popular eating spot.

Boyette appeared at a commissioner meeting to object to the Mashburn proposal and has been

vocal in his opposition. "There has been a lot of lobbying going on," Mashburn said.

Mashburn and Proctor, who formerly owned some 500 Pantry convenience stores, agreed to a number of changes over the past year, including turning the plan around and moving the store up front at N.C. 54 and the gas pumps (an Exxon station is planned) to the rear. The entrance driveway was moved 300 feet from the intersection.

It was Commissioner Leavy Barbee who made a lengthy plea in opposition to the project when the board met June 10. Barbee said he didn't want Morrisville to become known as a town of convenience stores.

"There are six to eight [convenience stores] in the vicinity, and this is not what the town is working for," said Barbee, who also has expressed opposition to more truck terminals. "Let's think of what the town will look like in years ahead. Let's try to get some mixes so we don't have to go to Raleigh for an attorney or Cary for a doctor."

Barbee also said he was concerned about sinking more fuel in the ground, citing possible pollution in the future. Both Barbee and Newnam also cited safety concerns, saying the store could create traffic problems.

Commissioner Sauls referred to the proposed store as "very nice" and said it had every right to be

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## Mayberry's Darling marvels at replica

By Ron Page

Twenty-eight years after he last played Rodney Darling on the Andy Griffith Show, Rodney Dillard had a brief encounter this month with a twin of the sheriff's car used in the celebrated television series.

The car, a black-and-white 1960 Ford Galaxie owned and restored by Morrisville Police Chief Bruce Newnam, was sitting in front of the Morrisville Cafe when Dillard drove into town en route to a vacation on the North Carolina coast.

"I got a call from headquarters, saying Rodney had called and asked if I could drop by and see him," Newnam said.

Dillard's wife is the former Beverly Cotton of Morrisville. Along with their daughter, they had stopped in Morrisville to see Beverly's father, Buck Cotton, who lives off Aviation Parkway.

Dillard, who now has a music business in Branson, Mo., played

one of the Darling brothers who often left the hills with their father and sister and visited Mayberry. Rodney Darling played a guitar; his father made music with a whiskey jug.

After learning Dillard was at the Cotton house, Newnam drove to the cafe and picked up the Mayberry replica. "We had talked in the past about how I was restoring the car, but he had never seen it," said the chief.

Newnam is a longtime fan of the television show and earlier this year finished an extensive restoration of the car. He shows it off at fairs, parades and other community events. During the week when he is on duty with his regular police car, he parks the replica at various business sites.

"When I drove into the Cotton driveway, Rodney was thrilled," Newnam said. "He was especially impressed that it was a 1960 Galaxie." That model was the one

used in the first year of the series, which ran from 1960 to 1968. Ford Motor Co. donated a new car to the series each year.

"We had a nice visit, took some pictures, and he sat in the car," said Newnam. "I got a couple of shots handcuffing him and we just kidded around. He opened the hood and laughed when he saw the engine." The engine was inscribed with the word "Goober's Garage. Overhauled by Lester Goodwin." Goodwin was among those who assisted in the restoration.

Newnam said before Dillard left the two reminisced about old-time country music. Newnam, who also plays the guitar, said he and Dillard enjoy many of the same songs.

Newnam said Dillard indicated it might be possible for him to return to Morrisville for one of the town's events, possibly this year's first annual Christmas parade or next year's Day in the Park.



**A MAYBERRY CHARACTER—Rodney Dillard, an actor who had a role in the Andy Griffith show, stopped in town to see the replica sheriff's car owned by Morrisville Police Chief Bruce Newnam.**

## Spectators gather on roadsides to watch Olympic flame coast through Morrisville

By Bill Kirkland

Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill enjoyed the ecstasy of victory last weekend when the Olympic torch was carried through those cities by local heroes.

Sunday morning, Morrisville suffered the agony of defeat.

"The torch will be coming through here on a bicycle," Kate Collier told the 250 or so people who had gathered along N.C. 54 in the heart of old Morrisville.

Collier, one of the coordinators of the torch's 84-day trip to Atlanta, drove up in a BMW convertible with a Torch 1 license plate.

She did have a bit of good news. "I understand these cyclists are pretty strong so one of them may be carrying the torch," she said. "But the next runner to get it will be 13 miles up the road."

Still, no one left.

Wanda Britton of Durham, whose father owns the Pine Cone Stables store on N.C. 54, had arrived early with her two children and a friend



**PASSING THROUGH—Cyclists carrying the Olympic torch through town Sunday morning were cheered on by spectators.**

to fill some red, white and blue balloons with helium and attach them to concrete staves along the roadside.

Andy Mills of Apex, who volunteers his time raising money for Clemson athletics, spent most

of his idle minutes bragging about the Tigers.

Kathy Greene of Morrisville chatted with a couple from Winston-Salem who stopped in town unexpectedly. "Our car broke down," the man explained.

Earl Czeck and his family of four left the shaded yard of their nearby house and stood near the railroad tracks. "We're going to lose that big tree in front of the house," Czeck said. "When they realign the road [Morrisville-Carpenter], we're told they're coming within 10 feet of us."

Ten-year-old Johanna Cipau of Raleigh and her 11-year-old brother, Erick, waved small Olympic flags. "A friend brought them to us from Atlanta," said their mother, Jane.

Morrisville Commissioner Phyllis Newnam was in attendance while her husband, Police Chief Bruce Newnam, stayed at home to nurse a cold.

Norma Jones of Apex may have been one of the few on hand who saw an Olympic torch when it passed through Morrisville nearly a decade ago. "It was when they had the North Carolina Games," she explained.

Another Apex resident, Betty

Rees, sat in a folding chair alongside her 90-year-old mother, Carrie Dierdorff.

Ten minutes after the torch's scheduled arrival at 8:35 a.m., two

cyclists pedaled through town amid an entourage of other vehicles. One held the Olympic torch aloft.

And—defeat or not—the people cheered.

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