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# WATAUGA DEMOCRAT

An Independent Weekly Newspaper—Established in the Year 1888

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BOONE, WATAUGA COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA, THURSDAY, JANUARY 26, 1950

FIVE CENTS

## \$75,000 Loss As Flames Race Through Showhouse

### KING STREET

BY ROB RIVERS

THE DISASTROUS FIRE which swept through Boone's big theatre Saturday afternoon brought the town's biggest excitement in years, as fathers and mothers from all over the community and county dashed madly to the scene of the conflagration, thinking perhaps their children might be trapped in the inferno, while others doing business in the immediate neighborhood, frantically made ready to evacuate their possessions if the fire should spread. . . . Bob Agle, district manager for the Sams Theatre enterprises, and Jay Beach, who managed the local playhouse, contrived, with their cool demeanor to evacuate several hundred folks from the building, without injury, even as the flames lapped at the backs of the last to reach the main exit. . . . The management is receiving the praise of the general populace for having accomplished the evacuation operation, without a trace of panic having been allowed to arise. . . . Gene Autry, cowboy vocalist, provided the headline attraction, and the kiddies with their toy pistols, and other paraphernalia of the wide open spaces were on hand by the hundred. . . . their parents knowing they were right down in front of the silver screen, and would of course be the last. . . . Frantic, pale-faced fathers and mothers rushed to the scene, only to find the tots mingling with the crowd on the lawn of the Daniel Boone hotel, enjoying the spectacle. . . . Those of us who had already lived through the horrors of charred and broken little bodies began to breathe again. . . . to reflect on the property loss, and the peerless work of the fire department in preventing the spread of the flames, which could have resulted in the virtual destruction of the immediate business district. . . . while the kiddies, unmindful of the tragic consequences which were narrowly averted, spent a happy week-end and trekked down to the Pastime Monday, happy as jay birds in June. . . . They wouldn't have been doing this today had Messrs Agle and Beach become unduly excited!

**VOLUNTEERS OF THE fire department capably handling the big blaze, and winning the general praise of the crowds, while a few, comfortably situated, undampened, and unchoked by the smoke, belittled their efforts. . . . making some of us see a bit red. . . . Blowing Rock boys render invaluable aid in fighting the flame, while motorists persist in running over the hose. . . . This problem exists everytime a fire breaks out. . . . Many have been arrested and fined. . . . Seems to do little good. . . . Should be a bit of jail sentence, for a broken hose might spell the destruction of a building. . . . Harsh and certain punishment should be applied in such instances.**

**WE SHARE THE SORROW of the Sams enterprises in their loss. . . . We are deeply concerned for Mr. W. R. Winkler, one of our town's most progressive citizens over the huge damage to his building, but we can very easily imagine a worse set of circumstances. . . . Plans are already underway for rebuilding the structure. . . . The Pastime Theatre has been re-opened and is enabling the theatre management to operate on about 25 per cent normal capacity. . . . but the folks who might have died, couldn't have been replaced. . . . The cloud has a lining that glows. . . . Speaker says he's definitely not an authority on international matters, then squares away and tells just how to handle the thing in all its intricate details. . . . Clyde Perry, one of our old subscribers, comes in to renew, and lays the cash on the line for five years. . . . "don't want it to be all the time running out!" . . . Rainbow in the west in early morning, said to be sure sign of bad weather, is the forerunner of rainy spell. . . . Dick Colvard says if the smoke from the chimney goes straight up on February 1, there'll be apples. . . . Commentator says we don't need bigger bombs, but bigger men,**

**OR MEN, AT LEAST, who share the opinion of the man making the observation. . . . Most of us are prone to think of greatness in terms of our own beliefs. . . . Those of different opinions are hailed all too often as "good fellows". . . . Those we hail as "good fellows" are often those who merely happen to follow our basic lines of reasoning. . . . while those we criticize severely happen to have leanings which are foreign to our established**  
(continued on page six)

### MORE WORKERS ARE NEEDED TO SOLICIT FOR MARCH DIMES

Scores of Volunteers Are Needed If Quota Is To Be Reached, Says Taylor; Urgent Plea Made by County Chairman of Campaign.

The March of Dimes needs volunteer workers. This announcement was made this week by Jim Taylor, Watauga county March of Dimes Director. It seems apparent now that if Watauga County is to meet its share of the state's quota, scores of volunteer workers will be needed in making personal solicitations. All persons who will give a little of their time on Friday, January 27, in making personal calls for the March of Dimes are asked to report to county headquarters or call telephone 234 before Friday. Even an hour will help. The thousands of crippled children need you. Please help.

Last week, it was reported by Mr. Taylor that March of Dimes gifts were lagging. Since that time, there has been a slight upsurge in donations, but Watauga County has still not contributed one-fourth as much as was donated last year. There have been several significant contributions, such as the one which was received from little Mickie Williams from Shulls Mills. Mickie saved his pennies all year long for the March of Dimes. Last week, his contribution came in a quart jar containing eight hundred and sixty-five pennies. Then there was the gift of \$19.03 by Mr. Zeb Farthing's Veterans on the Farm Class. The March of Dimes Campaign now has less than a week to go. Time is rapidly running out.

Many people have asked what goes with the polio funds raised in this county. Here's what happens to the dimes and dollars you give to the March of Dimes: Half remains with the local chapter of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis. It is used to pay for that part of medical care which a local patient's family cannot afford and, in emergencies, to supplement the national epidemic aid fund. The other half is sent to national headquarters. It is used for research to find a means of preventing or curing the disease, education of highly skilled and much-needed professional personnel and for epidemic aid to chapters whose local treasuries are exhausted.

However the money is distributed, all of it comes back in some form of benefit to the community in which it is raised. It comes back in improved treatment methods, trained personnel and cash when it is needed. Eventually, polio investigators say, it will come back in the form of a vaccine to protect mankind against infantile paralysis. You can help assure every victim of this disease the adequate care he must have for as long as he needs it—by giving NOW. An increased amount, to the 1950 March of Dimes.

### Census Takers Needed In Watauga County

There is a need for census takers in Watauga county, District Supervisor Harry B. Moore of the Statesville office said yesterday. Watauga county needs one crew leader and 23 enumerators and there have been only about 10 applications, Mr. Moore said. The supervisor pointed out that his office hoped at least 50 persons from the county would apply for the census jobs. Crew leaders will receive \$12 a day and gas mileage and enumerators will be paid approximately \$8 a day. Persons interested in the jobs should apply to the Bureau of the Census in Statesville, N. C. Applications must be in the census office by January 31, for crew leaders and February 20 for enumerators.

The census taking task will start April 1, with crew leaders pay starting March 2 and enumerators March 28. A training center will be established in West Jefferson for crew leaders and enumerators. Mr. Moore urges all interested persons to apply to the Statesville office immediately. Two or three applicants from each township in the county are wanted.

**Bloodshed Boxscore**  
ON N. C. HIGHWAYS  
Killed Jan. 17 through Jan. 19 2  
Killed Jan. 17 through Jan. 19 58  
Killed thru Jan. 19 this year 33  
Killed thru Jan. 19, 1948 33  
Injured thru Jan. 19 this year 558  
Injured thru Jan. 19, 1948 343

### President Is To Be Invited

President Harry S. Truman is to be invited to speak during the celebration to be held in Watauga county during the summer of 1950, it was decided here on Friday-night, when a meeting of the Echoes of the Blue Ridge, Inc., was held to discuss speakers for the occasion. The celebration will be held June 29 through July 4, and will feature speeches by outstanding persons, pageantry, and parades.

The committee on honor guests also decided to invite Charlie "Choo Choo" Justice to crown the queen at the opening day celebration, and to try to obtain Miss Margaret Truman for a concert during the celebration dates or as close thereto as possible. Governor W. Kerr Scott will be invited, and his aid will be solicited in the inviting of the governors of other states surrounding North Carolina.

Plans for the celebration include a College Day, Governor's Day, and Farmer's Day. All college presidents in North Carolina, and a large number in surrounding states will be invited to attend on College Day. According to the committee's tentative plans, many other persons prominent in public life are to be invited.

### Tugman, Ashe Co. Farm Agent

Dana Tugman, son of Mr. and Mrs. Grady Tugman of Boone, has been named Farm Agent for Ashe county, it was learned last week.

Mr. Tugman, had been serving as assistant farm agent in the neighboring county since his graduation from State College last year.

### Fire Chief Thanks Blowing Rock Dept.

Howard Cottrell, chief of the Boone volunteer fire department, wishes to express sincere appreciation to the members of the Blowing Rock fire department, for bringing their equipment, and valiantly fighting the theatre fire last Saturday. Their aid was of prime importance in preventing the spread of the flame. Chief Cottrell also thanks all local volunteer firemen for their fine performance.

The Chief again warns motorists to stay off the water hose when fires are in progress and promises vigorous action against this violation in the future.

### App Wrestlers To Meet Marine Team

The Appalachian Wrestlers will meet the Cherry Point Marines Wednesday, February 8, in the Appalachian College Gymnasium.

The Apps have won five straight victories this year, while the Marines have lost only one match with Duke, and the Cherry Pointers will be out to break the winning streak of the locals, who only last week won over Alabama, Georgia and W. N. C.

### Junior Order Holds District Initiation

District three, Junior Order, held initiation ceremonies at the hall of Daniel Boone Council in Boone last Friday evening. Fifteen candidates were initiated by the degree team from North Wilkesboro and the hall was filled to capacity.

Fifteen Juniors came from Elk Park, fourteen from North Wilkesboro, in addition to the large attendance from Watauga. Refreshments were served. Ira S. Ayers, district counselor, presided.

### To Assist State Income Taxpayers

Mr. Wade H. Lee, deputy collector with the State department of revenue, will be in the grand jury room in the courthouse on February 16th and 17th for the purpose of assisting State income taxpayers in the filing of their returns.

**HALF BITS**  
Representatives Patman, of Texas, thinks it's about time for Congress to give legal dignity to the expression "two bits"—a quarter, that is. He has introduced a bill to authorize the coinage of "bits" and "half-bits." The "bit" would be worth twelve and a half cents and would contain a little more silver than a dime, while the "half-bit" would be worth six and a quarter cents and would presumably be made of nickel and copper.



SCENES AT THEATRE FIRE.—Scenes at the Appalachian Theatre, taken Saturday, while the big structure was being gutted by fire. Lower picture shows some of the throngs of onlookers who gathered on the Daniel Boone Hotel lawn to watch the conflagration. (Photos by Hank Freeman and Palmer Blair, of Palmer's Studio.)

### NONE HURT AS FIVE HUNDRED USHERED OUT

Boone, Blowing Rock Firemen Accomplish Heroic Task, as Hundreds Witness Conflagration; Rebuilding To Begin Soon, Says Owner; Theatre To Be One of State's Finest.

A fire originating in a backstage popcorn machine, swept through the Appalachian Theatre last Saturday afternoon, bringing a loss of \$75,000 to \$85,000, but the emergency was so skillfully handled by the management that the more than five hundred men, women and children, assembled in the playhouse, made an orderly exit just ahead of the raging flames.

Bob Agle, district manager for the Appalachian Theatre chain, owned principally by Mr. A. F. Sams of Statesville, and Jay Beach, local theatre manager, conducted the evacuation of the building, when it became apparent that the blaze couldn't be handled with the available fire extinguishers. A tank of cooking gas exploded in the rear just as the last of the throng reached the sidewalk, and the flames reached the front doors.

The local volunteer fire department went into action, while distraught parents, searched through the milling throngs of spectators for their children, who had been enjoying a western film. The local population and hundreds of rural shoppers filled all available space on the streets and at other vantage points as the local firemen and the Blowing Rock fire department conducted the fight on the roaring flames. Due to the diligence of the fire-fighters and volunteer helpers, the blaze never seriously threatened other structures in the downtown business block.

The building, the property of Mr. W. R. Winkler of Boone, and under lease to the Sams enterprises, was one of the most modern in this section of the state, and was built in 1937. The roof structure was destroyed, with the exception of the big supporting beams, which were never allowed to become hot enough to impair their strength. The walls, likewise, are undamaged, but floors, seats, projection machinery, carpeting, etc., were destroyed.

### Taxable Payrolls in County Take Jump

Taxable payrolls under the old-age program of the Federal Security Agency rose 87 per cent in Watauga county between 1946 and 1948, according to information received here from C. Parker Persons, Regional Director of the U. S. Department of Commerce in Atlanta.

Taxable payrolls under the program in 1948 totalled \$229,000 compared with \$122,000 in 1946. The information is included in booklets prepared by his agency entitled "County Business Patterns", now on sale at all field offices of the commerce department, Mr. Persons said. The information, he pointed out, was compiled for the purpose of helping businessmen to achieve greater sales performance and to plan their 1950 sales campaigns by supplying them with facts and figures pointing the way to potential demands for consumer and industrial goods.

The booklet, priced at 25c, shows, it was stated, that employment under the program in Watauga county went from 484 persons in 1946 to 734 in 1948. A total of 136 firms engaged in wholesale, retail, and service trade activities and other pursuits participated in the reporting.

The compilation is considered comprehensive in the business field, Mr. Persons stated, because the old-age program covers all business establishments employing one or more employees at any time during a reporting quarter, except self, family, casual, agricultural, domestic, railroad, and certain types of nonprofit organization employment.

The booklet issued by the commerce department reflects data for the State and for all counties. It shows the following additional information for 1948 on retail, wholesale, and the service trades, as well as other industries operating in Watauga county: Contract construction, 66 employees, and taxable payrolls, \$32,000; manufacturing, 106 and \$20,000; public utilities, 18 and \$6,000; wholesale trade, 53 and \$25,000; retail trade, 243 and \$80,000; finance, insurance, and real estate, 16 and \$6,000; and service industries, 205 and \$82,000.

### President's Ball Is Slated Here

### Ricker Is Bound To Spring Court

Carl Ricker, who was captured in the hills of Watauga county at the close of the noted man hunt, was arraigned for preliminary hearing Saturday before Homer Brown, Justice of the Peace, and bound to Watauga Superior Court on charges of carrying concealed weapons and destroying stolen property. In default of bond Ricker was returned to the Lenoir jail.

Farmers in the South now own about 700,000 tractors, twice as many as they had six years ago. About half of the State's farm land is classified as woodlands.

### Greer House Is Scene Of Fire

A two-story frame structure in suburban Perkinsville, occupied by the Trent Greer family, was damaged from \$2,500 to \$3,000 in a fire which developed from a fire Sunday evening. The loss is said to have been covered by insurance.

The local fire department quenched the blaze within a short time, and no other building was damaged.

Dimes for continuing the fight against polio. "Strong legs dance that weak ones may walk."

### Johnny Albea and his orchestra will play for the ball, and the proceeds will go to the March of Dimes.