

OATH OF OFFICE—Legislators take oaths of office in the House of Representatives Monday afternoon. Sworn from the First District are Rep. Vernon James of Pasquotank (foreground) and Rep. R.M. (Pete) Thompson of Chowan (at left). It was standing room only in the visitor galleries as friends and family of the legislators viewed the opening day proceedings of the General Assembly.

Local Residents Attend Swearing-In

By JACK GROVE
After an interval of 22 years, Chowan County again has a legislator in the General Assembly. R.M. (Pete) Thompson was sworn into office in the House of Representatives Monday morning along with some 30 other freshmen. The earlier Chowan legislator was Jim Earnhardt, an Edenton attorney, who stepped down in 1965.

About 30 county residents made the trek to Raleigh to see Thompson and veteran First District Rep. Vernon James of Pasquotank take their oaths of office.

Alton Elmore, Chairman of the County Board of Commissioners, was present for the opening ceremonies and commented that the visitor galleries were "just jam-packed." He credited the number of new legislators with at-

tracting such huge crowds of family members and friends.

The chairman said that the hometown folks had a good view of Thompson and James during the proceedings. It was a cold and extremely windy day across the state and Elmore, noting that it was cold and flu season and that there was 100 per cent attendance of legislators, said, "It's quite an accomplishment to have everybody present on swearing-in day."

Thompson's desk is right behind that of James at the right front of the chamber facing the Speaker's chair. In noting this fact, Elmore offered, "Pete is very fortunate in having a veteran such as Vernon James to help guide him along as a freshman. Of course, he could do well on his own, but he can do tremendously better with a good friend like Vernon James."

Other observations were made by town councilmen Allen B. Harless and E.N. (Pete) Manning, also in attendance. Manning said, "If more people had realized the impact Thompson will have on the local area, there would have been a lot more of our local citizens there."

Elmore, Harless and Manning had never attended an opening day of the General Assembly. The councilmen couldn't get into the crowded gallery and could only watch through a glass wall. Harless nonetheless found it "very impressive", though he could not hear the proceedings.

He commented, "It has been a number of years since we've had someone from Chowan County to be our Representative. I don't think it's anything but true." That the citizens of the county will have more direct access to the legislature, "however, he's there to serve the whole area." He pointed out that Thompson has roots in Perquimans and Pasquotank Counties as well. He summed up, "It's always an ad-

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Free Ride For Too Long

North Carolina Railroad Company was in the news recently because, with no operating expenses of its own, it had managed to run a deficit during the last fiscal year. That prompted us to take a closer look at the submerged portion of this corporate iceberg.

North Carolina owns a little over two-thirds of the stock outstanding in the North Carolina Railroad Company, which, in turn, owns some 474.8 miles of track and siding from Charlotte through the Piedmont Crescent and the state capital to Goldsboro.

More precisely, the state owns 3,000,200 of the 4,000,000 shares, the remaining 999,800 being held by private citizens. Thus, the state controls a very big company. In addition to the tracks, its holdings include six acres of land in Charlotte's business district, 150 acres just south of Clayton, and several other parcels of land, together with improvements, along the line.

But all of this property is operated by Southern Railway Company under a 99-year lease entered into back in 1896, when dollars looked much bigger than they do today. This lease expires January 1, 1995; but a second lease covering the Charlotte property, signed in 1968, when dollars didn't look so large, is just as sweet as the first. It expires on December 31, 2067.

Under the terms of the first lease, Southern Railway gained control of property, roadbed and facilities for an annual rental of only \$286,000, but agreed to pay all income, property and franchise taxes. Under the second lease, covering the property in Charlotte, Southern Railway agreed to pay an annual rental of \$90,000 through the 50th year, then no more than 6 per cent of the appraised value of the property per year for the balance of the contract.

Thus, for \$376,000 a year, the Southern Railway Company has enjoyed the use of a property now valued from \$125 million to \$512 million, depending on how you look at it. Even at the rate of 6 per cent and at the lowest value, the state ought to be receiving \$7,500,000 a year.

From that it is apparent that a great deal will be at stake when the original lease comes up for renewal in 1995. How much is this property really worth to the Southern Railway Company? It is an important link in the Southern's system, connecting its main line from Washington south. A large portion of its traffic moves over it.

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Center Hill Home Is Destroyed In Early Morning Blaze

The home of James Mondis in the Center Hill community was completely destroyed by fire Monday night. No one was home when the fire was discovered.

Center Hill Fire Chief Leon Evans said his department was called just before 4 a.m. Tuesday after a motorist noticed the blaze. The home was engulfed in

flames when firefighters arrived and Evans said, "You couldn't even tell where it started. When it's like that, you just feel helpless."

Edenton Fire Dept. has answered three alarms recently, two for minor fires.

Fire Chief Lynn Perry said the first occurred just before 9 p.m.

February 6 when a chimney caught fire in the home of Samuel Robison on Bayview Drive. No damage was reported.

A stove fire at the home of Alice Williams brought the fire department to 72 Chowan Court at 7:44 a.m. Monday. Smoke damage was minor.

Perry and Chowan County Forestry Ranger Roger Spivey

have issued a word of caution after a brush fire was contained on Airport Road around 2:30 p.m. Monday.

Since the fire started on the shoulder of the highway and burned into the edge of the woods, Perry said they believed the fire was caused when someone threw a burning cigarette from a passing vehicle.

"I know we've had a lot of rain, but the ground surface is getting dry and it's time for people to start burning for spring clearing. A brush fire can get out of hand quickly, especially in high winds. People should be careful when they begin to burn fields and ditches," Perry said.

Council Delays Decision On Rezoning

Edenton Mayor John Dowd stepped aside as presiding officer at the town council meeting Tuesday night during two rezoning hearings for property, owned by Judy Earnhardt Adams, that straddles N.C. 32 north on the east side of the intersection with U.S. 17 bypass.

Dowd gave as his reason, a business relationship with developer Bob Thomas through Dowd's real estate company. Thomas is planning the construction of a shopping center on the west side of U.S. 17 at the intersection with N.C. 32. Mayor Pro Tem Willis Privott then presided.

The first hearing dealt with a request to rezone 20 acres located at the southwest corner of the highway intersection from R-20 (residential) to CH (highway commercial). The parcel is adjacent to the Edenton United Methodist Church.

The second parcel of 20 acres is across Virginia Road (N.C. 32) behind McDonald's and the Golden Corral. That request was for a change from R-20 (residential) to CS (shopping center).

After well over an hour of spirited exchange from various speakers for and against the requests in an over-flowing council chamber, the council voted unanimously to continue the sub-

ject to a February 24 meeting and a final decision. The continuance was due to council's concern that adequate notice by mail had not been given to neighbors bordering the Adams property.

Gil Burroughs and Thomas questioned the rezonings. Burroughs was concerned about future use of the first parcel if the rezoning was passed and Adams subsequently sold to another developer who might not follow her stated aim of developing a professional park. The park would have offices for medical and other professionals. Highway commercial would also allow such other businesses as auto repair, shops, mobile home parks and service stations.

Adams' attorney Troy Smith, countered that town ordinances and building permits would hold the property to the planned use. Some council members showed through facial expressions, their doubt at this assertion.

Adams said at the hearing, "I would like to tell you that I met with the planning board (Monday night) and they were unanimous in their approval (of the rezoning)." She also assured the council, "I want to enhance what's there." Several members of the adjacent church spoke in favor of the rezoning.

From the audience, Rae Knox asked if Mrs. Adams wasn't also considering a restaurant for the location? Mrs. Adams acknowledged that she was considering that possibility.

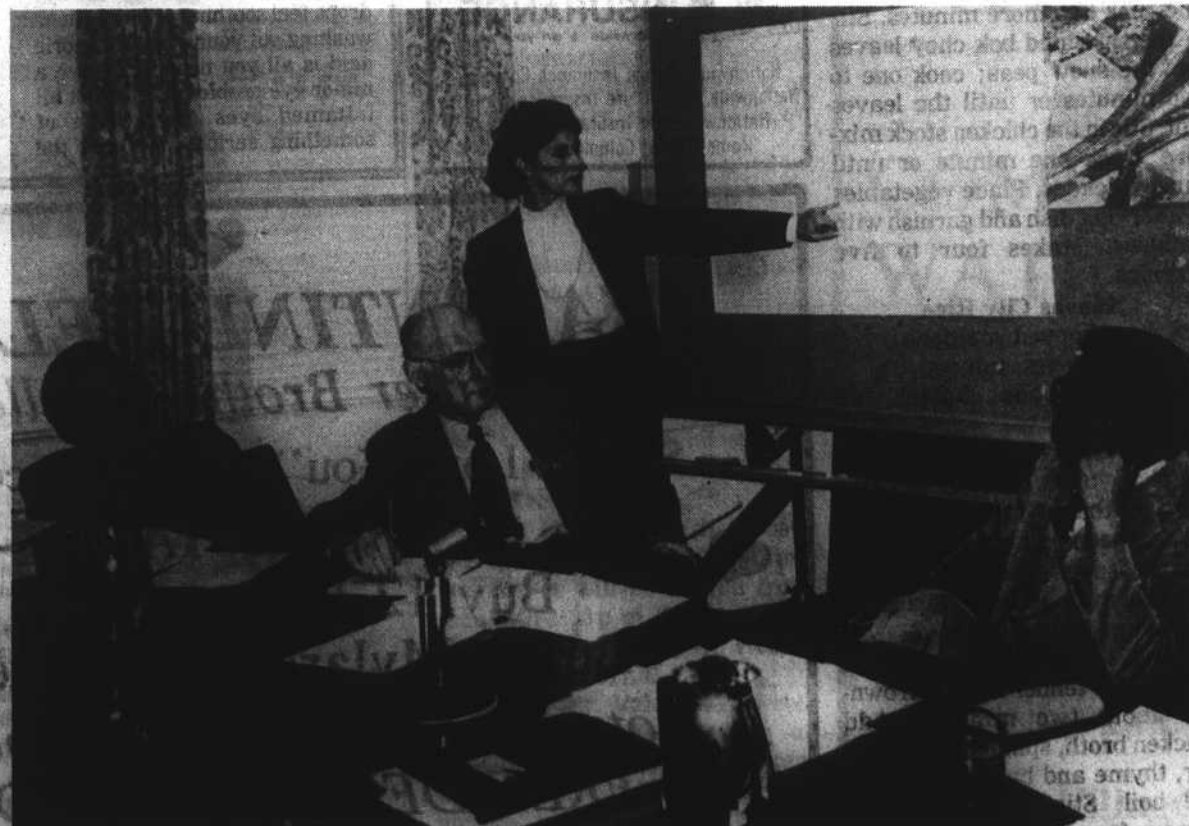
During the hearing on the other tract, a representative of a development company retained by Mrs. Adams, provided information on a proposed shopping center to be called Colonial Shopping Center. He said that three anchor tenants, dubbed "triple A tenants," had been located.

While he said that the identity of the three could not now be identified, "We foresee this as a regional center, not just for Edenton."

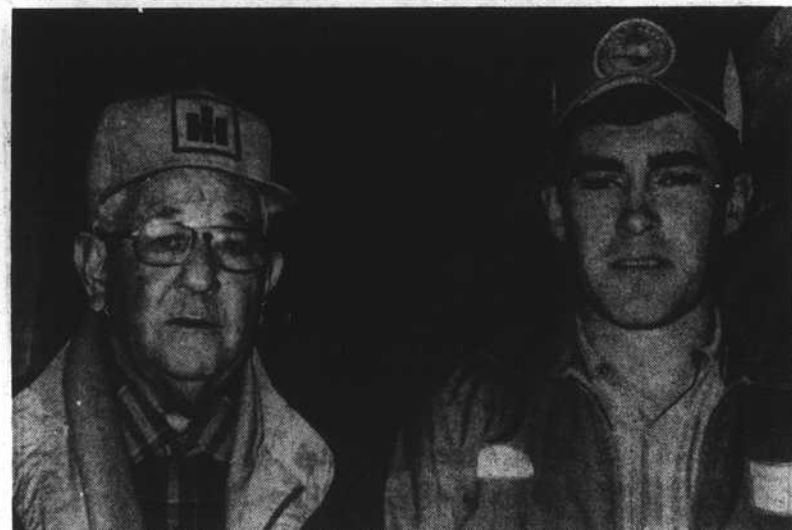
David Twiddy spoke out against the center, contending that property values of residents on Morris Circle near the complex would fall. The developer replied that his company had seen property values go up in other areas where it had built shopping centers.

Thomas rose to say, "I can be accused of speaking from a selfish interest." He said that at the planning board meeting, the statement was made that "her tenants would completely bypass Edenton if this wasn't approved." Calling it a childish statement, he said, "If they would bypass Edenton,

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MAKES POINT—Judy Earnhardt Adams points to the location of a proposed shopping center behind McDonald's and the Golden Corral. She spoke at a town council hearing on rezoning of her property for that purpose. Councilmen (l to r) are E.N. (Pete) Manning, Herbert Hollowell and Mayor Pro Tem Willis Privott.



FARM SAVE DAY—Businessmen and farmers across the area have worked together to sponsor a day of tribute to farmers Saturday in Elizabeth City. Tom Byrum (left) donated time and offered a building and Mike Nixon (right) and his father, Earl Nixon, donated porkers for the pig picking.

Farm Save Day Nearing

By JEANETTE WHITE
Valentine's Day is traditionally a day of love, and people in the Albemarle area will use the day to show love and appreciation for farmers from Carolina to California.

Area businessmen and planners are expecting up to 100,000 people from across the nation to converge on Elizabeth City State University Saturday for Farm Save Day, planned so growers can meet at a grassroots level and talk about solutions to problems that have caused the farm crisis.

The idea began more than a year ago when Eugene Meads of Pasquotank County tried to think of a way to say thank you to the nation's farmers. From his idea, the plans have snowballed.

One worker with Farm Save, W. A. Weeks said, "Response has been fantastic, overwhelming. We have had calls from people everywhere. We have whole planes booked and caravans driving from Georgia, the Eastern Shore and places in North Carolina."

As plans grew, a command post was necessary to handle calls and publicity. Monday afternoon the vice-president of the N.C. Future Farmers of America, volunteers from the Coast Guard and Week's wife were answering calls on one

of 17 toll-free coast-to-coast lines donated by telephone companies.

Continental and Eastern Airlines have provided transportation at 80 percent discount, local businesses and farmers are donating food for an all-day pig picking with up to 150 hogs, host families and motels are providing housing and ECSU is providing meeting places and a cafeteria. A shuttle service from Norfolk airport to Elizabeth City will provide transportation.

Renowned entertainers who have contacted Farm Save and said they would like to help include Ricky Scaggs and Joe Namath. Edie Adams, who lost an almond farm last year, cannot appear but will hold a press conference on the West Coast to talk about the plight of farmers. Perquimans County's James (Catfish) Hunter will be a guest. One company provided a computer to answer 10,000 telephone calls daily so Hunter could talk with people asking for information.

A restaurateur in Danville, Va., called to say he is bringing a cooker 17 feet wide and 27 feet long to cook 660 pounds of pork in four hours.

In Chowan County, hogs were

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