



Meekins Given Life In Prison Instead Of Death Penalty

By JEANETTE WHITE

The same jury which found Eazed Rudolph Meekins guilty of first degree murder last week recommended Tuesday that he be given life imprisonment instead of the death penalty.

Judge Fred Williams of Durham further sentenced Meekins to 49 years for first degree burglary, 40 years for first degree kidnapping and five years for felonious larceny. Williams ordered the sentences to run

consecutively. One charge of felonious possession of stolen goods against Meekins was dropped after the judge said it was not proper after Meekins had been convicted of stealing the items.

Meekins had been charged with the April 29, 1986 disappearance and death of Ethel S. Owens, 79, of Harbinger. The victim disappeared from her home and was not seen again until her body was found on an isolated section of U.S. 158 in Currituck County May 3.

After the trial, which found Meekins guilty of all charges, a sentencing hearing began Monday in Chowan Superior Court.

The defendant listened impassively as Roger Allen, Ph.D., testified that Meekins had a history of mental and emotional problems and had been committed to Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro twice, Dorethea Dix in Raleigh once, and had been treated by Albemarle Mental Health on an irregular basis since 1975.

Allen said Meekins' abusive father was an alcoholic diabetic who died when the defendant was in his teens, but that the son was close to the father and suffered anguish when a rescue squad would not come to get the father the night of his death because of a history of alcohol problems.

Allen said Meekins suffered from "very severe mental disorders", with delusions and audio and visual hallucinations, once jumping through a window when he thought he saw an elephant in his bedroom.

The doctor further stated that Meekins enjoyed self-mutilation and bore scars of more than 50 self-inflicted cuts on his left

forearm. "He feels a great deal of inner pressure and gets relief when he cuts his arm with a razor and watches it bleed," Allen said.

Allen said Meekins suffered from the paranoia that someone was trying to hurt him and a marriage failed after a few months when Meekins feared his wife was trying to poison him.

He said Meekins had an IQ of 66, which places him in the bottom one percent of the population and that he operated his life at the mental age of 11-years-old.

"If he has thoughts, he's likely to act on them without thinking. He takes one day at a time, whatever comes down the pike," Allen said.

The doctor testified that the defendant began sexual activity at age 12 and considered himself to be a "ladies man. I think that's important to him," Allen said. "He told me his family was against his interracial dating."

The doctor said Meekins appeared to be proud of his sexual prowess and was interested in dating a number of women and having a variety of sexual encounters.

In summation before the jury determined a sentence for the

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CONVICTED—Eazed Rudolph Meekins is shown being escorted back to Chowan County Jail by Edenton Police Chief John Parrish and Sheriff Fred Spruill. Not in the picture were three other officers in the escort. Security was extremely tight during the trial which found Meekins guilty of the kidnapping and murder of a Currituck County woman in April.

Commissioners Support Site Relocation

Chowan County Commissioners recently threw their support behind the proposed relocation of Edenton's visitor center from the Barker House to the Ziegler House which is adjacent to the Post Office parking lot.

They were asked for a resolution of support by Historic Edenton Commission chairman Jack Pruden who told them, "I just want to emphasize what tourism means to Edenton."

Citing 1985 statistics from the N.C. Division of Tourism, he said that tourism meant \$4.6 billion statewide. Chowan County realized \$3,985,000 in travel related income while Perquimans received \$402,000 and Bertie \$357,000. Examples of travel related businesses include gas stations, motels and restaurants.

In addition, Pruden said that 256 persons were employed in the county in these businesses.

Commissioners were told that Historic Edenton bought the Ziegler property in 1980 and resold it to the state in 1981. Pruden said that two attempts have been made to get renovation funding from the

General Assembly and that another try is being made this year to get a grant of \$200,000.

The commission board heard that the Town of Edenton had already sent a resolution of support to the district's legislative delegation and that one was needed from the county. "This is going to be a great asset to Edenton," Pruden stated.

Linda Eure, site manager of the visitor center, in giving visitation figures, told the board that "There's been a lot of wear and tear on the Barker House." Her statistics show a steadily increasing stream of visitors to the center. In 1971 there were 8,642, in 1980, 15,906 and last year, 26,431. She maintained, "The Barker House was never intended to be

the permanent visitor center." She explained that the steering committee that organized Historic Edenton in the late 1960's meant for the Barker House to be only the temporary location.

In addition to wear and tear, the site manager pointed out that the Barker House had inadequate public restrooms and a smaller than adequate audio-visual room.

Mrs. Eure said that if the Ziegler House became the visitor center site, the state would fund two or three new staff positions.

She was asked about the current budget for the center. She said that in 1986 the town appropriated \$5,000 and the county \$4,000 for its operating expenses. Other income

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Town Manager Is Chosen

By JACK GROVE

The Town of Edenton will soon have a Town Manager running its day to day affairs. It was announced this week that Phillip S. Whitaker, currently Town Administrator in Marshville, N.C., has accepted the position in Edenton.

The town has been without a professional manager since the departure of Sam Noble on January 9. Office staff personnel were appointed to fill the void. Linda Edmundson was appointed interim town manager and Janet Hines as assistant interim town manager.

Whitaker, 44, has a Master's Degree in Public Administration from UNC-Chapel Hill and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from the same university. After six years in management positions with Burlington Industries, he entered the public administration field as finance director in Carrboro.

He also served as Assistant Town Manager with Carrboro before moving on to Marshville.

The search for a town manager led city fathers to consider over 40 applications for the Edenton job. These were narrowed down to six applicants who were then interviewed for the position. The field was further winnowed to three, including a woman, before the final selection of Whitaker.

Whitaker moves up from a town of 2,200 with a budget of \$1,125,000 to Edenton with a population of over 5,500 and an annual budget of over \$9 million.

Married, the Whitakers have two children, 16 and 12 years of age. He said that the family will

stay in Marshville, 35 miles east of Charlotte, for the remainder of the school year. The family is "very active in the First Baptist Church of Marshville".

The new manager said that he had brought the family to look at Edenton and they liked what they saw. "It was a difficult decision leaving Marshville, but I'm looking forward to coming to Edenton," Whitaker said in a telephone interview.

He will report to work in his new position on April 21.

Deputy To Leave CSD

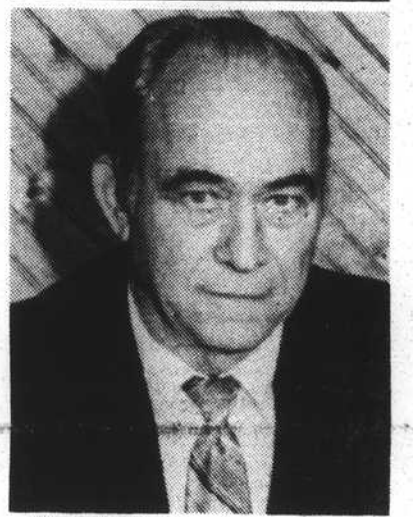
Chowan County Sheriff's Department will soon be losing its chief deputy after Mrs. Linda Terry was notified Monday that she has been chosen as probation and parole officer to work out of Perquimans County.

Mrs. Terry has been with the Sheriff's department eight years. She said, "I will miss the people I've worked with, but I'll still be serving the people, just in a different capacity."

She emphasized her change of jobs was not caused by any problems in the sheriff's department, but was a career move she has been contemplating for more than two years.

The deputy is married to Bland Terry and the couple has four-year-old twins, a boy and a girl.

"We hate to lose Chief Deputy Terry from our department, but I am happy for her sake because of the advancement in her career. We wish her well in her new job," Sheriff Fred Spruill said Wednesday.



Rep. R.M. (Pete) Thompson

Thompson Will Report

Representative R. M. (Pete) Thompson, D-Chowan, has indicated he expects to report to area citizens the activities of the General Assembly. Following is the first of these reports.

Rep. Thompson said "My first four weeks of representing the First District in the General Assembly have been a very interesting and unique experience for me. After 33 years of working with young people, farm families, local and state agencies and being involved in community activities, I am having to adjust to an even wider range of needs of the citizens of our state."

"Mrs. Mary Moore agreed to

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ESC Searching For Oldest Employee In County

The Employment Security Commission (ESC) office in Edenton is looking for the oldest employee working in Chowan County. The ESC is featuring radio spots on station WZBO asking listeners to nominate older workers for recognition by ESC manager Gordon E. Allen

The ESC each year promotes the National "Employ The Older Worker Week," March 9-14. The commission is calling attention to the fact that hiring and employing workers over 45 years old is a good business practice.

Charles T. Skinner, Older Worker Specialist in the Edenton office stated that many of the workers over 45 are settled, dependable and willing to begin a new career of employment in a new occupational field.

In past years, Allen said that attention was called to the older worker week through proclamations signed by the mayor and chairman of the county commissioners.

"This year we're putting kind of

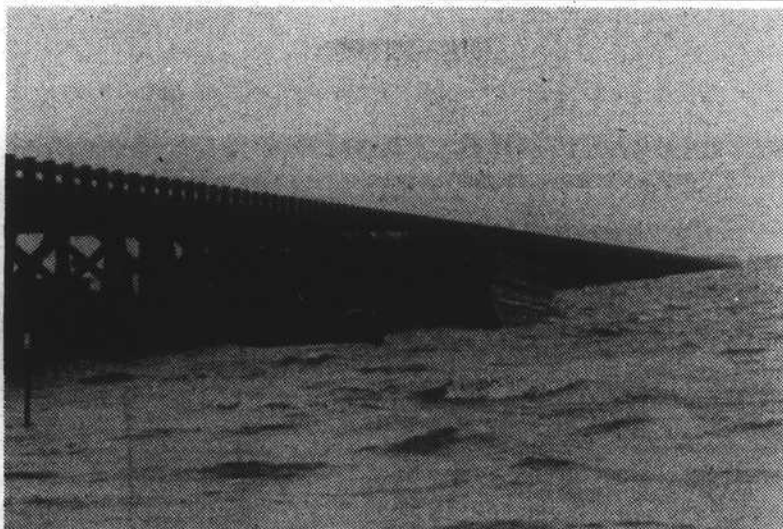
a different twist on it," he said. Area residents are being urged to call or mail in their nominations to the radio station or the ESC office. A certificate recognizing Chowan's oldest employee will be presented by Allen next week.

The ESC keeps a tally on older

workers placed in jobs through its office. In the eight months since their program year started in July, Allen said that 66 persons, 45 or older, were placed in jobs.

Skinner is keeping a special tally for this week on those placed

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BARGE RAMS BRIDGE—A work barge being used on the construction of the new Albemarle Sound Bridge broke its moorings in high winds Monday night and rammed the old bridge. It is shown tied up to the bridge Tuesday.

Loose Barge Rams Sound Bridge

Problems with bridges continue to plague builders and highway officials after a barge broke from its mooring Monday night and rammed the old Albemarle Sound Bridge.

A. E. Bradley, resident engineer with the N.C. Dept. of Transportation, said he estimated the accident occurred around 3 a.m. Tuesday.

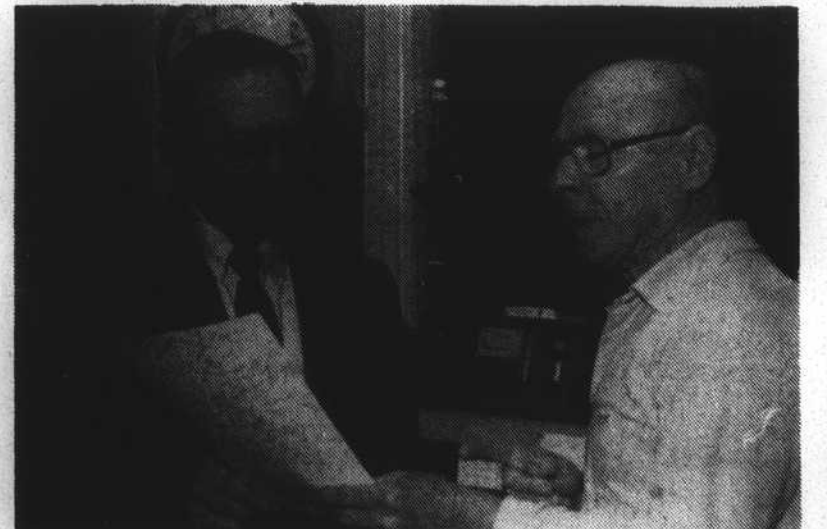
The barge belonged to companies constructing the new sound bridge and was moored one and one-half miles offshore from Soundview Restaurant, about 200 feet from the bridge.

Bradley says high winds and ground swells probably played a part in the accident. He estimated wind gales of 45-50 miles per hour and swells of five to six feet when the barge broke loose.

The barge rammed into the bridge and bounced back and forth into pilings for one and one-half miles, breaking at least three pilings and moving several others.

"The bridge is safe for travel, but just to be sure, we decided to close one lane until repairs are made," Bradley said.

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OLDER WORKER WEEK—Charles T. Skinner (left) and WZBO radio personality Pat Flanagan were on the air Tuesday morning promoting Older Worker Week, March 9-14. The ESC is seeking the oldest employee in Chowan County.