



Jury Deliberation Halted In Murder Trial

By JACK GROVE

The murder trial of Claude Augustus Felton has progressed much faster than either prosecutors or defense counsels expected. Assistant District Attorney Nancy Lamb said that the speedy selection of a jury last week was part of the reason.

Both sides also expected the

proceedings to be slowed by the necessity of having sign language interpretation for Felton who can neither hear or speak. The interpreters however, skillfully kept up with the court. They asked for something to be repeated only a few times.

After the case went to the jury Tuesday afternoon, de-

fense attorney Bill Culpepper said of them, "They're amazing." District Attorney H.P. Williams readily agreed with him.

Twelve jurors and three alternates were selected by Wednesday of last week. The state then began a parade of witnesses and presented 57 exhibits to prove its case that

Felton bludgeoned and stabbed Sarah Ann Jones to death and shot to death her 11 year-old daughter, Falinda.

Clinical pathologist Dr. Page Hudson testified that Mrs. Jones was stabbed nine times and that death was almost instantaneous from a stab wound to the base of the aorta. He said that she also suffered a skull fracture that could have been inflicted by a broken Pepsi bottle found at the scene.

He said that death was quick also for Falinda who died from a .25 caliber pistol shot to the top of the head that traveled all the way through her brain.

Forensic tests by the SBI lab tended to show that fibers found on the clothing that Felton wore the night of August 27-28, 1988 were identical to some of those taken from victims' clothing. A bloody handprint on the wall near a window was also identified by the SBI lab as that of Felton.

The defense team brought in its own scientific experts. One was Haywood R. Starling of Raleigh who was SBI Director for ten years before his retirement in 1984. Both men's credentials as "expert witnesses" were questioned by Williams who said that neither had had modern training in fingerprint, blood and fiber analysis.

Starling testified that there was no identifiable fingerprint along with the bloody palm print on the wall and

questioned if it was even blood. Williams on cross-examination caustically asked him, "Isn't it a fact that you don't know what you're talking about Mr. Starling?"

Witnesses for both sides put Felton at several Hertford night spots on the night of August 27 and the early morning hours of the 28th.

Two prosecution witnesses placed him in Edenton from 3:30 to 4:10 a.m. Robin Fletcher testified that he talked with Felton on Fletcher's mother's front porch on Blade St. His mother, Geraldine Spivey, followed him to the stand to back up his testimony. She said she was awakened by someone on the porch, went to the door and was told by Robin that Felton had been there looking for another of her sons.

Throughout the questioning of witnesses as to Felton's whereabouts that fatal night, Culpepper continually challenged their memories as to exact or even approximate times. "In fact you don't remember exactly what time it was," he was heard to say repeatedly.

One witness testified that she saw Felton many Sundays at the store where she worked and, prior to August 27, 1988, he always had in his possession a small caliber pistol that she thought to be either a .25 or .22 caliber and a knife in a sheath.

The Sunday after the murder
Continued On Page 8



MURDER TRIAL--Defense attorney Samuel Dixon reaches for information provided by SBI agent Dwight Ransome as Dixon's co-counsel Bill Culpepper makes notes. On trial for a double murder is Claude A. Felton (behind Culpepper). This is one of the first pictures ever taken in a Chowan courtroom. (Photo courtesy of The Daily Advance, media photo pool representative.)

Already All-American

We are happy to see that Edenton is seeking to have itself designated an All-America City. That can be a long, tedious process, requiring sustained effort, unflagging enthusiasm and a pretty even balance of faith and hope.

Sometimes applications have to be resubmitted year after year before attracting the attention of the National Civic League, sponsor of the award.

We, of course, do not know at this stage how this endeavor will come out; but, for our part, Edenton is already an All-America City.

That should not disparage the efforts of Mayor John Dowd's 18-member committee. In fact, it should raise their confidence in what they are trying to do.

What are some of the things that make this town on Queen Anne's Creek a suitable candidate for All-America status? Let us cite a few:

Edenton is a civilized community in the finest sense of the word, where civility reigns among the races and courtesy among the classes. It did not wait until under the stricture of some court order to give its minority citizens a fair shake at the ballot box, but moved on its own to establish voting districts that offered them an equal opportunity to send their candidates to positions on the town board and administrative staff.

Edenton is a town with a long history and a proud heritage, having supported an organized society for almost three centuries. Once the state capital, its citizens were protesting onerous taxation before the people of Boston were dumping tea into the harbor.

Continued On Page 8

Town Forum Scheduled

RALEIGH -- Gov. Jim Martin will hold a town meeting in Windsor on Monday, February 12, as a part of his continuing effort to hold forums for North Carolina citizens.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the superior courtroom at the Bertie County Courthouse. The town meeting format allows citizens to discuss any topic they wish with Governor Martin, who will moderate the public discussion.

"The town meeting allows North Carolinians to talk to their governor and to voice their concerns without traveling to Raleigh," Governor Martin said. "Not only does this allow me to answer their questions directly, it gives me the chance to have a better understanding of their concerns and to hear their suggestions for possible solutions."

The town meeting in Windsor is the 33rd in a series the governor began in 1985. An interpreter for deaf citizens will be present at the meeting.

More Candidates File

Candidates continued to file in local races this week with only days to go before the deadline. Last opportunities will be tomorrow and until noon Monday.

Emmett E. Winborne tossed his hat in the ring Monday for Seat Two, District One, county commission board. Carlton Nixon had previously filed for the seat. It will be the only seat available this year in the district.

Yesterday, Leon Nixon joined the competition for the same seat. All three filed as

Democrats and will battle for the position in the May primaries.

Until yesterday, incumbent Republican Sheriff Fred Spruill had no competition for his badge. That changed as

E.C. Toppin entered the race as a Democrat.

Toppin stated, "I have filed for the office for many reasons, the main three being: I want to be Sheriff of Chowan

Continued On Page 8

Signs Will Be Posted

New regulatory signs will be posted in downtown Edenton, possibly by next week.

With downtown on-street parking often in short supply, some drivers, spotting parking on the opposite side of the street, swing left across Broad St. to claim the spot.

This practice has caused accidents and near-accidents, resulting in citizen complaints to Town Manager Anne-Marie Kelly.

In checking with Police Chief C.H. Williams, Ms. Kelly learned that a new ordinance would not be necessary. A no-left turn ordinance has been in effect for years. But due to a lack of posted signs, it was not enforced.

Prison inmates made the soon-to-be erected signs.

When asked about the new traffic signal on Virginia Road at Chowan Crossing Shopping Center, Ms. Kelly said that the Department of Transportation (DOT), at the town's request, conducted a study to determine the need and placement of the light.

The light regulates traffic at the southern entrance to the shopping center. She said it would be up to DOT to ascertain the need for another light at the northern entrance.

The present light was installed two weeks ago.

Police Investigate Two Robberies

Edenton Police were kept busy the first part of this week when two armed robberies occurred.

Authorities learned of the first on Sunday night at 10:40 when an S&R employee came to the 911 Central Communications office to report it.

She said that she had left the store at 10:30 to make a routine nightly deposit at the Peoples Bank night depository box. She left her car and as she walked around the car's rear, she spotted two black males jogging toward her from the front.

One was wearing a ski mask and the other a nylon stocking over his face. She thought that one was also carrying some kind of weapon.

As she began running away from them, she threw the bank bag down and then tripped over a curb and fell. One of the men grabbed the bag and they fled. An undisclosed amount of money was taken.

Investigating the incident are Capt. G.K. Bonner, Chief C.H. Williams, Sgt. Joe Norman and Officers L.C. Brothers, Don Harris, Linnard Bonner and Wayne Forehand.

The second robbery took place shortly after midnight on Tuesday morning at the Red Apple Market on No. Broad St. Police received the call at 24 minutes into the new day.

Chief Williams said that a lone black male approached the clerk at the counter and ordered a pack of cigarettes. As she was reaching for them, she saw the man reach into his pocket and draw a gun. She gave him a handful of money from the register after

he demanded, "Give me your money."

As the thief was leaving with the gun in his left hand, it discharged into the sidewalk and police recovered the spent slug.

Williams said that the clerk gave them an "excellent description" of the man and

that they were able to track him as far as the swimming pool at the Coach House Inn.

Another witness in the area reported seeing two men running to a car and driving away. The car's description was provided to police.

Shortly afterward, using information from previous

reports and the descriptions, officers went to 39 Davis Place where they arrested Antonio Mortinez Gonzales, 16, of Virginia Beach, Va. He was charged with the Red Apple robbery. The handgun was not recovered.

While at the apartment,
Continued On Page 8

Local Chamber Presents Awards

The American Legion Building's main hall was filled to capacity Saturday night as Edenton-Chowan Chamber of Commerce members dined on prime rib and danced to the music of DJ, Jack Revels.

Speeches were purposely kept short, chamber officials said, at the annual banquet and dance. A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the John A. Mitchener, Jr. Business Person of the Year Award and the William P. (Spec) Jones Volunteer of the Year Award.

The business award went to Tom Shepard who could not be present to accept the honor. His working career included the Edenton Peanut Mill, Jimbo's Jumbos, Blue Cross and a stint as Chowan Clerk of Superior Court. He then became affiliated with Home Feed and Fertilizer which he recently sold to W.S. Clark of Tarboro.

Phil Tant, captain of the Edenton Rescue Squad unit, was selected for the volunteer award. Tant is an employee of the N.C. Soil Conservation Service and was a statewide winner of the SCS Performance Award for 1988.

Among his many volun-

teer efforts are: the Edenton Fire Dept.; rescue squad; evaluator for Eagle Scout safety and first aid badges; and assistant leader for Girl Scout Cadet Troop 796.

The theme for the evening was "A Winter Wonderland" which was carried out with extensive and attractive decorations. Three chamber

presidents had places on the banquet program - past, present and future.

Jim Elliott, 1989 president, told the group, "It really doesn't seem like a year since I began my term. We've had a very successful year." He singled out the new COA Edenton Chowan Adult Edu-

Continued On Page 8



CHAMBER VOLUNTEER AWARD--Phil Tant received the Spec Jones Volunteer Award from Betz Ricks Saturday night at the annual chamber of commerce banquet and dance.

Goal: 75 Pints

Bloodmobile

Chowan Hospital ~ Monday, February 5 ~ 3 P.M. to 7 P.M.

Sponsored By: Edenton Jaycees