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The weekend weather: Friday, high 88, low 47, hum. 50 percent; Saturday, high 83, low 58, hum. 40 percent and .10 inches of rain fell; Sunday, high 64, low 46, hum. 45 percent. Robert Dedmond says we're in "blackberry winter".

We recently had the opportunity to sit down with seven of the ten candidates seeking their party's nomination for Polk County commissioner.

On May 5, Polk County voters will choose three Democrats from a field of four candidates, and three Republicans from a field of six.

We asked bright, active helpers in every township to talk to neighbors and friends about their concerns, and then asked the candidates to address those concerns.

Today we begin running the results of those interviews, in question and answer form. We will include one Democrat and one Republican each day, running in alphabetical order, until all the interviews have been presented to you.

The questions for each interview did not vary, but do vary in the presentation here where a candidate either did not respond

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Accidental Fire Consumes Riddle's Stoneybrook Home

The Stoneybrook home of Paul T. Riddle was destroyed by fire Saturday morning.

The fire had breached the roof when the Columbus Fire Department reached the scene just after midnight Saturday, and Chief Geoff Tennant said the firemen could only try to keep the fire from spreading beyond the house. The house could not be saved.

The fire began when a blanket was placed over a lamp by the two Riddle children and their two overnight guests who were pretending to be camping out. The upstairs and downstairs doors were left open as the family fled, creating a draft which further fueled the fire, Tennant said.

"The fire was of totally innocent origin," the chief said. "And it is understandable that the doors were left open as they were used to escape. But that doesn't help us."

Riddle was formerly a drummer with the Marshall Tucker Band and lost valuable moments of his days with the band in the fire, Tennant said.

The Green Creek, Mill Spring and Sunny View fire departments also were on the scene and Tryon was on standby, Tennant said. Firemen fought the fire until 5:02 a.m. Saturday and were called back four times.

"It just kept flaring," Tennant said. "It was virtually impossible to put it out."

Three Of Six Republicans Take Part In Party Forum

Three of the six Republican candidates seeking their party's nomination to run for the Polk County Board of Commissioners participated in the party forum Saturday night.

Incumbents John Edwards and Jeannie Martin were at the Republican Pig Pickin' in person, while Grover Whitmire had his prepared answers read by party vice-chairman Karen Edwards. Whitmire was attending a national school board association convention in Florida with his wife, Ann, chairman of the Polk County Board of Education.

Jessie Foy, Ross Gosnell and Joan Skipper were not in attendance and no reason was announced.

The three candidates who participated fielded eight prepared questions, and the two present fielded several more questions from the audience.

As the evening was about to wind up, Bob Worsnop asked party chairman Larry Poe why only three candidates participated.

"I don't know what to tell you," Poe said. "It was the party's thinking that with three nominations and six candidates, that if the candidates could be here and speak for themselves, they would have the best opportunity to present their views and win votes. These

(Continued On Page Four)

Government Owns Red Fox, But Says 'Upset Bid Likely'

The auction only took about 12 minutes Monday at high noon. Substitute Trustee Bob York of Raintree Realty in Asheville read a brief description of Red Fox Country Club and then asked for bids.

Albert L. Smead Jr., the attorney for the federal savings and loan bailout agency, Resolution Trust Corp. (RTC), gave the first and only bid, \$1,742,500.

"Any other bids," York shouted to about 200 onlookers at the Polk County courthouse steps. "Going once, twice, three times. Sold to the RTC."

North Carolina law requires a ten day period in which anyone can offer an "upset bid" of at least 5 percent more, in this case \$87,175 more than the RTC's bid. RTC officers said they expect an upset bid will be filed.

If an upset bid is filed, four to six weeks later another open auction will be held on the courthouse steps to see if any other bidders want to top that bid.

The foreclosure sale Monday might have ended this chapter in the saga of Red Fox Country Club, which became an asset on the RTC's books when N.C. Federal Savings and Loan failed in March 1990. Red Fox had defaulted on a \$2.6 million loan to N.C. Federal.

It might have, but the RTC's
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