

Helms camp doesn't respond

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It was also the first time, Pitt said, that the state's black press was "unified in its efforts to distribute news and information throughout North Carolina. The same things affect blacks in Winston-Salem as in Charlotte."

Four candidates were invited to attend two separate press conferences last Friday, but two declined. The black publishers initially hoped to conduct a press conference with both Hunt and incumbent U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms present, with another press conference the same day for gubernatorial candidates Rufus Edmisten and Jim Martin.

The Helms campaign never responded to a July 24 invitation to appear with Hunt. Pitt said he made a follow-up telephone call to Claude Allen, Helms' press secretary, and that Allen told him he would "look into it," but never contacted Pitt.

The Chronicle has attempted to arrange an interview with Helms for nearly a year, said Allen Johnson, the Chronicle's executive editor, but to no avail.

"I'll be honest with you. It doesn't look promising at this point," Helms aide Allen, who is black, said Wednesday in reference to a meeting with Helms.

Scheduling is the primary obstacle, Allen said, because Helms will not be back in the state until October. But he acknowledged that the senator had returned to the state since the July 24 invitation was issued. Requests for interviews are forwarded to Helms' Washington office, where the decision is made to grant or reject the requests.

But Allen also said, "I'm not pleased with the coverage in your newspaper." Asked whether Helms grants interviews only to those publications which provide complimentary articles about him, Allen said it was his job "to screen" such requests.

"I'm not going to schedule an

interview with someone who won't be fair," Allen said. When asked whether Sen. Helms has written off the black vote in this year's campaign, Allen said, "I think the black press has written off Sen. Helms."

Allen said he would try to determine by the end of this week whether Helms could meet with the black press at any time before the election.

Meanwhile, Will Marshall, co-director of Hunt's campaign, said he wasn't surprised by Helms' reluctance to meet with black reporters, characterizing it as "a deliberate ignorance of concerns to the black community."

"I think Sen. Helms and his campaign have made it clear they've written off black voters, to the extent of refusing to communicate with them," Marshall said.

When asked if Hunt took any political risks by meeting with the black reporters, Marshall said, "I don't think he took any political risks, although I understand the meaning behind your question."

"Sen. Helms has made an attempt to exploit racial feeling, but I don't think it (the press conference) hurt because I think the great majority in this state are opposed to racial polarization politics."

Gubernatorial candidate Jim Martin did agree to meet with black reporters last Friday, but Edmisten's staff said its candidate had a scheduling conflict and could not appear. Martin rescheduled his meeting for Friday, Sept. 14, but Pitt said he then received a letter from Edmisten's staff stating that Edmisten would not appear on the same forum with Martin. No meeting of any kind between Edmisten and black reporters had been scheduled by the Chronicle's deadline on Wednesday.

But Becky Owens, a press aide

on Edmisten's staff, said such a press conference still may be possible. She said "it is perhaps a policy" of Edmisten's campaign to avoid joint appearances with Martin because "it really gives him (Martin) the publicity he needs."

"It's not that we don't want to discuss the issues," Owens said. "We do. But we don't want to bring them together and have it turn into a series of personal attacks. I feel like an interview would accomplish the same thing (as a joint appearance, as far as discussing issues is concerned). We have no problem with that."

When asked if Edmisten's campaign strategy of avoiding appearances with Martin adversely affects the public's right to know more about the candidates, Owens said there is "nothing unusual about it where there is a clear frontrunner."

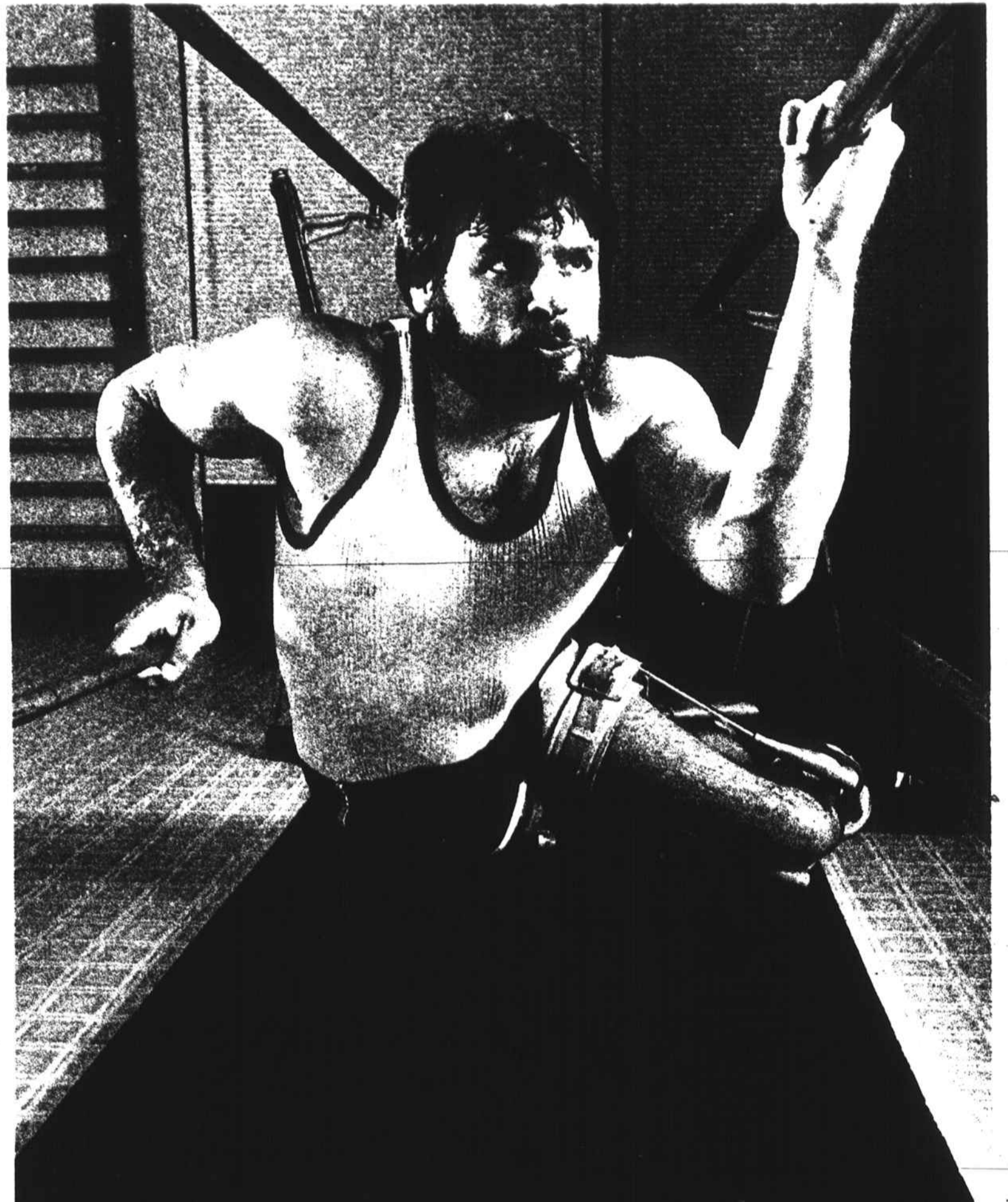
Yet, she also said she didn't think the one scheduled joint appearance by the two candidates before television cameras on Sept. 30 would address the same issues as a joint meeting before the black press.

Robert Jones, assistant to Martin campaign manager Jack Hawk, said he personally thinks that Edmisten may not be a good public speaker and that may account for his refusal to debate Martin.

"I would think anyone running for this kind of office should be willing to debate before the public," Jones said. "What's he afraid of?"

"We were able to get one debate for Sept. 30, but only after they made so many changes in the format that the debate will be diluted," he said.

Martin's campaign attempted to use the same format used for the Helms-Hunt debates, but Jones said Edmisten would not permit head-to-head debating or rebuttals to the candidates' answers.



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Advice provided for senior citizen safety

Crime protection is putting common sense into practice, and most crimes committed in North Carolina are preventable.

Bob Brooks, a state crime prevention specialist, told these encouraging facts during extension's annual Eloise S. Cofer Family Living Seminar at North Carolina State University to volunteers and professionals who work with the elderly.

Brooks offer the following suggestions for actions which can ward off crimes:

--Never carry more cash than is needed.

--Use direct deposit for social security or other checks. A senior citizen who does not use this service is "sitting for it" and is very "feel sorry for them" frankly, if they are robbed, Brooks said.

--Don't follow a strict schedule. Always going to the laundromat at 10 a.m. every Monday lets a thief know when the house will be empty.

--Try a dog. The barking will often scare a thief off.

--"No one should walk by themselves in any major city at any time of day. Crazy people will attack you, Brooks said. "Plan your route. Go with someone. Tell a neighbor, 'I'm going to be gone to the store for an hour. If I'm not back by then, call the police.'"

--Driving a car is just like walking. Be prepared, and plan your route. Keep the car serviced and the gas tank full. Let someone know where you are going and when you will be back.

--If the car should break down, hang something white out the

window. When someone stops, roll the window down a bit, and ask that the police be called. Never get out.

--Anyone who must carry a large pocketbook should fold over the top and carry it upside down under the arm. Then, if it should be grabbed away, the contents will fall out all over the sidewalk.

--"Never resist a robber or mugger. When you resist, you are likely to be injured severely," Brooks said.

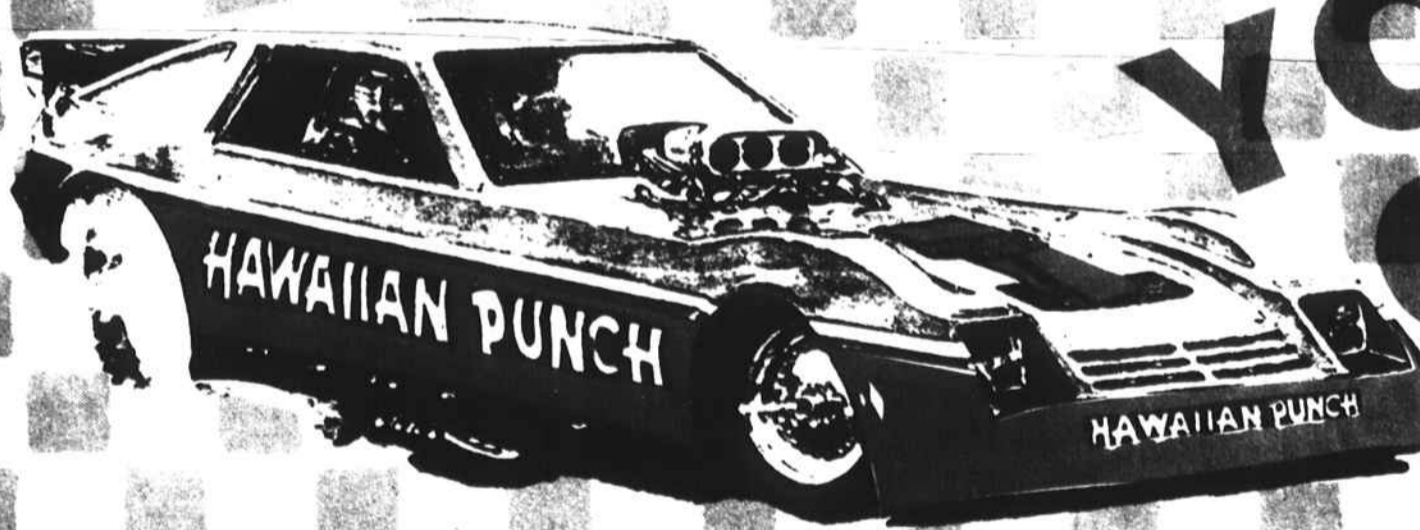
--Put double cylinder deadbolt locks on doors at home. These are the kind which must be opened with a key from the outside. "And don't put a good idea on a sorry door," Brooks said. Exterior doors should be solid, rather than hollow core.

Most people have a \$100 deductible on home insurance. Take that \$100 once and fix up the doors. "Remember, we've got the stupid prisoners in Central Prison; the smart ones are on your doorstep," Brooks concluded.

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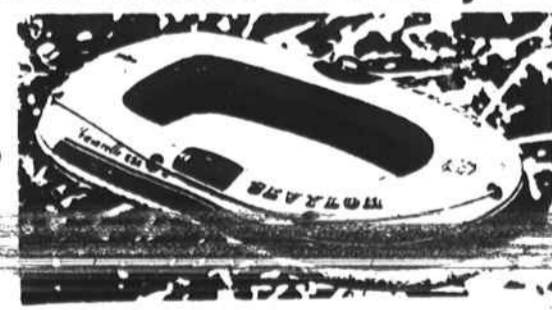


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