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A new job for Ruffin

JOHN HINTON
Chronicle Staff Writer

Benjamin S. Ruffin has moved from politics to big business. Ruffin, 44, once a special assistant for minority affairs to former Gov. James B. Hunt, joined RJR Nabisco Inc. last week as director of public affairs. "The company is supporting a lot of things that I will be involved in," Ruffin said last week. "I will be working with national black organizations around the country. I am excited about my job."

Ruffin most recently was president and special assistant to the president of Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Co. in Durham. He managed RJR Nabisco's Minority Enterprise Program. The program aims to bring minorities and women into the economic mainstream, said F. Cousart, a senior public relations representative at RJR. Ruffin will oversee the purchasing, banking, insurance and advertising aspects of the program. He also will serve as the company's liaison with national minority organizations such as the NAACP and the United Negro College Fund. Ruffin, a director of mechanics and Farmers Bank in Durham, will deal as well



Former civil rights activist Ben Ruffin has joined the corporate world and will work closely with national minority organizations (photo by James Parker).

with governmental affairs for RJR, Ms. Cousart said.

Ruffin said his job requires him to travel extensively in the States and abroad. "I will be very busy," he said. But he and his family find their new home base appealing, he said.

"It will be an easy transition for us to move from Durham to Winston-Salem," Ruffin said. "I know a lot of people here."

"This is a very proud community," he said. "My kids will go to a quality school. People in Winston-Salem want the very best."

Ruffin is married to the former Avon Long; they have two daughters, April and Benita.

Ruffin comes to Winston-Salem with an impressive record of civil rights activism and political involvement.

He served as co-developer of United Durham Inc., deputy director of UDI Community Development Corp., coordinator of adult education with Operation Breakthrough and director of the North Carolina Human Relations Council.

Ruffin, a lifetime member of the NAACP, is a former chairman of the Durham Housing Authority and former first vice chairman of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People.

Ruffin gained statewide publicity when he was a special

assistant to Hunt from 1978 to 1984. Among other duties, Ruffin advised Hunt on appointments to boards and commissions.

Ruffin, a Democrat, also worked on Hunt's two gubernatorial campaigns as well as his 1984 U.S. Senate bid. "I have been through three campaigns, and I have enjoyed them all," he said.

"He could have been a great senator," Ruffin said of Hunt, who lost to Republican incumbent Jesse Helms in the most bitter, expensive senatorial campaign in U.S. history. "He just could not overcome Ronald Reagan's strength."

Drayton complains that he was badgered

Allegations made in court affidavit

By JOHN HINTON
Chronicle Staff Writer

Attorneys for Merritt W. Drayton filed an affidavit in Forsyth County Superior Court Monday alleging that police harassed him to get information about the murder of Deborah B. Sykes and guaranteed him leniency if he cooperated.

Drayton, 28, says in his affidavit that he told police about another murder, the unsolved beating death of Arthur Wilson three years ago, because they didn't believe him when he said he didn't know anything about Mrs. Sykes' 1984 death.

Wilson, a 57-year-old black man, was found dead outside a liquor house in the 1700 block of Claremont Avenue on Sept. 17, 1983. Drayton and two other men -- Darryl Eugene Hunt, who was convicted last summer of Mrs. Sykes' murder, and Hunt's best friend, Sammy Lee Mitchell, who had been a suspect in the Sykes case but was neither arrested nor convicted -- are charged with the murder of Wilson, who lived at 3054 N. Patterson Ave.

Drayton's attorneys also filed a motion requesting that the evidence Drayton gave to police be barred from his trial. That evidence includes statements Drayton gave to police on April 11 and April 16.

Drayton maintains in the affidavit that officers made promises to him and threatened him

to get the information. District Attorney Donald K. Tisdale, who was criticized by black leaders for his handling of the Sykes murder investigation, denied the allegation in Drayton's affidavit.

"That is simply not true," Tisdale told the *Winston-Salem Journal*. "I am satisfied that no one promised him anything."

But supporters of Hunt, who say he was convicted unfairly of Mrs. Sykes' murder, say Drayton has been a pawn all along in an

"Tisdale and the police department have used this boy, Drayton. They have been pressuring this boy all along. Now, they are going to flush this boy down the toilet."

—LARRY D. LITTLE

attempt to hurt Hunt's efforts for a new trial.

"Tisdale and the police department have used this boy, Drayton," said Larry D. Little, founder of the Darryl Hunt Defense Committee. "They have been pressuring this boy all along. Now, they are going to flush this boy down the toilet."

The Rev. Carlton A.G. Eversley, a member of the Darryl Hunt Defense Committee, said Please see page A2

Good grades

City-county schools boast one of lowest dropout rates

CHERYL WILLIAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

The city-county school system is doing pretty well when it comes to keeping students in school. It has one of the lowest dropout rates in the state.

The rate for the 1985-86 school year was 3.7 percent. Interestingly, the dropout rate for blacks in the system is the same as that for whites. In Greensboro, two out of three dropouts are black, and some residents have threatened to keep their children home to protest when school begins.

During the 1984-85 school year, the dropout rate was even lower for blacks in the county schools, 4 percent as opposed to 5 percent for whites, said Dr. Ervin Sakran, coordinator of student services for the city-county school system.

The overall dropout rate for that year was 4.6, Sakran said. Of the 4,016 blacks enrolled in secondary schools, 149 dropped out last school year, while 309 of the 8,286 whites enrolled dropped out.

"It is very low and we are pleased," Sakran said of the rate.

Sakran said that a series of efforts contributed to the county's low dropout rate. There is care and concern for the quality of public education," he said. The superintendent is always ready to come up with viable alternatives, and there is a greater commitment on the part of families of students as well as students themselves to help main-

Boycott threatened in Greensboro

By The Associated Press

GREENSBORO -- Leaders of a public housing tenants association say they may keep an estimated 2,000 black children home from school for two weeks to protest school policies they say result in lower black students' scores and higher dropout rates.

"Our kids are dying, and it's just not fair," said Ervin Brisbon, president of the Confederation of Greensboro Parents.

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tain education and stay with it.

"We hope those who drop out will work their way back into the school system or to Forsyth Tech," he said. "We don't like for any student to drop out, and the system makes every effort to reduce it as much as possible."

This effort, Sakran said, includes staff development for teachers and administrators, a continued effort to make the curriculum relevant to the learning needs of the students, special instructional programs such as those offered by the Optional Education Center, and an array of support services such as social workers, psychologists and guidance counselors.

Another special effort to prevent dropouts is an in-school suspension

program that operates in the middle and high schools, Sakran said.

A frequent critic of the schools, NAACP President Walter Marshall, said he is pleased with the system's high retention rate.

"Dropout here is not as bad as in other places," Marshall said.

Marshall agreed with Sakran that the in-school suspension program has helped keep students in school.

"I'm not going to argue with the figures," Marshall said. "Individual attendance is better than ever. There is emphasis on staying in school and not dropping out."

"Our problem is what's happening with the kids while they are in school," Marshall said. "You have all these kids in school, but are you reaching all the students at all levels?"

The system's dropout rate also falls below the state average.

Dr. Oliver C. Johnson, a program consultant for dropout prevention with the state Department of Public Instruction, said that the state dropout rate is approximately 7 percent.

The school system in the state with the lowest dropout rate is Chapel Hill/Carrboro, with 3.1 percent. Durham City Schools have the highest dropout rate in the state, with 12.6 percent, Johnson said.

The national dropout rate is 30 percent, said Dr. Donna Rhodes, executive director of the Washington-based National Foundation for the Improvement of Education.

She said the dropout rate for blacks Please see page A16



DETRIC MILLER hams it up as he celebrates some welcome rain Monday afternoon (photo by James Parker).

Drug program focuses on youth

By CHERYL WILLIAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

Not many things can make a child trade the outdoors on a hot summer day for a seat on a church pew for an hour.

But every Thursday since July 24, 20 or more youngsters have been gathering at the education building of True Temple Holiness Church in Happy Hill Gardens for something that they can't find on any street corner -- an education on drug abuse.

The seats are hard and the children are restless, but they do listen. And what they have heard for the past four weeks is the message that drugs are bad.

The program was begun by True Temple Holiness Church and is now being held in conjunction with congressional candidate Stu Epperson's newly created 5th District Drug Abuse Task Force.

Epperson has started what he calls a war on drug abuse with the formation of the nine-member task force.

"We are all working to make this pilot program a success," Epperson said in a news release announcing the task force's involvement in the drug education program. "If the results are as promising as we expect, we will begin to expand to other areas of the district."

Albert Bingham, a member of the church and Epperson's assistant, Please see page A2