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Hawkins

Hawkins Convicted Of Fraud Lawyer Plans Appeal Of Sentence

By Herb White
Post Staff Writer

The defense lawyer for former dentist and gubernatorial candidate Reginald Hawkins says part of his client's court fight was won last week, but the battle is far from over.

Mecklenburg Superior Court Judge Terry Sherrill Monday gave Hawkins a two-year suspended sentence and ordered him to pay the state \$1,079 in restitution for three lower dentures that weren't delivered to patients.

James Ferguson, Hawkins's attorney, said this week that he has filed a notice of appeal to overturn Hawkins's conviction of Medicaid fraud. The appeal process may take from six months to a year to be resolved, Ferguson allowed.

Hawkins originally faced 86 counts of Medicaid fraud, which could have netted a maximum of 430 years, but a Mecklenburg jury found him guilty on only three.

Ferguson said Hawkins, the first black to run for governor in North Carolina in 1968, got about as fair a hearing as he could have hoped for, but added that his client should not have gone through the embarrassment and publicity of a trial.

"I think the judge did all he could, but I think the prosecution was inherently unfair," Ferguson said.

Hawkins was charged with billing Medicaid for dental work he didn't perform, but Ferguson said his client didn't willfully defraud the government. Once the government detected irregu-

larities in Hawkins's billing practices, Ferguson stated, they could have contacted him to explain the situation but chose not to.

"The government could have contacted him of any discrepancies in the Medicaid law so he could address them," he informed. "They never gave Dr. Hawkins the opportunity to come in and clear up the discrepancies."

Ferguson said the suit may have been racially motivated, noting that Hawkins has been an outspoken promoter of civil rights. He said the time and money the government used to prosecute Hawkins instead of trying to reach a settlement could suggest that.

"It's shocking that the state would spend the time and money

to bring this trial to court," Ferguson said. "It could've been" a racist campaign to convict Hawkins, he added. "As far as I know, there's never been a prosecution of a dentist over dentures that didn't get to patients. It's highly unusual to say the least."

Hawkins was acquitted of all but three charges, but his conviction is wrong and will be challenged, Ferguson said.

"Even the jury rejected virtually all the state's evidence. In a way the verdict was a victory for Dr. Hawkins," Ferguson said. "They did find that he was guilty of technical violations" for not reporting his failure to deliver dentures patients although the work was done.

Former Girl Scout Executive Files Suit Against Old Employer

By Loretta Richardson
Post Staff Writer

In 1976 Argie S. Blackmore, a former math teacher began a second career when she went to work for the Girl Scouts Council in Memphis, Tennessee as a field executive.

From that entry level position, Ms. Blackmore moved through the ranks of the organization and by 1981 was named the Tenn-Ark-Miss Girl Scout Council's executive director.

It wasn't until 1986 when a similar executive director's position became vacant in Charlotte that Ms. Blackmore, a native of Waxhaw, NC decided to become an applicant.

She applied, was interviewed and 19 months after having served in the executive director's position, the same board that had unanimously decided to approve the hiring of Mrs. Blackmore, minus a two-third majority, had voted to release her from her position.

By October 20, Ms. Blackmore was no longer executive director of the Hornet's Nest Girl Scout

Council.

Action towards her dismissal was brought up at the end of the year meeting, when, according to Ms. Blackmore no discussion on her employment had been scheduled and was initiated by Dave Berryhill, second vice president of the Girl Scout's board of directors.

Berryhill who was contacted, refused any comment citing that the issue was a personnel matter that neither he, nor any present board members, was at liberty to discuss.

The meeting, rather routine, included the president's evaluation of Ms. Blackmore.

An excerpt from Ms. Blackmore's evaluation read: "...The executive director is a strong and experienced manager who knows the Girl Scout program and ways of working together. Her management style contrast sharply with that of previous executive directors in the Council and some staff members and volunteers have been uncomfortable with and critical of it. I have found her to be easy to

work with and I have enjoyed working with her. She has provided invaluable assistance to me as a new president. I respect her commitment to 'get the job done' and her courage to do what she believes is right when other do not agree with her."

Based on that evaluation, Ms. Blackmore rated competent on her performance management report.

"Any time before the evaluation was written up, members of the board of directors had been informed that they could voice their criticism of my performance, but none did," she says.

Blackmore stated that those who voted to dismiss her, did so on the basis of a loophole in the bylaws that read "the executive director who is an officer serves to the pleasure of the board of directors." Mrs. Blackmore interpreted that to mean the board could dismiss her at any time.

"If they (her opponents) had read further they would have read that it takes a two-thirds



Blackmore

majority vote for dismissal," cited Ms. Blackmore.

Because of the recent action

taken against her, Ms. Blackmore has filed suit in U.S. District Court in Charlotte and has sued the council, along with 13 of its directors.

What Ms. Blackmore wants is her job. She is also seeking punitive damages amounting to

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Report Proposes Action For Better Schools

By Herb White
Post Staff Writer

A report published last week by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Urban League warns that Charlotte blacks can't depend on the local school system to provide all their children's educational needs and the community needs to mobilize to insure their success.

Madine Hester Falls, president of the local chapter, said the report shows that there is much the school system can do to improve the education black students get but parents can get the ball rolling by taking an active role in the learning process.

"The committee was charged with identifying problems in the schools and come up with an action plan," Falls informed. "I'd be the first to admit that there are a lot of good things going on in improving the achievements of black children, especially in the black community."

The task force whose findings formed the report was chaired by Barbara Davis and was convened last March to determine the system's ability to educate black children. The findings, released during a Dec. 8 press conference, weren't overwhelming, Falls admitted.

"It's bad and it's going to get worse if you don't do anything," she informed. Debate has been rampant in recent months over the quality of education in Mecklenburg. Parents and various groups representing different interests have criticized the system for giving students a less than first-class education. Some white parents have blasted the

Jackson Gets First Nat'l Endorsement

BY JUDD EVERHART
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) -- The National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, District 1199, endorsed Democrat Jesse L. Jackson for president on Friday, marking the first national labor endorsement in the 1988 presidential race.

Before the unanimous voice-vote endorsement by the approximately 300 delegates to the union's annual convention, Henry Nicholas, president of the 75,000-member union, said Jackson's record "cries out" for the support of working men and women.

Jerome P. Brown, New England leader of District 1199, said Jackson "stands for working people in this country."

Although the AFL-CIO passed a non-binding resolution this fall calling on its affiliates not to endorse a candidate yet, District 1199 went ahead anyway. It was the only AFL-CIO affiliate to endorse Jackson in 1984 and that came after the AFL-CIO had endorsed Walter Mondale.

Jackson addressed the delegates for half an hour Friday morning, using the occasion to denounce corporations that take jobs away from Americans and create them overseas.

"We must shift the incentive from plant closings to plant expansion," Jackson said. "Jobs, peace and justice make more sense than unemployment, war and injustice."

"Workers," he told the cheering delegates, "when I win, you win. Workers united can never



Charlotte City workers labor in the shadow of Charlotte's burgeoning skyline. They're involved in the bi-annual chore of draining and cleaning the lake in Marshall Park on McDowell St.

Myrick Announces Plan For Homeless

By Herb White
Post Staff Writer

Charlotte has a possible answer to the city's need to find shelter for the homeless, and it wouldn't cost taxpayers a dime.

Mayor Sue Myrick announced last week at a press conference plans to convert the present Naval Reserve Center on Fifth Street into a permanent homeless shelter once control of the building is turned over to the city.

Myrick said the land on which the center sits belongs to the city

but the building itself is Navy property. The Navy plans to move out of its present location in June to a new office in the northeast section of the city. Once the Navy moves, the General Services Administration, a federal agency, will take control of the building, Myrick said. The GSA has informed her that it would turn the site over to the city at that time.

The proposed shelter has an area of 39,000 feet and could house as many as 400 people when converted, Myrick said

that after the cost of converting the building is determined, renovation should begin so the facility can be ready by next winter.

The Navy building site was the subject of a letter former Mayor Harvey Gantt sent to Rep. Alex McMillan before leaving office asking that the Navy turn the building over for conversion. The Navy went along with the proposal and sent a letter to Myrick last announcing its plans to

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schools for paying too much attention to classes for slow learners at the expense of programs for gifted and advanced students. Black parents have taken the system to task for not challenging their children, often by-passing them in class because of their social or economic background.

Falls said what many people don't understand is that improving the scores of black students can improve the system's overall achievement scores.

"If we lift the level of the black child, you're lifting the level of the whole district," she said.

Debating the merits of the education system has been good for bringing all groups' concerns into the open, especially the black community, Falls maintained. With everyone pulling together, the system is bound to show improvement.

"If we can work in a concentrated manner, then we will probably see better results," she said. "I think it's an idea time for this dialogue because whatever comes out of it will shape policy for the next several years."

The task force's findings suggest that blacks can pull together now to promote better education by working with educators and organizations to support the system.

"We have a detailed plan and it's just a matter of getting people excited," Falls asserted. "It's not going to be easy, but it's doable. As a black community, we can't expect the school board to look after all our needs. We have to do some for ourselves."

Black Colleges Convene

CHEYNEY, Pa. (AP) ---The oldest black public college founded for the training of black teachers, Cheyney University will host its first National Black College Convention next year.

Cheyney spokesman Joseph Devane said all 105 historically black colleges in the nation are planning to attend the event. The theme will be "Motivation Through Education ---The Key to Black Achievement."

The conference will be held Feb. 25-28.

"The conference will seek to determine strengths and improve upon the weaknesses of these institutions," said Steven Edwards, president of the Student Government Cooperative Association of Cheyney.

"We are trying to lift the steel curtain of alienation between

the educational excellences of both black and white institutions," he said.

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