

The Charlotte Post

VOLUME 22 NO. 11

THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 27, 1996

75 CENTS

THE VOICE OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY

ALSO SERVING CABARRUS, CHESTER, ROWAN AND YORK COUNTIES

Killing sparks anger

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

She missed her daddy, her sign said.

Plaits and barrettes aflutter, she sat patiently before Charlotte City Council, along with dozens of other African Americans Monday night.

Perhaps little Shaquelea Digsby was a symbol of the anger that swept through the African American community in the wake of the shooting of her father, James Willie

Cooper, by a police officer.

The 4-year-old witnessed the shooting Nov. 19 off The Plaza near Sugar Creek Road. Cooper was taking her to the movies, a regular outing, according to family members.

The child was found huddled on the floor in the back of the car after the shooting, which occurred shortly after 7 p.m. in the yard of a residence on Commercial Avenue.

The officer who shot Cooper is Michael D. Marlow, 28, a two-year veteran.

Cooper was buried Tuesday after a wake and funeral at Mayfield Memorial Baptist Church.

Cooper had dropped out of Independence High School in the 10th grade, after Shaquelea was born. He had worked at S&S Auto on North Tryon Street for about a year, said his aunt, Coreleen Cooper.

"He never owned a gun," Cooper said. "I'm not going to build him up to be no angel, but all the times they arrested him, they never ever arrested

him with a weapon. He was into (drugs)...but at this time he was trying to turn his self around."

The community has been restless since Cooper's shooting, angrily shouting at police and other city officials in public meetings, plotting strategy behind closed doors and in private conversation decrying the killing of an unarmed black man.

Groups have led demonstrations, including the Black See SHOOTING on page 3A



PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Central Piedmont Community College student Solodeen Muhammad draws a poster protesting the James Cooper shooting.

Wallace trial moves forward

By Paul Nowell
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Prosecutors continued to put a human side on the case against Henry Louis Wallace Friday as the mother of murder victim Debra Slaughter testified about discovering her daughter's body.

Lovie Slaughter, 60, testified at Wallace's capital murder trial that in early March 1994 she went to the east Charlotte apartment that she and her husband, Alphonso, had once shared with Debra.

She was dropping by to return a photograph.

Inside the Glen Hollows Apartment, she found her daughter's body. She had been strangled and stabbed.

Prosecutors claim she was the 10th young black Charlotte woman whose life was snuffed out by Wallace over a 20-month period that ended with his arrest shortly after Debra Slaughter's death. An 11th victim was in South Carolina.

Wallace, 31, a Navy veteran and former restaurant worker, is on trial in Mecklenburg County Superior Court for nine of the killings.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty in each of the killings.

"Nothing can be done to bring my daughter back," Mrs. Slaughter said after she was finished with her testimony. "Something needs to be done with the person who is responsible."

It's been more than two years since her daughter's death, but the pain is still there, she said.

"I try not to think about it but every time I close my eyes, I see her laying there," Lovie Slaughter said, adding that her religious faith and strong family support have helped

See WALLACE on page 3A



PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Ranson Junior High School Principal Kevin Sawyer asks ninth-grader Jasmine Penn about a note she wrote Monday.

Principal interest

Sawyer leads academic, discipline and improvement at Ranson Junior High

By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST

It seems like everyone at Ranson Junior High School wants something from Kevin Sawyer.

The head of the math department wants him to teach radicals to her seventh period class.

Josh needs a hall pass to show the new girl from California around.

Keisha wants to spend third period with him. She needs to talk.

"She's the first student I had to deal with when I got here," says Sawyer, Ranson's principal. "We've developed a good rapport. She's come a long way."

The head of the parents organization needs him to substitute for teachers who have won awards. Two classrooms need subs this year, she says.

"I'll clone myself," he says.

Sawyer spends the rest of the five-minute class change greeting students.

"Hey, Barbecue," he says to a girl walking down the hall.

"Hey, Mr. Sawyer," she says with a grin.

"Sawyer," a young man yells from the mall.

"Hey, what's up," he yells back.

"You have to be able to relate to kids," Sawyer said. "You have to let them know that they can trust you. It's about building a relationship."

When Sawyer, a 22-year education veteran, took over at Ranson two years ago, it was a school on the bubble. Low reading and math scores plagued the school, as did nonchalance. Students didn't care. Neither did many parents.

"His first year, he was dealing with a neighborhood group

who had a negative image of the school," said Charlotte-Mecklenburg school board member George Dunlap. "He had to make them feel comfortable, like they wanted to send their kids there."

Now, test scores are better. Not perfect, Sawyer admits, but a lot better than before.

This year Ranson scored 10 points above the CMS average in algebra. Reading scores have increased, but are still below average.

"If you look at the statistics on reading that the superintendent has recently shared, on the third graders reading

See PRINCIPAL on page 2A

McHeroes honored for community service

By Herbert L. White
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Eight Charlotte-area citizens were honored for being heroes in their communities.

Local McDonald's owners, The Charlotte Post and WPEG (FM 98) saluted them at the 1996 McHero Awards recently at the Adam's Mark Hotel. The awards recognize and honor the contributions and positive impact of citizens in the African American community. Nominations were made in August, and the winners were selected to appear in McDonald's newspaper and radio advertisements.

"As a local McDonald's owner/operator, we saw a need to recognize and honor people who are making a difference in our communities," said Gordon Thornton, a Charlotte franchise owner. "The McHero Awards gave us the opportunity to acknowledge those individuals for their endless efforts and outstanding contributions."

The winners were:

• Mr. and Mrs. Fred Lipscomb of Gastonia, who formed a campaign to help save lives through organ donor transplants.

• Joyce Waddell, who provided

See McHEROES on page 3A



PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

McHeroes (left to right): Robert Brown, Rev. James Barnett, Fred Lipscomb Jr. Zola Lipscomb, Andre Hairston and Joyce Waddell. Theresa Bethea and Anna Hood are seated.

Spann didn't kill

Death row inmate has York hearing

By John Minter
THE CHARLOTTE POST

YORK, S.C. - Police investigators should have known three 1981 murders of elderly white women in a four-month period were the work of a serial killer, forensic experts testified Monday in a hearing for death row inmate Sterling Spann.

The murders occurred within 12 miles of each other in western York County. The victims were strangled and sexually assaulted. Spann was already in jail when the third murder occurred. He'd been charged in the second murder, of Melva Neill, 82.

Spann, then 19, was convicted but has maintained his innocence through 14 years on South Carolina's death row.

A federal judge in February ordered the hearing, which began Monday before Judge John Hays. Hays will decide if Spann's attorneys have gathered enough new evidence to warrant another trial in the case. Among that evidence is the confession of involvement by William Johnny Hullitt, who is serving a life sentence for the third murder, Bessie Alexander, 69, who was killed on Nov. 16, 1981.

The first victim, Mary Ring, was found in her bathtub on July 18, 1981, two months before Neill was found on Sept. 14.

Hullitt and his brother-in-law had a produce sales route in the area of the deaths.

Hullitt, clad in jailhouse orange coveralls, refused to answer questions about the Neill killing from either the

See DEATH ROW on page 2A

Inside

Editorials 4A-5A
Strictly Business 7A
Lifestyles 9A
Religion 11A
Sports 1B
A&E 4B
Regional News 8B
Classified 11B
Auto Showcase 12B

To subscribe, call (704) 376-0496 or FAX (704) 342-2160. © 1996 The Charlotte Post Publishing Company.

Comments? Our e-mail address is: charpost@cit.mindspring.com
World Wide Web page address: http://www.thepost.mindspring.com