

# The Warren Record

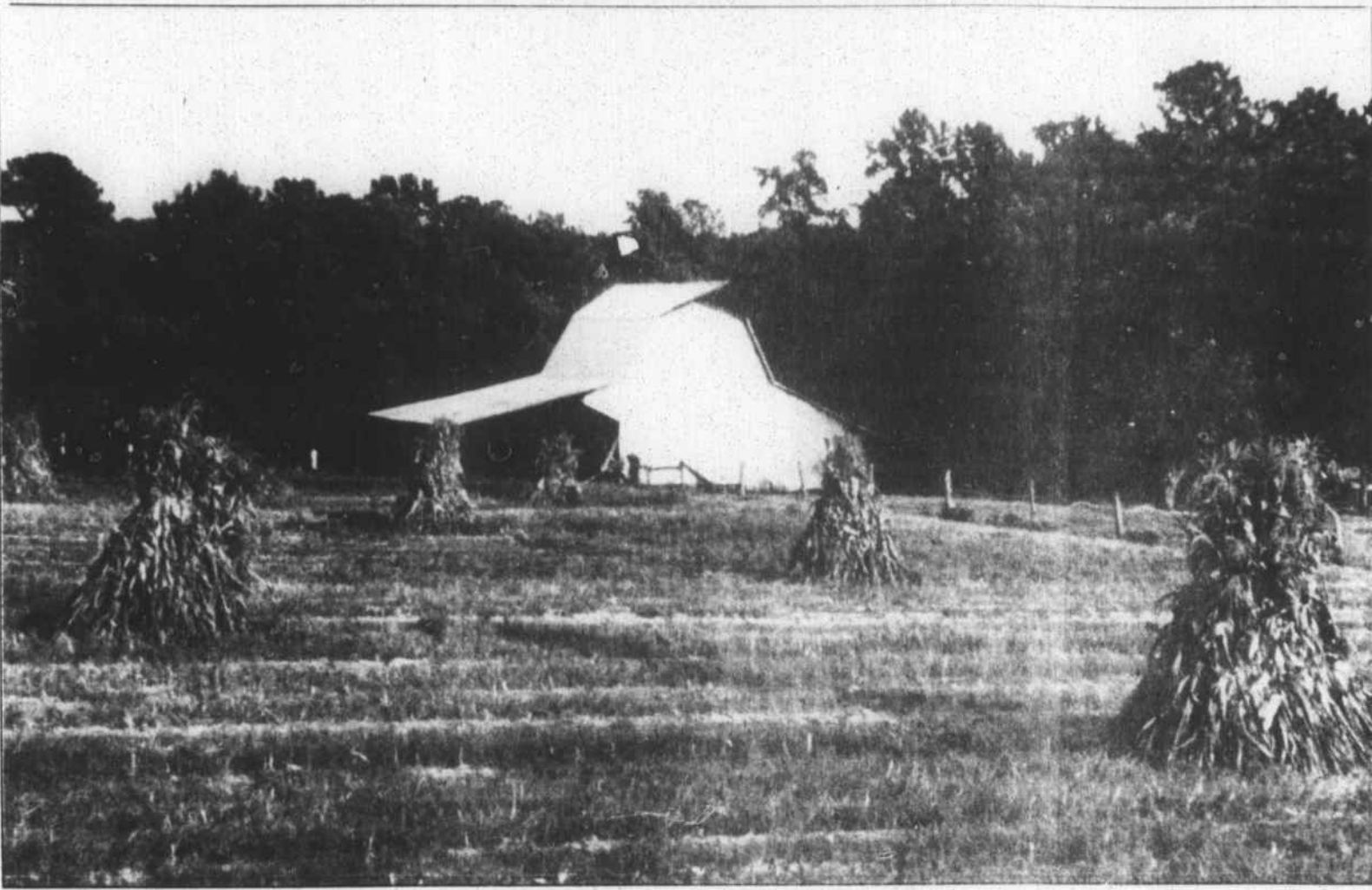
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Looking more like a scene of fall than one sighted in the last weeks of summer, these cornstalk "centurions" stand watch over this field on a farm between Oakville and Macon. Shocks such as these are

usually not seen until later in the year. Spring planting—fall harvest: all parts of the cycle of nature made use of by man as he cultivates the earth. (Staff Photo by Howard Jones)

## Smooth School Opening Reported By Officials

The opening of Warren County schools on Monday, Aug. 24, was very smooth at all sites, Superintendent Mike Williams reported this week.

A total of 2,836 students reported to their classes, about 17 more than last year's opening day.

The State Department of Public Instruction had projected for Warren County an enrollment of 2,943. "We are on target for grades K-three," Williams said, "but we are 15 short for K-six." The superintendent also indicated a shortfall of 26 students for K-eight and 79 fewer students at the high school. The total enrollment at Warren County High School is 829.

According to Williams, the average daily membership for last year was 3,022. "We will probably pick up most of these

students before Labor Day," Williams speculated, "but we will be slightly lower this year—even when the others come," he said.

### Afton Child Bitten By Dog On Sunday

A four-year-old child from the Afton community was bitten by a dog on Saturday as family members, attending a cookout at the Perrytown home of a relative, watched in horror.

Arriving Officer J. M. McCowan was sent to the residence of Queen Mayfield in Rt. 3, Warrenton, located behind the site of the cookout. He found that the trailer there was also the home for seven dogs.

According to Mrs. Diane Williams of Rt. 2, Norlina, mother of

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Mike Williams, superintendent of Warren County schools, congratulates Richard Williams on his entry into the school system Monday by presenting him with a T-shirt. Richard, a beginning student at South Warren Elementary School, is one of about 200 kindergarten students in the county who will comprise the Class of 2000. Superintendent Williams presented all kindergarten students with a shirt designed with a clown carrying a banner that reads "Class of 2000" and carries the slogan, "Learning for the New Century in Warren County Schools."

(Community Schools Photo by Mary Hunter)

## Objections Raised

# Board Tables Cable TV Bid

By THURLETTA M. BROWN  
Staff Writer

The franchise request recently submitted by REACT Cable Services, Inc., listed for a second reading on the agenda before Warren County commissioners Wednesday night, was tabled following objections by board members to the documents submitted to them by the business.

"This is too important an issue to decide tonight," Commissioner J. T. Fleming said.

"This is not a question of legality," County Attorney Charles Johnson said, "but the board needs to come to some consensus of a standard... (the company)... should measure up to... and give the public the type of service they deserve."

Commissioner Fleming reminded the board of unanswered requests for service that had been made by Warren CATV—the company's perceived refusal to operate in Norlina and Soul City.

Although Chairman Eva Clayton noted that granting the REACT request would not constitute an "exclusive ordinance," she agreed that service, access and readiness to provide service were important items to consider.

The franchise document that had been submitted by R. Midrowsky, REACT president, lacked specificity, the board felt. When pressed, Midrowsky conceded to modify the language to specify a housing density requirement of 25 per mile, if the residences could be reached from REACT's heading equipment. REACT owns its own construction company, Midrowsky noted. Board members noted that Warren CATV offered free service to school. Midrowsky agreed that his company would provide free service to schools and manned firehouses. He was asked by the board to add both concessions to the franchise agreement.

Midrowsky's request had stemmed from the company's need to ensure access to Littleton residences located near the Warren County boundary. REACT is unable to enter Warren County without a franchise agreement.

REACT's price structure would show a modest increase over charges now made for service by Warren CATV. Installation, for example, is \$5 higher, and ESPN, included now as a part of basic service through Warren CATV, is offered through REACT only as a part of an expanded package which costs an additional \$4 over the \$19 basic fee.

A work session for commissioners has been scheduled for

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## Student Driver Jobs In Doubt

Unless the state can demonstrate by Nov. 30 that the safety record of student drivers has improved in 1986-87, about 4,300 school bus drivers who are under the age of 18 must be replaced.

The General Assembly recently passed a law, effective Jan. 1, which specifies that student bus drivers must be at least 17 years of age.

"We have known for some time that a self-imposed regulation would restrict our use of student bus drivers," Superintendent Mike Williams said, "and we have been prepared to implement that." According to Williams, about 50 percent of Warren county's 79 bus drivers are students. Selection for the current school year was such that all student drivers will be at least 17 by Jan. 1. "If the regulation is indeed for age 18 rather than for age 17, that will cause some problems," Williams said.

According to statistics compiled by the Division of Motor Vehicles for 1985-86, state bus drivers under age 18 had one traffic accident per 86,000 miles. Drivers ages 18 and above had only one accident per 115,000 miles.

In Warren County for the year 1985-86, there were four reportable bus accidents. In 1986-87 there was only one. According to Williams, no injuries of any consequence resulted.

Minors have been hired to drive buses for the past 20 years. In the last school year, 3,906 of the state's 13,002 school bus drivers were 17 years of age; 367 were age 16.

Governor James Martin's request for renewal of an exemption to a rule which prohibits 16- and 17-year olds from driving school buses in August resulted in a letter from U.S. Labor Secretary William Brock, who stated that the state's underaged drivers did not measure up. "Regrettably, the accident experience of school bus drivers under 18 years of age does not compare favorably with that of adult school bus drivers," the letter stated.

"Given our present situation, we are able to select from the pool of students the best drivers and from the pool of adults the best drivers," Superintendent Williams said. "With the best of both groups, we have a competent driving force," he added. "Being forced to eliminate students under age 18 will result in a smaller pool and quality will suffer," he surmised.

## Plan Approved To Lower Lake Gaston Water Level

The waters of Lake Gaston, normally stable with a level of about 200 feet above sea level, will be lowered for about 60 days this winter.

The "draw-down" has been planned as a means of attack against a noxious aquatic weed—Brazilian elodea—which left free to multiply could block every cove and inlet in Lake Gaston. According to Ben D. McCauley, president of the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council, uncontrolled growth and infestation of Brazilian elodea would make fishing, boating, swimming and other recreational activities impossible.

According to Lloyd Andrews, station manager for the Roanoke Rapids and Lake Gaston Dam, three options were available to reduce the infestation by elodea: A "draw-down," the introduction of Weed Carp, a vegetation-eating variety of fish; and the application of herbicides. Chopping is ineffective because the separated shoots of the weed simply fall to the lake floor and become viable plants.

"Environment-wise, it has been determined that the best method to go with first is the "draw-down," Andrews said.

The Lake Gaston Weed Control Council, in cooperation with North Carolina Power/Virginia Power, has planned beginning Dec. 1 to decrease the water level of Lake Gaston by six to nine feet. The active draining process will continue until Jan. 1. Studies have shown that reducing the water level for a short time during the winter will be an effective deterrent against the elodea. "When not covered by water, but exposed to cold winter air, the weed will die," McCauley re-

ported. "Although it is premature to assess the lasting effect the water level reduction will achieve, it is anticipated that a reduction would only need to be done once every three to five years," he speculated.

Beginning on March 1, the water level will be increased until the normal 200-foot level has been returned. Normal lake level is expected to be achieved by April 1.

While the water level is reduced, property owners will have an excellent opportunity to make repairs to piers, boat houses and docks, McCauley reported, but they are cautioned to protect their boats and other facilities which may be affected by the reduction.

Homeowners are required to obtain a permit before altering the bottom of the lake, including the removal of stumps and rocks, dredging, filling or construction. Blasting will not be allowed. Answers to questions about permits may be received by calling N.C. Power at 1-537-9091.

The Lake Gaston Weed Control Council was formed in 1986 to study the nuisance weed problem and to coordinate a treatment program. Instrumental in the formation of the council were the N.C. Agricultural Extension Service and North Carolina Power/Virginia Power. The 15-member council consists of three county representatives appointed by the board of supervisors or board of commissioners of each of the five counties bordering the lake: Warren, Halifax, Northampton in North Carolina, and Brunswick and Mecklenburg in Virginia.



Gaston Lake resident Jack Potter is shown holding a clump of Brazilian elodea, the prolific weed that, left free to multiply, threatens to make boating, swimming and fishing impossible. Aerial photographs taken last year by utility companies revealed that about 300 areas of the lake were heavily infested. Officials have reported that given the rapid propagation habits of the weed, infestation now is probably double that amount. According to Ben D. McCauley, president of the Lake Gaston Weed Control Council, the weed could eventually grow into all areas of the lake that are less than 14 feet in depth. To combat the weed and reduce its infestation through exposure to cold weather, Lake Gaston will be lowered, beginning Dec. 1, by six to nine feet. (Photo by Russell King)