

Rapid Growth Of Elderly Population Is Reported In Warren

The elderly—defined as those persons aged 65 years and older—continue to be one of the largest age groups in both Warren County and the rest of the nation, statistics released recently by the Bureau of the Census have confirmed.

According to the report, the number of elderly persons in Warren County had increased from 2,395 in 1980 to 2,702 by 1986. That growth represented a 12.8 percent increase—while the overall population for Warren County grew by only 2.9 percent. Elderly persons constituted 14.8 percent of the population in Warren County in 1980, but by 1986, the percentage had increased to 16.2 percent.

"I recall that in 1982, there were less than 100 persons registered to vote from the Roanoke Township area," Mrs. Ruby Jones, Warren County board of elections supervisor said. "Now, in 1988, there are 304 persons there registered to

vote and over 50 percent of them were born in the 1920's or before," she observed. "I've also noticed similar increases in the number of senior citizens registering from the Nutbush, Six Pound and Churchill-Five Forks townships."

Nationally, the number of Americans aged 65 years or more increased from 25.5 million in 1980 to 29.2 million by 1986. At the same time, the proportion of Americans aged 65 years and more increased from 11.3 percent in 1980 to about 12.1 percent by 1986.

The rate of increase among the elderly population from 1980 through 1986 appears to be greater than the Census Bureau had projected earlier. At the same time, the elderly population is not likely to grow as quickly in the near future since census statisticians project that persons over the age of 65 will constitute 13.0 percent of the nation's population until the year 2000.

The decline in growth will occur because birth rates during the Great Depression were extremely low. Persons born during the Depression constitute the overwhelming majority of those aged from 50 years to 65 years, and it is this group that will become 65 years of age by the end of the century.

A striking increase has been predicted nationally in the early 2000's, however, because that is when the "baby boomers" will begin to turn 65, census officials said. Barring some extreme change in the makeup of the population of Warren County, it is most likely that this will also be the case locally.

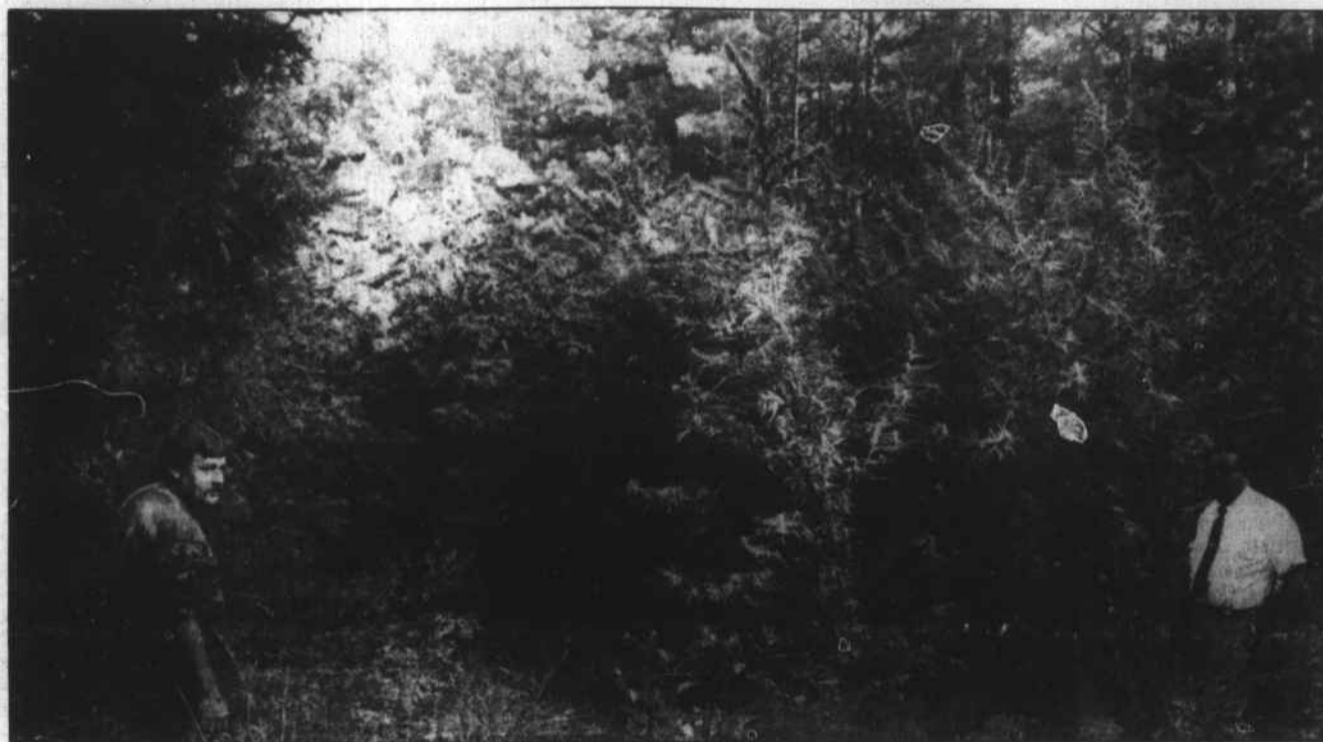
Undoubtedly, this continuing long-term increase in the number and proportion of elderly persons will have a substantial economic and social impact both nationally and in Warren County. For example, persons over 65 are

generally less likely to invest in new housing and other major consumer purchases. At the same time, the elderly are less likely to be poor, and are more likely to spend money for services than other age groups.

"In Warren County, according to statistics on file in the office of the Coordinating Council for Senior Citizens, 15.6 percent of the population here aged 60 years or older is below the poverty level," Mrs. Bertha Forte, Coordinating Council director, said recently. "Many more of the individuals in this age group are at the poverty level," she noted.

Elderly females continue to outnumber elderly males. For example, 986 or 41.2 percent of all persons over 65 years in Warren County were males in 1980. By contrast, 1,409 or 58.8 percent were females. By 1986, 1,144 or 42.3 percent of

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Warren County Sheriff Theo Williams, right, and Deputy Harold Seaman are shown in the first of two fields of marijuana found south of Inez on Friday afternoon. The tall plants shown above were cut and burned at the Warren County landfill. Later, the bulk of the \$4

million harvest was destroyed where it was found. Lawmen worked 11 hours to harvest and burn the illicit weed. See other photos on Page 11.

(Staff Photo by Howard Jones)

Marijuana Crop Worth \$4 Million Is Put To Torch

By HOWARD JONES
Editor

Law enforcement officers—working beneath emergency portable lighting provided by volunteer firemen—completed an 11-hour task of destroying a marijuana crop valued at \$4 million shortly after 4 a.m. Saturday.

Warren County Sheriff Theo Williams, who released details of what has been described as the largest marijuana find in the county's history, said the mammoth undertaking to destroy an estimated 2,400 stalks of the illegal weed began after a deputy sheriff flushed two men engaged in processing the crop at their field-side camp in Fork Township.

The site of the huge marijuana find, located a half mile north of the E. A. Turner Road two miles south of Inez, was relayed to lawmen minutes after Chief Deputy Bobby D. Bolton surprised two operators of a camp believed to have been set up as early as last April. That was about 3 p.m. Friday.

Bolton, acting on a tip from unnamed persons who had seen a tent in the area, was walking up a path leading to a two-man tent when a dog's bark alerted the laborers. The two—described only as white males—bolted from the area, leaving behind an arsenal which included four sawed-off shotguns and three pistols.

Lawmen who were combing the area within minutes,

discovered binoculars, two walkie talkies, and a battery operated television set inside the olive-drab tent.

The tent was encircled with an estimated 30 bags of debris, four coolers containing food and drinks, numerous bags of clothing and a gas grill.

Lawmen had hoped to bring in either SBI or Highway Patrol helicopters to aid in the search for the two unidentified men found at the camp, but all aircraft were engaged in operations in the western part of the state, a sheriff's spokesman said. Efforts to bring in area television helicopters to assist in the search were not successful.

Deputy Bolton said that the two men he found at the site are believed to be residents of North Wilkesboro. Bolton, who believes more that these two were involved in the giant undertaking, said the investigation is continuing.

The two processors were believed to have been bagging high-grade marijuana when they were spotted. Some 32 bags of processed weed—having a street value of \$2,000 per bag—were found near the two sleeping bags covered by the tent.

As lawmen fanned out from the tent site in search of marijuana patches, containers of liquid fertilizer and a hoe were found. Then came the discovery of the first of two fields which covered approximately an acre.

Between the fields, growers had pressed an abandoned well back into service, and two portable sprayers were found near this source of irrigation water. In the larger of the two fields, lawmen came upon a gasoline-powered cultivator.

A sheriff's spokesman said all the material found at the site had been confiscated and would be held pending completion of the investigation.

Late Friday afternoon the huge job of destroying the illicit crop began. After cutting the weed from the smaller field, the 20-foot stalks were taken in flatbed loads to the Warren County landfill where it was destroyed.

The N. C. Forestry Service was a big help in the destruction phase of the operation, using a large bulldozer to cut an access road to the two fields.

"If it had not been for them, we would have been there half a day Saturday," Bolton said.

The Warrenton Rural Fire Department provided a truck with portable lighting which enabled the crop destruction to continue after dark Friday. Machetes and chainsaws were used to cut the marijuana plants

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During Commissioners' Hearing

Fire Service Districts Suggested

By THURLETTA M. BROWN
News Editor

Fire service districts may exist next year in Warren County, if the voices of the area citizenry convince the Warren County Board of County Commissioners that fire protection is worth a few cents in additional taxes.

The issue of taxation for fire protection first surfaced some months before the recent referendum for a fire tax district in the Churchill-Five Forks community. By a vote of 90 to 58, the 15 percent of the residents there who were eligible to vote made a decision to nix taxation, whether the ineligible, non-resident taxpayers wanted it or not.

"I know how the people in Churchill-Five Forks feel," Chairman Eva Clayton said, "but, I don't feel as confident about the feelings of the rest of the county. We don't want to take away the right of the people to speak."

M. O. Dunlevy, speaking on behalf of the Warren County Fire Commission, presented to the board of county commissioners last Wednesday night a resolution that service districts for each of the county's 14 approved fire districts be established and that an annual tax be assessed, effective in the 1989-90 fiscal year.

The resolution had received the support of the fire commission in a called meeting held by the commission last Monday night after the well-attended public hearing to receive citizens' comments on the issue of fire protection and the proposed closing on Oct. 1 of the

Churchill-Five Forks Fire Department.

Required will be 14 public hearings on the establishment of service fire districts.

Taxed fire districts are created following affirmative votes from residents in a referendum. By contrast, fire service districts are created by action of the board of county commissioners, following their receipt of comments from the citizenry in public hearings, but no votes are cast by citizens.

To establish service districts, the board must consider the appraised value of property subject to taxation, the present tax rate assessed and the ability of the proposed district to provide service. Once the report for each of the 14 districts has been prepared, separate public hearings must be scheduled.

Following the public hearings, the board must assess if there is a demonstrated need for fire protection, whether it is economical-

ly feasible to provide service without an unreasonable tax levy, whether there is a demonstrated demand for service via taxation, as well as any other matters deemed germane by the board.

Once service districts have been established, the county tax collector would levy property taxes—usually not to exceed 15 cents per \$100 valuation—in addition to those already imposed.

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Proposed Jail Location Is Hit Court Clerk Expresses Misgivings About Site

Warren County Clerk of Court Richard E. Hunter, Jr. has expressed misgivings about the possible placement of a new county jail on property in downtown Warrenton just west of the court house.

In a letter to Mrs. Eva M. Clayton, chairman of the Warren County Board of Commissioners, Hunter expressed his reservations about the site, which would house a new jail incorporated in a law enforcement center expected to be built soon.

Hunter, who sent copies of his letter to all members of the board of commissioners, as well as to Senior Resident Judge Robert H. Hobgood of Louisburg, took part in discussions on a possible site for the new center last spring prior to approval of a bond issue for the center by Warren voters.

In his letter to Mrs. Clayton, written last week, Hunter had this to say:

"Dear Mrs. Clayton:

"Lately I have rethought my stand on the placement of the new Warren County jail.

When we were meeting last spring, I felt that the best location for the proposed jail site would be behind the court house in the vacant lot that is presently used for parking. I still feel that for the convenience of getting the prisoners to the courtroom that this would be the best location; however, there are more options to consider than the mere convenience of the Courts.

"This parking lot is the only parking lot that is available to the general public in downtown Warrenton. The only other parking facilities are behind the Post Office and beside the Branch Banking & Trust Company building. Both of these lots are generally full. The closing of the lot behind the court house would create a severe parking problem normally, and it would be especially critical during terms of court and other functions that would meet in the court house.

"When we met last spring, we discussed the location of the jail on the

Hawkins School site. This location was on property already owned by the county schools and soon to be abandoned by them. As I recall, Mr. Exum voiced objections to that site, as it would be in a residential neighborhood. I believe that the needs of the community and county government would be better served if the jail were placed on the property adjacent to the present Warren County Jail that was formerly occupied by Randy Currin Chevrolet. This site is large enough to build any type building we would need and afford parking for the tenants.

"I hope that the commissioners will consider the alternatives before any decisions are finalized concerning the placement of the jail.

"With best wishes and kind personal regards, I remain

"Sincerely yours,
"Richard E. Hunter, Jr.
"Clerk of Superior Court"