

Patton Questioned In Death Of Wife

Former State Senator Finds Invalid Spouse In Gas-Filled Room

Robert A. (Bob) Patton, former state senator and Macon legislator, is being questioned in the death of his invalid wife, who was found dead Saturday in a gas-filled room in their home in the swank Bayshore Blvd. section of Tampa, Fla.

Mrs. Louise A. Patton, about 65, who had had both legs amputated because of cancer within the last three years and was a helpless invalid, was found in her room by her husband, who told police she had attempted suicide in the past.

However, police have said it was "improbable" that Mrs. Patton turned on the gas jet in her room with the leg of a bedside table. Mr. Patton is said to have told the officers she attempted to take her life in this manner previously.

In a telephone interview with The Press yesterday (Wednesday), Sgt. Pete Franks, of the Tampa detective bureau, emphasized Mr. Patton has not been charged, "only brought in for questioning."

The sergeant said he was questioned, given a lie detector test, and then released Monday morning prior to the funeral of his wife, a former head of the State Federation of Garden Clubs, and prominent in Tampa social circles.

Results of the lie detector test "are incomplete", Sgt. Franks said, "and we have nothing definite."

Mr. Patton, state senator from this (33rd) district in 1935 and a legislator for two terms (1935 and 1937), told officers he left his wife's room about 9:30 in the morning. At 11 o'clock, he went back up stairs, smelled gas, cut off the jet, and opened all the windows. He said he then tried to contact her physician, but was unable to reach him. He is reported to have then called a funeral home. Funeral home attendants, upon arriving at the Patton home and learning of the means of the woman's death, called police.

Officers said it was improbable that Mrs. Patton opened the gas jet with the leg of the bedside table because the jet was more than arm's length from her bed.

In a statement to police, the invalid woman's nurse is reported to have said Mrs. Patton appeared to have been "heavily dosed" during her last hours and when she came on duty about 6 Friday night she could not arouse the sleeping woman for at least four hours. The couple was married in 1947.

Late News and Briefs

BUCHANAN COMING

Harry E. Buchanan, 14th division highway commissioner, is scheduled to be in Franklin at the county courthouse tomorrow (Friday) at 2 p. m. for a road meeting. It is open to the public.

EDITOR SPEAKS HERE

Dr. Amos Abrams, of Raleigh, editor of N. C. Education, addressed a meeting of the local unit of the North Carolina Education Association last (Wednesday) night at the Franklin High cafeteria.

Special guests of the teachers and principals included businessmen and civic organizations.

SNOW IN HIGHLANDS

It blew a little snow Saturday in Highlands and there was general shivering over most of the county as the mercury FINALLY dipped down to a winter-like level. It was down to 23 Sunday in Highlands and Coweeta recorded a 22 degree temperature yesterday (Wednesday).

APPROVES CAMPAIGN

Franklin Mayor W. C. Burrell
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HIGDON DEATH BEING PROBED

Macon Native Dies In Cabin In Tenn.; Is Buried Here

George Hamilton Higdon, 52-year-old native of this county, was buried here Saturday afternoon while officers continued an investigation into the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death last Thursday in a cabin near Knoxville, Tenn.

Yesterday (Wednesday) an official of the district attorney's office in Knoxville told The Press by telephone they are marking time in the investigation until an autopsy report is received.

But Ralph Longmire, general secretary to District Attorney Hal H. Clements, Jr., also commented: "There is very little, if any, indications of foul play. It appears that he smothered to death... he had been drinking some."

However, a taxicab driver and a woman, who is a former resident of this county, are being held in connection with the case, Mr. Longmire reported.

The body of Mr. Higdon was found about 1 p. m. last Thursday in one of Jim's Cabins, on the Clinton highway outside Knoxville, by the manager of the cabins. The manager is reported to have told officers that a woman came to the cabins about 2 a. m. in a taxicab, rented the cabin, stayed about 10 minutes, and then left in the same taxicab.

The woman who rented the room has been identified as Betty Jean Welch Moore, 24, formerly of this county, Howard L. Miller, 38, the taxicab driver, also is in custody, according to Mr. Longmire.

He also said Mrs. Moore has admitted she met Mr. Higdon and drank beer and whiskey with him.

Mr. Higdon was here the Sunday before his death.

An autopsy report on the body is expected by Knoxville officers at any time, Mr. Longmire said.

"We should know what happened then," he added. Funeral services for Mr. Higdon were conducted at the Sugarfork Baptist Church Saturday at 3:30 by the Rev. Jarvis Underwood. Burial was in the church cemetery.

He is survived by five brothers, Fred, of Sacramento, Calif., Frank and Lyman, of Franklin, Joseph, of Asheville, and William, of Honolulu, Hawaii, and four sisters, Mrs. Maude Strain, of Sacramento, Mrs. Margie Ramsey, of Franklin, Route 2, Mrs. Kate Hoyt, of Phoenix, Ariz., and Miss Hazel Higdon, of Sacramento.

Pallbearers were Clayton and Albert Ramsey, Joe Higdon, Jr., Sam Higdon, Billie Higdon, Jr., and William Ramsey.

Bryant Funeral Home was in charge.

Burning Permits Cancelled Here Until Rain Comes

Issuing of all burning permits has been cancelled until a general rain wets the forests enough to eliminate the hazardous fire conditions now prevailing, J. Fred Bryson, county forest ranger, announced this week.

County-Wide Rally Of Democrats Slated

A county-wide Democratic rally is planned next Thursday night, October 28, at the county courthouse, it has been announced.

Meanwhile, the party is holding precinct meetings over the county. A meeting of the Smithbridge Township is set tonight (Thursday) at 7:30 at the Otto School and Tuesday night at the same hour one will be held at the Nantahala School for party members of the Nantahala 1 and 2 precincts.

The rally also is set for 7:30.



A SMILING John Whitelock, New Zealand dairyman, watches Mrs. Dan Reynolds (right), president of the county home demonstration council, present The Gavel, top club award, to Mrs. Emma R. West, president of the Cowee club.

Cowee Wins Club Award

The Gavel, top home demonstration club award, was presented to the Cowee club for its accomplishments over the past year at the annual home demonstration "Achievement Day" Friday at the Franklin Methodist Church.

In winning the award, Cowee collected a total of 2,482 points during the year. In second place was Oak Grove with 2,040 points, and Franklin was third with 1,477. Small cash awards also were presented the winning clubs by the county council.

The presentation of The Gavel came as the closing feature of the all-day meeting, which drew more than 200 women from the county's 24 active clubs.

Highlighting the morning session was an address by Mrs. C. Tom Bryson, of the Cullasaja club, who has just returned from a tour of the United Nations in New York City with other club women of the state. Mrs. Bryson spoke on "Toward Better World Understanding" and touched on some of the high spots of her tour.

Following the devotional by Mrs. E. G. Altland, of the Iotia club, greetings were extended to

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Flying Preacher Recovering From Fall From Tree

The Rev. R. D. Burnette, who was featured in last week's Press as "Macon's Flying Preacher", is recovering at Angel Hospital from serious injuries received Saturday afternoon in a fall from a tree.

Officials of the hospital reported the field representative of the American Sunday School Union received a brain concussion, a fractured hip, and internal injuries when he fell from a large poplar tree at his home in the Bethel community while installing a TV aerial. Mrs. Burnette said he fell about 30 feet.

The accident occurred about 2:30 and Mr. Burnette remained in a critical condition for some time. However, yesterday (Wednesday) the hospital reported his condition as "improved."

Last week's newspaper article dealt with the preacher's debut as a pilot in order to better serve his Sunday Schools in this state and Georgia.

NEW AGENT IS HIRED

McNeil To Report November 1 For Extension Program

Robert McNeil, a native of Ashe County, has been hired as the third and last extension worker for the new personalized farm-home program slated to get under way in Macon in November.

County Agent T. H. Fagg said the new agent will report for work here November 1.

John Wrinn and Mrs. Margaret D. Smith have previously been hired for the new program, which was offered the county earlier in the year on a county-federal financing arrangement.

Details of the program and how it will operate are now being mapped, according to Mr. Fagg. He expects to see the program under way early in November.

The third agent, Mr. McNeil, is a graduate of Berea College, Berea, Ky. A veteran of World War II, he is now operating a dairy farm in Ashe and is a G. I. instructor.

Macon was one of two counties in the western area to be offered the new program, which is designed to put extension work on a more personal basis with individual farm families. Madison was the other county.

Will Judge Contest Here

Out-of-county judges for the 1954 Macon County Rural Community Development Contest, which closes October 25, have been selected.

The difficult job of picking 13 winners from among the 21 communities entered will fall to W. H. Flake, county agent in Graham, and Miss Anne Benson Priest, home agent in Transylvania.

In disclosing the names of the judges, County Agent T. H. Fagg said they will tour communities October 27-28-29 to select the winners.

A schedule for judiciary is now being worked out, he added, and will be announced later.

Prize money this year comes to \$1,100, with first place receiving \$300; second, \$200; third, \$100; and the next 10 bet \$50 each.

19 Advanced At Boy Scout Court Here

Nineteen Macon County Boy Scouts received advancements in rank and merit badges last Thursday night at a Smoky Mountain District Court of Honor in Highlands.

First Class rank went to Robert Carpenter, William Calloway, Robert Edwards, Bobby Norton, James L. Lowe, and William J. Lowe, all of Highlands, Troop 7. Bert Rodgers, of Highlands, and Kenneth Don Wallace, Robert Wallace, and Doyle McCracken, all of Franklin, Troop 6, received Second Class rank.

Awarded Tenderfoot rank were Bill Hyde, William D. Simpson, J. E. Emory, and Clifford Childers, all of Franklin, Troop 1, and Arthur Rodgers, Jack A. Calloway, and Jack Wilson, all of Highlands.

In the presentation of merit badges, Patrick Henry, of Franklin, Troop 1, received Firemanship, and H. C. Stouemire, of Franklin, Troop 6, Corn Farming.

Tom Speed, of Sylva, Scout field executive, was in charge of the honor court, which was held at the Highlands Baptist Church.

Registering About Same

(Editor's Note: A complete run-down on local, district, and state politics will appear in next week's issue of The Press.)

Politics is beginning to dominate the Macon scene as the November 2 election nears.

Registration books close Saturday and the following Saturday, October 30, will be challenge day.

J. Lee Barnard, chairman of the elections board, yesterday (Wednesday) said registration for the past two Saturdays has been about average. County-wide figures were not available. However, the chairman said absentee voting is "way off" from the election two years ago, because of the marked decrease in the number of men now serving in the armed forces.

TEAM DOWNS ROBBINSVILLE

Meets Swain High Here Friday Night For Second Game

True to advance predictions, the Franklin Panthers bowled over the underdog Robbinsville eleven 29 to 12 in Robbinsville Friday night.

After three consecutive games away, the Panthers return to their home stadium tomorrow (Friday) night for their second game of the year with Swain High School. Earlier in the season, the Swain Maroons handed the locals the short end of a 31 to 13 score in a non-conference scrap. So, tomorrow night, the Panthers will be shooting to win the game for conference standing. Kickoff will be at 8 o'clock.

In the Robbinsville game, SEE NO. 4, PAGE 12

'Roughed-In' Gym Approved By Board

PHONE VALUE IS REDUCED

County, Franklin Losing Money Over Cut In Valuation

Macon County and Franklin are losing close to a thousand dollars in taxes this year through a cut in valuation by Western Carolina Telephone Company.

Item: In the county, the telephone company has cut its excess (taxable) valuation from \$134,129 in 1953 to \$88,588 this year — a cut which means, on the basis of the new \$1.40 tax rate, the county is losing \$637.58.

Item: Franklin is out \$329.78 on a reduction from \$74,109 valuation in 1953 to \$44,129 this year. In 1953, the town received \$815.20 in taxes, but this year, on the new valuation, will get only \$485.42.

Item: The telephone company this year has reduced its value per mile figure within the county and the town from \$69.2916 per mile to \$45.7029.

Figures from Highlands were not immediately available, but it is reported a similar reduction has been noted there.

The above listed valuation and mileage figures were sworn through the State Board of Assessment, which forwards them officially to the counties and towns served by the telephone company.

The 1954 figures listed above are "revised". Last month, the governing bodies of the county and the town met jointly to discuss irregularities in telephone line mileage figures here. At that time, the State Board of Assessment had sent figures showing 688.27 miles of line less in Franklin in 1954 than in 1953 and 966.65 miles less for the entire county. Franklin mileage dropped from 1,069.53 miles in 1953 to 381.26 miles. The county figure dropped from 1,935.72 miles to 969.17. On the basis of these figures Franklin stood to lose better than \$400 and the county more than \$350 in taxes on the basis of 1953 tax rates.

With the situation called to their attention, following this meeting of the two governments' officials of the telephone company termed the figures as "mistakes" and said immediate steps were being made to correct them and submit new figures to the State Board of Assessment.

These new figures — marked by a correction of the mileage figure and the reduction in excess valuation — were received last week by the two governments.

"I believe something will happen by then (October 30) to enable us to build at least one," he said.

However, Chairman Sorrells did not disclose his ideas. No funds are available for construction of the two lunchrooms at the present time. At its last meeting, the board indicated it would build them.

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Nickels Vote Carries Here

Macon County joined the rest of the state Friday in voting overwhelming approval of the "Nickels for Know-How" agricultural research program for another three years.

Of the 312 votes cast throughout the county, 283 approved continuation of the program, while only 28 disapproved. One ballot was improperly marked.

The program, a North Carolina brain-child, assesses five cents per ton on feed and fertilizer to finance advanced research and education for farm folk.

The injured: Miss Ellen Ruth Franks, 17, daughter of Mack Franks, of Franklin, and Mrs. Ellen Franks, of Franklin and Hendersonville, received a concussion and cuts and bruises. Angel Hospital reported yesterday (Wednesday) she was "improving nicely."

Airman 3/c Lester Cecil Hin-

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Lunchroom Action Postponed; Bradley Gets Committee Job

A "roughed-in" gymnasium to fit the \$105,000 now on hand was authorized by Franklin High School by the Macon County Board of Education in session Monday night.

Action on construction of lunchrooms at the Otto and Cowee schools was postponed until October 30 at 9:30 a. m.

Decision to "rough-in" the gymnasium fell in line with a proposal advanced by the low-bidding general contractor, Macon Construction Company, to put up the structure in two phases of construction, since the county is more than \$50,000 short of having enough to finance the building according to the architect's plans.

The board accepted Part 1 of the contractor's offer: to erect the main walls, roof, doors and

SCHOOLS TO CLOSE
All schools in District 1 (Franklin) will close November 2 — election day.

In making this public Monday night, the Macon County Board of Education said the decision to close at Highlands and Nantahala will be left up to the committees of the two districts.

The lost day will be made up Saturday, October 30.

Windows of the bymnasium for \$83,000, plus \$25 per cubic yard to pour the concrete main floor. This latter item will cost an addition \$2,500 to \$3,000, according to School Supt. Holland McSwain.

The electrical and plumbing systems also will be "roughed-in" with the remainder of the \$105,000 insurance money, which the county received after the old gymnasium burned in March of this year. The architect's fee also will come out of this amount.

Part 2 of the contractor's offer calls for the completion of the building.

"It's at least a step forward," Board Chairman J. C. Sorrells commented after the action was taken. "After it is built the people should see the needs and move to provide funds to complete it."

Dover Plumbing and Heating Company was low bidder for the plumbing and heating and J. P. Wurst was low for electrical work.

Action on the Otto and Cowee lunchrooms was postponed at the suggestion of Chairman Sorrells, who commented he had "another idea or two" about raising enough money to start at least one of the buildings.

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The Weather

The week's temperature and rainfall, as recorded in Franklin by Manson Stiles, U. S. weather observer, and at the Coweeta Hydrologic Laboratory.

FRANKLIN		
Temperatures		
	High	Low
Wed. (Oct. 13).....	85	54
Thursday.....	82	55
Friday.....	68	48
Saturday.....	51	33
Sunday.....	67	23
Monday.....	74	23
Tuesday.....	66	28

HIGHLANDS		
Temperatures		
	High	Low
Wed. (Oct. 13).....	74	52
Thursday.....	80	53
Friday.....	62	47
Saturday.....	44	28
Sunday.....	59	29
Monday.....	70	30
Tuesday.....	58	30

COWEETA		
Temperatures		
	High	Low
Wed. (Oct. 13).....	80	59
Thursday.....	76	55
Friday.....	58	56
Saturday.....	48	29
Sunday.....	64	24
Monday.....	72	27
Tuesday.....	63	31
Wednesday.....	61	22



CORN FIELD TO HOSIERY PLANT—The new Franklin plant of Burlington Mills is going up in the corn field in which the men above are standing. Two engineers of the corporation were here Monday for a final survey of the site on US 23-441 (south) just outside Franklin. (L to R) W. J. Evans, construction engineer, Baxter Scott, architectural draftsman, W. W. Reeves, president of the Franklin Chamber of Commerce, Frank B. Duncan, chairman of the Macon Industrial Committee, and John M. Archer, Jr., president of Nantahala Power and Light Company and a key figure in arranging for the plant to come here. Grading should begin on the site next week. Two houses on the site are being torn down and two are being moved to new locations.