

HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

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Makes Boone Obsolete

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A CHRISTMAS MURAL was pieced together by Mrs. Young's business English class at Madison High School to celebrate the holiday season. The creators who spent three class periods (and extra time at home) cutting out snowflakes and coloring the scene at right, are front row, left to right: Mrs. Young, Beverly Green, Karen Franklin, Trina Nor-

ton, Rosemary Stanton, Brenda Stephens and Becky McDevitt. Second row: Lori Reese, Kathy Hensley, Connie Rice, Sandy Rice, Dianna Cutshall, Penny Gosnell, Janet Reed, Delores Wyatt, Aleshia Coates and Robin Self. Not present: April Ebbs and Donna Shetley.

Electricity Rates Will Rise Jan. 1

After holding off for two years, the French Broad Electric Membership Corporation is raising its electricity rates by an average of 5.3 percent. The move was authorized by the board of directors on Dec. 18, 1979.

The increases vary from zero to 6 percent according to the type of service. Residential rates will rise 5 percent, large commercial rates (more than 50 kilowatts) will rise 6 percent, street lighting rates will rise 10 percent, security lighting rates will rise 5 percent, and small commercial rates (less than 50 kilowatts) will not rise.

The reason that not all increases are the same is that French Broad EMC applied the new rates in a way never before tried here — the "cost of service" technique. They calculated how much it costs the company to supply electricity to each class of service, and how much that class ac-

tually was paying. In the case of large commercial users, for example, it was determined that customers were being undercharged by 4½ to 5 percent, so their rates are being raised. In the case of small commercial users, it was determined that customers were paying their full share already, so their rates will stay the same. The calculations were made under contract by Electrical Consulting Engineers of Charlotte.

Another significant change in the rate structure is the elimination of the 5 percent all-electric home discount.

This will mean that owners of all-electric homes are facing an increase of 5 percent in addition to the general residential increase of 5 percent, for a total of 10 percent.

"The all-electric rate," said General Manager Charles Tolley, "was established when electricity was cheap. It was still being advertised as recently as seven and eight years ago. But now we don't want people to use electricity for heating and we can't afford to offer the discount — it used to be 10 percent — anymore."

"I know that this hurts peo-

ple, and I know they are going to complain about it. But all I can say is that we're living in a different world now. You could say that we were guilty of encouraging people to build all-electric homes, and this is true; and so was every other utility in the country."

Another factor in the decision to eliminate this special rate is that increasing numbers of "all-electric" houses are actually relying heavily on oil or wood as their main heating source. The original discount was for homes that were "totally elec-

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Co-op Hopes For Wood-fuel Plant

After a year of study, the French Broad EMC has determined that a wood-burning power plant is technologically feasible and could handle approximately a third of the co-op's electricity load by as early as 1983.

If built, the Cane River plant would be the nation's first electricity generator constructed to use wood as fuel.

At a meeting Dec. 17 at Mountain Heritage High School in Burnsville, General Manager Charles Tolley told an audience of about 50 persons that French Broad has already taken an option on a 55-acre site on the Cane River, 2½ miles west of Burnsville on Highway 19E.

The plant would be fired by

burning finely-cut bark, sawdust, and barked slabs of waste wood, generating enough steam to produce 10 megawatts of electric power. The estimated cost of the facility is \$16.5 million.

The reasons for proposing this plant, according to a report released this week by the French Broad EMC board of directors, are several:

"To achieve partial relief from the escalating costs of wholesale electricity, presently bought from Carolina Power & Light;

"To help the national and state goal of energy self-sufficiency;

"To develop electricity with a renewable energy source that is presently going to

waste and even degrading the environment;

"To produce power without pollution — the wood smoke would contain negligible amounts of sulfur or other pollutants;

"To create a new industry in the area that would employ local people.

"What we hope to do," said

Tolley, "is to earn a grant that will cover half or even all of the construction cost of the plant. Congress is working on a bill that makes money available to the REA (Rural Electrification Administration) to stimulate the use of alternative sources of electricity among REA co-ops like us. We have been in almost constant contact with the of-

fices of Gov. Hunt, Sen. Morgan, Sen. Helms, Rep. Ramsey, and Cong. Guder, and we're very hopeful of getting the money. Also, our board of directors has authorized me to send a copy of our full report on the plant to the REA people in Washington and to meet with them personally."

The report was prepared by J.E. Serrine and Co., with a grant of \$30,000, arranged by Rep. Liston Ramsey and Gov. Hunt. "When we first mentioned our plan to the governor," said Tolley, "he was very pleased. He jumped up out of his chair and clapped his hands, and said, 'Finally someone wants to do something with wood!'"

Tolley says that as far as he knows, there is only one electricity plant in the country now producing power commercially with wood — a converted coal plant in Burlington, Vt. This would be the nation's first wholly wood-

fueled plant built just for that purpose.

The broader purpose, of course, is to move a step closer to independence from the huge power companies from whom small co-ops like French Broad must buy their electricity today. French Broad is almost helpless at controlling its rates, which are determined by the wholesale rates set by CP&L.

That amount has increased nearly four times since 1969, and is expected to continue rising at a similar rate in the future. And a huge increase is expected when CP&L finishes building its 3,600-megawatt nuclear complex, which will be the second-largest in the country. The wholesale rate could as much as double when that happens.

One of the main advantages of a wood-fueled plant is the price of the fuel — which is far below the price of coal or uranium. (Utilities are now prohibited by federal law from building power plants fueled by oil or natural gas). The current price of wood waste, as established by J.E. Serrine, is about \$2 a ton, plus transportation costs. The cost of coal would be far higher, so that heat could be obtained from wood for about 70 cents per

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Ponder Named To Panel By Governor

Gov. Jim Hunt named Madison County Sheriff E.Y. Ponder of Marshall to the Law Enforcement Planning Committee of the Governor's Crime Commission.

"E.Y. Ponder is one of the finest law enforcement officers in this state, and I know that he will be an exceptional member of this committee," Gov. Hunt said. "He has served Madison County and the people of North Carolina well for many years, and I am certain he will make outstanding contributions as a member of this committee."

The committee advises the Governor's Crime Commission on all matters relating to law enforcement, including detention, and recommends priorities for the improvement of law enforcement services in North Carolina.



STUDENTS AT MADISON HIGH gave four performances of three plays on Dec. 19 and 20, and the audiences loved every minute. The scene above is part of "The Laughing Ghost," which featured Shannon Joyner as Cleopatra; Gina Worley as Aunt Barbara; Chuck Pfaff as Uncle Ed; Lee Hoffman as Joe; Paula Shelton as Pamela; Lisa Chandler as

daughter No. 1; and Darlene Hill as daughter No. 2. The second play was "A New Sunrise," featuring Tammy Breedlove, Sue Tomberlin, Eddie Davis, and Stuart Jolley; and the third was "Farmer's Daughter," with Steve Ferguson, Gwen Stanton, Tim Wilde, Lisa Fish and Brian Dodge. The director was Stuart Jolley of Mars Hill.



DR. CHIPPER JONES, right, discusses treatment with Oscar Williams of Little Laurel at the Laurel Medical Center. As medical director of the Hot Springs Medical Program, he divides

his time between two of the three centers in Madison County. Tuesdays and Wednesdays he drives to Hot Springs, and on the other three days he works at Laurel.

Family Practice Specialist: A New Kind Of Doctor For Madison

Most doctors who spend the extra time to specialize in a particular field of medicine end up in large cities. This is not true for Dr. Frieden B. "Chipper" Jones, who moved to one of the most remote sections of Madison County last July.

And that is because Dr. Jones' specialty is family practice — one of the broadest specialties in medicine. He was recently named a diplomate of the American Board of Family Practice in Kansas City, after passing a

rigorous two-day examination testing his ability to deal with the whole broad spectrum of medicine.

Dr. Jones came here July 1 to become medical director of the Hot Springs Health Program. There, he divides his time between two centers, spending Tuesdays and Wednesdays at Hot Springs and Mondays, Thursdays, and Fridays at Laurel. He treats clients with problems ranging from the fields of surgery to gynecology to psychiatry.

"I prefer working in an out-

patient setting like this," says Dr. Jones, "rather than in a hospital. I don't like administrative chores, and a lot of a doctor's time is taken up with them in a hospital. I would rather spend that time with patients."

Madison County is one of the very few counties in the state that has no hospital, and one of the few where a doctor can — and has to — work in a rural setting. "My wife and I both get along with country people better than city folks," says Dr. Jones. "I grew up in Ashe

County, and my wife is from Bryson City, so we both like the mountains and mountain people. We wanted to settle in a small community, and we are happy we did. We can't think of any reason we would want to leave Madison County."

A "small community" is an understatement: Chipper Jones and his wife live so far up Shelton Laurel that some of their closest neighbors are Tennesseeans.

He moved there from

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