

THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

On the Inside . . .

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MARSHALL BUSINESSMEN interested in using local resources to help revitalize the downtown area are: (L-R) Ed Niles, who operates Roberts Pharmacy; Alfred Dirago, who runs the Rock Cafe; George Penland of Penland and Sons Department Store; Mayor Lawrence Ponder; and Buddy Buckner of Pioneer Ford.

Tight Budget Slashes 7 County Jobs

Seven county employees have been notified that their employment will be terminated at the end of June due to tight money considerations in the Madison County budget. Apparently letters were handed to the employees when they went to pick up their paychecks in late May. Madison County commissioner James Ledford identified those terminated as tax supervisor Ernest Snelson; veterans service officer Don West; safety officer Howard Ogle; and secretaries Ruth Gardner, Barbara Candler and Diane Coffey. A planner,

Herbert Ponder was on a federal grant which ran out at the end of May. He said the terminations were solely because of budget cutbacks. However, the veterans service officer, Don West, said he felt that politics was involved in his removal. "I don't see why a veterans office should be in politics, if that's what's going on," West said, and cited an increase in veterans benefits in the years since he has been in the office as a "good budgetary reason" to not terminate him.

West produced documents which show that Madison County was receiving a total of \$675,704 when he took office in 1974. The amount has increased every year, according to his figures, until the total last year was \$1,176,229. West did not make clear his charge of politics, since the members of the Board of Commissioners are Democrats and he is a Democrat himself. He said he had helped in elections as a Democrat for 30 years and has been a registrar in the South Marshall box for the past six years. "I want the veterans and dependents and survivors to know what has happened so they won't come in for



DON WEST

Marshall — A Town Coming Alive?

A group of Main Street merchants in Marshall has begun formulating plans for a low-cost rejuvenation of the downtown area which would draw people into the Main Street section on the weekends and conceivably turn the town into a steady attraction for Madison Countians and probably out-of-town visitors. The idea to use local assets as a fertile ground for growth has aroused the interest in a number of Marshall area leaders. Basically the ideas revolve around turning the French Broad River into a focal point for recreational activities, and the weekends use Back Street and various vacant lots for a flea market and farmer's market.

George Penland, one of the operators of Penland and Sons Department Store, said he was enthusiastically in favor of such a plan where local businessmen could take a hand in a revitalization effort without applying for big federal grants and the restrictions and regulations that go with it. "Most of what we're talking about we can do ourselves," Penland said. Alfred Dirago, operator of the Rock Cafe, beside the Madison County Courthouse, said that he could see the possibilities inherent in such an effort and that it might be the springboard for more ideas on how Marshall might regain its heavy volume of commerce. Dirago said: "It would be pleasant to have a nice cool place to go fishing or picnicking in the evening. We have so much raw natural beauty here it seems pointless to travel for recreation. I've heard stories of how Marshall's downtown used to be. I'd like to see it become a community meeting place once again, where neighbors get to visit and enjoy their leisure." Buddy Buckner, president of the downtown merchants group and who operates Pioneer Ford Co. on Main Street, said after several months of doldrums, the group is taking new interest in any feasible plan for the town and that meetings are scheduled to begin next Monday at the Rock Cafe at lunch time for

further explorations of the possibilities. "We expect to make some significant public announcements soon," Buckner said. The meetings at lunch on Mondays are expected to be informal and unstructured affairs in the beginning and will not supercede the regular meetings of the merchants groups on Thursday. Most people who heard of the plan felt that the effort to revive business along Main Street would not hinder, but rather, would probably help, the merchants in the shopping area along the Marshall bypass. "It's just going to mean more business for everyone in Madison County if we can get it off the ground," one of the group said. Marshall Mayor Lawrence Ponder said that he felt the governing body of the town would do everything possible to help the move. "We've got a lot to offer in Marshall and we are now in a position to make the offer a positive one to the public. "I am trying hard to get

some help from TVA and other sources for a big fireworks display here on the Fourth. That can be tied in with the things we are talking about. Nothing but good can come out of this effort. It is something new but as we make contacts we can just about be assured of assistance," Ponder said. Ed Niles, owner of Roberts Pharmacy, said it was time that such a drive got underway and that he knew of no one who would stand in the way of it. Offers of any assistance, or at least moral support, came from the Mayor of Mars Hill. Bill Powell said that he knew anyone in that end of the county would be eager to assist in something that would

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Glove Plant Employees Take Riverside Break

Rejuvenation: The River Is The Key

People with an interest in the renewal of downtown Marshall are waxing enthusiastically about the possibilities of exploiting a major asset which has always been right in the front yard, so to speak. The river, the beautiful cool French Broad River, whose presence dominates the downtown area. Around the river ideas have begun to revolve and evolve, and if the ideas keep teeming, shortly something tangible will grow, downtowners say. Here it is — fishing and those things affiliated with fishing, like boating and rafting. From that, swimming and tubing. Then, along the river banks in each direction upstream and down — picnic sites, campsites, possibly the development of hiking and jogging paths, nature trails, something for bikers. Perhaps a stable of riding horses for the summer weekends. Part of Marshall is owned by the city. The Mayor said that there is a good likelihood

that something can be worked out there. There are other small sandbars and islands along the immediate waterway, and these might perhaps offer small "beach" possibilities for teenager swimming and sunbathing. The bridge across the river could be worked with and perhaps revamped to make it more attractive to the eye. The smaller bridge going to the school spans a small piece of ground which would be ideal for clearing off and using as evening resting places and cookout sites. The major need in such a development would be manpower, and the merchants feel that chainsaws and bushaxes, shovels and picks, would do much of the job, and with the right community interest, those to do the labor would not be hard to find. Also of major importance is the utilization of Back Street and the lots along it for a flea market and, as the season progresses, a good farmer's market for small quantities of produce to be sold. In such a spontaneous

complex, a nice barter-market could also be developed. Madison County is a natural place for a good flea market since the main depository of antiques has not been touched. It is also a land of expert swappers. Once these inexpensive ideas are placed into operation, such things as artists festivals and music-making will naturally spring up. Such is the charm and appeal of the people of Madison County that people from all over the western part of the state might come. However, these are basic ideas and downtown merchants are beginning to meet and explore the possibilities. They have asked that people with embellishments on these ideas, or ideas of their own, write the editor of The News-Record or attend the Monday meetings during the noon hour at the Rock Cafe beside the Madison County Courthouse.

Workshop Set To Hear Legal Worries Of Aged

A workshop on "Legal Problems of the Elderly" will be held at the Marshall Day Care and Senior Center, Route 7, Long Branch Road, in Marshall on Friday, June 6, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Topics will include public benefits, protection for the disabled, and similar concerns. The workshop is open to the public and is targeted especially at persons involved in services to the elderly such as Council on Aging staff, Nutrition Site Managers, Senior Center Directors, Senior Employees, Nursing Home staff, Human Service Agency staff, volunteers and Aging Advisory Board member.

It is sponsored by Land-of-Sky Regional Council and Legal Aid Services of Buncombe County. The training is funded by Title IVA of the Older Americans Act. There is no charge, but pre-registration is requested. The workshop is limited to 35 participants. To register contact Judy Latham, Land-of-Sky Regional Council, P.O. Box 2175, Asheville 28801 or call (704)254-8131.

Mars Hill Budget Cut, Services To Remain

The tentative proposal for the Mars Hill town budget will see a cut of approximately 10 per cent, according to Mayor Bill Powell. He said the budget is being hammered out and an announcement will be made before the end of the month about public hearings. "We have proposed to cut the budget by 10 per cent — from last year's — in order to keep from raising taxes," Powell said. He said no workers will be laid off and the same services will be provided by the same personnel. Sunday Singing The Second Sunday Night Singing will be held at 7 p.m. Sunday, June 8 at Alexander Baptist Church. Groups expected to take part in the singing will be the Alexander Youth Choir, the Waters Singers, Parris Trio and others.