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Ambulance Driver Convicted

A Madison County ambulance driver who ran a red light and struck a car killing both occupants April 7 was convicted on four misdemeanor charges Wednesday in Buncombe County District Court.

Judge William Styles found Jackie Dean Holcombe, 28, of Mars Hill, guilty on two counts of death by motor vehicle, a stoplight violation, and failure to yield right-of-way.

Holcombe was fined \$200. He appealed the conviction to Buncombe County Superior Court. He has been free on \$1,000 bond.

Holcombe has returned to work for the Madison County ambulance service, "but he is not a driver," according to Larry Leake, Madison County attorney. Holcombe was suspended from his job the day after the accident by the Madison County Board of Commissioners.

Leake, who is still investigating the case, said Holcombe's job status and completion of the county investigation will remain open until the new trial of the case is resolved.

Holcombe was arrested by Asheville police following the 1:57 p.m. accident between his ambulance and a car at an intersection within sight of Asheville's two hospitals.

According to a police investigation, Holcombe failed to stop for a red light at the intersection of Biltmore Avenue and Victoria Road while transporting a heart attack victim to Memorial Mission Hospital.

Killed in the accident were Victoria Weatherman Tipton, 42, and her mother, Carrie M. Weatherman, 73, both of Burnsville.

Mrs. Weatherman was pronounced dead on arrival at Memorial Mission Hospital. Mrs. Tipton died in the hospital three days later.

Ambulance patient Grace Taylor, 69, of Marshall, died early April 8 in Memorial Mission's coronary care unit. Her death was not related to the accident, a hospital spokesman said.

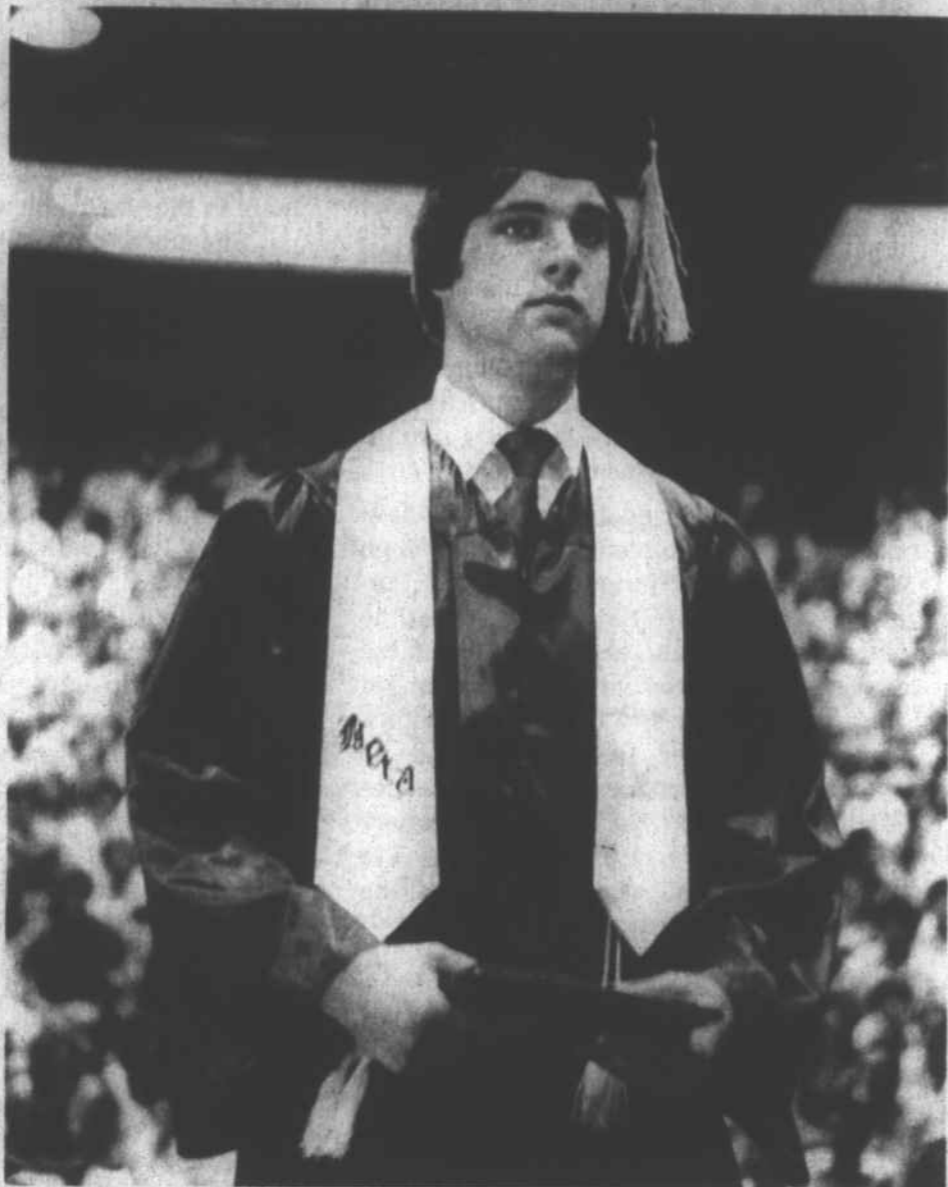


Photo by N. Hancock

Graduate Dwayne Buckner Carries Diploma

MHS Graduation Held

One of the largest audiences in Madison County High School history turned out Sunday afternoon to witness the graduation ceremony conducted for the 191 member 1981 graduating class.

The standing-room-only crowd of parents, relatives and friends packed the high school gymnasium and endured uncomfortable high temperatures to participate in the traditional event.

Immediately preceding the passing out of diplomas, 10 graduates received awards for outstanding achievements in various fields during their senior year. The categories and recipients were Band Award — Barry Wells, Agriculture Award —

Michael Griffin, English Award — Dwayne Buckner and Vera Melvin, French Award — Vera Melvin, Home Economics Award — Diane Roberts, Math Award — Ken Edwards, Marketing and Distributive Education Award — Tonya Mace, Biological Science Award — Vera Melvin, Physical Science Award — Ken Edwards, Social Studies Award — Tommy Gentry, Trade and Industrial Award — Racine Murray, Yearbook Editors Award — Michael Griffin and Gwen Stanton.

Graduates receiving awards for the highest grade point averages were Vera Melvin, first place and Jeffery Dwayne Buckner, second place.

At Board Of Education Meeting

Career Teachers 'Rehired' Monday

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

The Madison County Board of Education apparently avoided a legal confrontation with the North Carolina Association of Educators Monday when it voted to keep on the payroll 16 regular classroom career teachers previously sent termination notices by the board.

The board acted after a 30 minute executive session and immediately before hearing two NCAE representatives who attended the meeting to discuss the status of the career teachers with the board.

Returning to the public meeting, Superintendent R.L. Edwards recommended employment of the teachers for the 1981-82 school year, and the board unanimously approved the hiring of 15 of the 16. Board member Gerald Young voted against hiring Don Fowler, a teacher at Spring Creek Elementary School, but Fowler was retained on a majority vote.

Kathryn Boone, president of the Madison NCAE chapter, and Burnace Roberts, regional NCAE UniServ director, attended the meeting with the intention of questioning the board about the manner in which it terminated the employment of the 16 teachers, all tenured, at a called meeting on March 16, and to inform the board that the procedure used was not in accordance with state law.

"As I understand the situation, the board simply met and voted to 'not renew' the contracts of these people. You don't 'non-renew' a career teacher because they are on a continuing con-

tract," Roberts said in an interview during the board's executive session.

Roberts pointed out that state law requires the school superintendent to notify career teachers by certified mail of his intention to make a recommendation to the board for termination or dismissal before the recommendation is actually presented to the board. Roberts said the NCAE contends this and other required procedures were not carried out before the Madison school board terminated the career teachers in March.

"The law was totally ignored as far as our career folks are concerned," Roberts said.

Roberts said he wrote a letter to Edwards in mid April "setting these things out" and notifying the superintendent of the NCAE contentions.

The school board's action Monday took care of Boone and Roberts' concern about the employment of career personnel, but Boone voiced concern about how soon the affected teachers would be notified about their employment status. Edwards assured her that he would contact them Tuesday morning about the matter.

"The last day of school is Friday, and we are holding (termination) letters which might cause some people to show up in employment lines," Boone said.

The career teachers and personnel "reinstated" by the board's action are: Kathryn Boone, Vickie Carver, Sharon Baker, Elmer Chandler, Owen Fish, Alex Farkas, Don Fowler, Wanda Hollifield, Ethel Kirkpatrick, Linda

Harrell, Rosella Ramsey, Randy Ramsey, Deborah Ross, Jeter Sherlin, and Christa Wallin.

Asked after the meeting why he did not approve rehiring of Fowler, Young said, "Because of his past record."

Young said Fowler "was dismissed at one time from the school system, but I was told by the chairman of the board today that he (Fowler) resigned (that he was not fired)."

Young referred to an article in the February 2, 1978 edition of *The News Record* and said school board attorney, Larry Leake, was quoted at that time as saying that Fowler would never be hired again if found guilty of allegations made against him.

"I've never voted for him. I didn't vote for him the first time," Young said.

Fowler was suspended from teaching duties at Madison High School by the board on January 30, 1978 after the board ordered an investigation of alleged immoral conduct involving Fowler and a student. The board voted to uphold and continue Fowler's suspension at an executive hearing held on February 9.

Board chairman Bobby Ponder said Edwards "did not initiate dismissal proceedings against Fowler after the executive hearing."

"He resigned on his own on a bunch of rumors, hogwash, or whatever you want to call it, in his best interest," Ponder said.

Fowler was out of the school system approximately one year, according to Ponder, and was later re-employed.

Marshall Board Of Aldermen

Rec Park Fills Meeting

With a June 12 opening date for the Marshall swimming pool fast approaching, the Town Board of Aldermen spent most of Monday night's meeting trying to sort out details in getting the town's summer recreation program into full operation.

The aldermen listened to comments and recommendations from Fay Reid and Betty Wild, members of the town's recreation committee, and took several actions toward getting the recreation program into full swing.

The board approved a negotiated salary for Peggy Rice who will manage the swimming pool for the summer, and agreed to allow Miss Rice to begin work at the facility this week. Rice said much work is needed in the dressing rooms at the pool, and the pool needs to be cleaned and painted as soon as possible.

The board also agreed to build a wooden deck at the pool, and assigned alderman Jack Davis to supervise its construction without delay.

A tentative schedule for opening the pool each day was set up. The pool will be open from 1 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday. The pool will be closed on Mondays. The board approved the following admission prices for swimmers: one dollar for students, \$1.25 for adults, and \$2.50 for families on a designated family day.

Mayor Lawrence Ponder told the aldermen that the tennis courts and basketball court at the recreation park have been completed.

Mrs. Wild told the aldermen that she would

like to see the town hire a full-time recreation director year round. She said the youth need something to do after swimming and baseball season are over. Her comments were met with some opposition from aldermen citing lack of funds to hire someone year-round, but Mrs. Wild said taxes could be raised in order to provide the service. "It's done everywhere else, and you've got to start somewhere," she said.

In other business, the aldermen heard a report from Becky Williams of the Land-of-Sky Regional Council in which she said a grant application for federal funds to help the French Broad Electric Membership Corporation renovate the Capitola Dam for power generation would probably be submitted by Aug. 1.

The aldermen appointed Helen Rudisill as the town's representative to attend preliminary meetings connected with the upcoming French Broad River Week which will be held in September.

The board also heard a complaint from Roy Reeves, a resident on Skyway Drive, who wanted to know, "Where is the muddy water coming from?"

"It's getting old — paying my water bill and getting muddy water a third of the time," Reeves said.

The board responded by admitting that they weren't really sure exactly what is causing the problem, but they assured Reeves that once the water and sewer improvements are made to the system, the problem should be eliminated.

State School Bond Looks Doubtful

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — With attention focused on a proposed gasoline tax increase, some key legislators say they've almost give up hope for a \$600 million school referendum this year.

"It's looking more doubtful every day," said House Speaker Liston Ramsey.

"The governor's gas tax thing has taken all the limelight," said Rep. Horace Locklear, D-Robeson, who introduced a bill Jan. 30 to schedule a bond referendum.

"It (the bond referendum) doesn't look like it would be good timing. We need to get

our superintendents and boards of education back to writing their legislators," he said.

But Locklear and Sen. Helen Marvin, D-Gaston, who introduced an identical bill in the Senate, say they may be waiting in vain for the right moment to push ahead with their bills.

Both measures would put the \$600 million bond question to voters in a statewide referendum Nov. 30. Should the referendum pass, the money would pay for rebuilding, repairing and renovating public schools.

Tom I. Davis, public information officer for the Department of Public Instruction, said the idea of a bond referendum has been around for three or four years.

The department apparently has held off pushing the referendum until just the right moment. Now officials say they're afraid there won't be a right time.

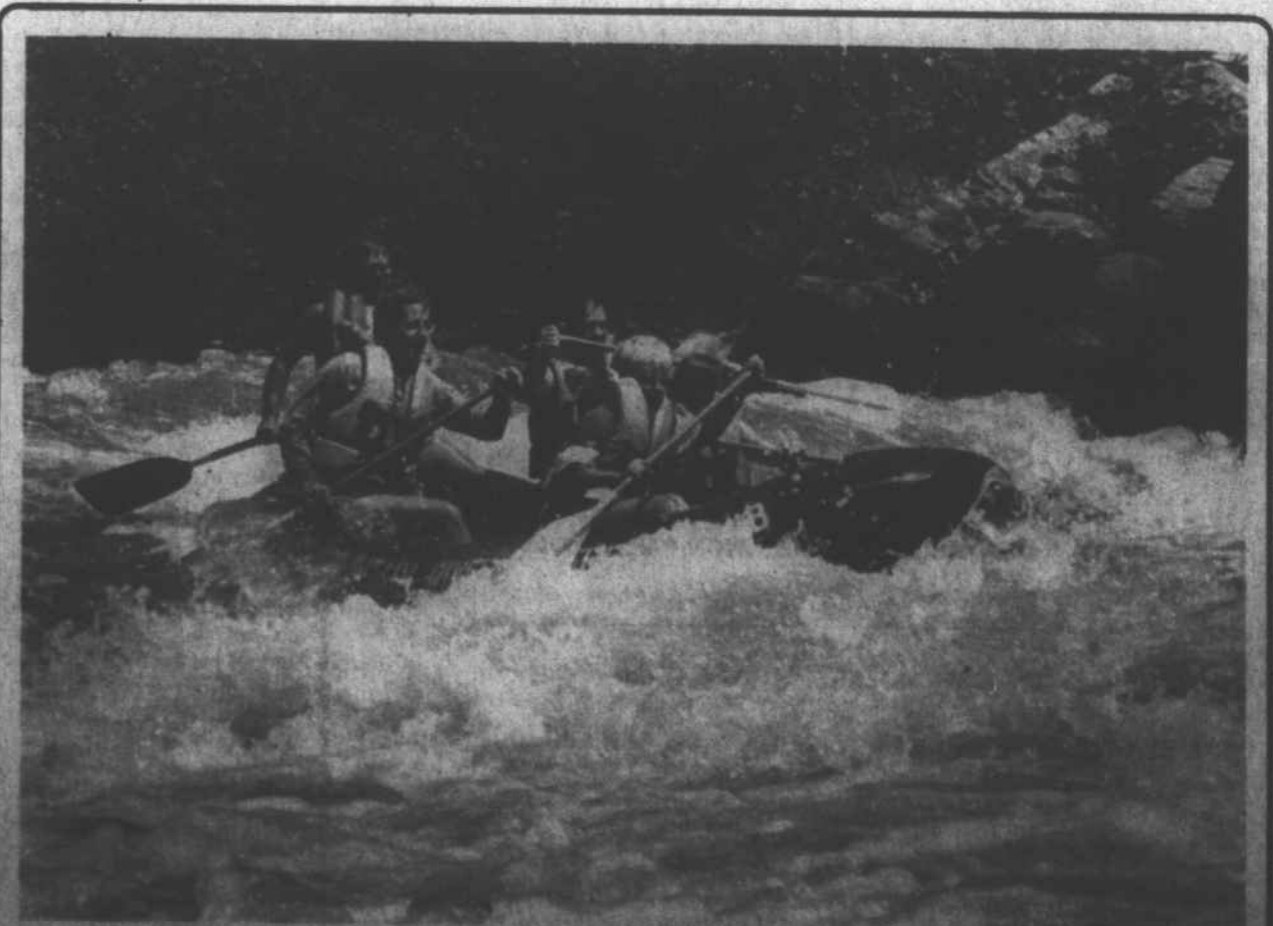
"Every time we thought we'd get it on the floor that would be some other major disaster," Locklear said. But he predicted his bill might surface this week in the House Finance Committee.

Mrs. Marvin said she was awaiting word on her bill's chances of success from the Department of Public Instruction, which has been testing the waters for a referendum.

Davis is more pessimistic. He said he doubts the right time will come to vote on a referendum before the Legislature adjourns this summer.

"We put the bill in early hoping it would get approved early and we may have made a mistake by not pushing it stronger," Davis said.

Continued on Page 2



WHITE-WATER RAFTING is a fun sport and enjoyable pastime on the French Broad River. Experience a trip with Smoky Mountain River Expeditions, an editor and his family and a husband of Boy Scouts. See story and photos on Page 1.

Photo by N. Hancock