



# THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

80th Year No. 25

PUBLISHED WEEKLY IN THE COUNTY SEAT AT MARSHALL, N.C.

THURSDAY, June 18, 1981

15c Per Copy



Photo by N. Hancock

Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Conners With Their Four Home-Delivered Children

## And 'Lucky' Makes Four

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK  
Editor

Gaston Lucky Conners was born into the world on Sunday, June 7 at 11:05 p.m. weighing in at a healthy eight pounds and eight ounces. And, like an older sister and two older brothers, Lucky is the fourth child of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Conners of Route 2, Marshall to be delivered at home — by Mr. Conners.

It was no accident or premature situation. The Conners planned it that way as they did with Robert Alexander, 6; Rodney Wahoo, 5; and Nioka Pocahontas, 2½. The Conners' four older children were all delivered in a hospital.

So why the decision to have the last four at home?

"Well, I came to the conclusion that they didn't help me any at the hospital with our fourth child, and I figured if I could suffer pain at the hospital, I could suffer pain here at home," Mrs. Conners said.

Mr. Conners and the other children were the only people present when Mrs. Conners gave birth to Lucky, and Conners delivered the other three youngsters unassisted by a doctor or nurses.

"People ask me where I got my schooling for delivering babies," Conners laughed, "and I tell them I got my schooling out behind the barn like everybody else."

Mrs. Conners explained that she borrowed some books on child birth and read the instructions to Conners before Robert's birth. Conners, who says he doesn't read very well, learned the procedure and has had little difficulty in his role as midwife, or "midhusband" in this case.

"I've delivered a lot of farm animals,"

Conners said, "but this is a lot different, buddy. If you lose a calf, you've not lost nothing, but with this you've got a human life in your hands, and you better believe it's different. It's an awful lot of responsibility."

Conners said he's never been frightened or nervous while delivering his last four children, but both Wahoo and little Lucky gave him cause for concern. He said when Wahoo was born "for three or four seconds I didn't think he was going to start breathing, but I just slapped him on the back until he started." Conners said when Lucky's head emerged from the birth canal, "he just stopped. If I had got scared or panicked, I guess we would have lost him," he said.

The Conners said they took Lucky to a doctor the next day to have him examined and to get a birth certificate filled out. It's a procedure the staff at the Marshall-Walnut Medical Center have become accustomed to with the Conners.

"The folks there have been wonderful to us," Mrs. Conners said. "When my child birth books got burned in the house we lived in, I went down to the clinic and they ran off some more copies for me. The only question they ever ask me is will I go to the hospital if I start to have any problems, and I assure them I will."

Asked if they plan on having any more children, Mrs. Conners laughed and said, "No, Eight is enough, like that television program."

Conners, who farms burley tobacco and runs a lawnmower service and small engine repair shop at his home, said, "That's why we named this one Lucky. He's the last one."

### Employees Locked In Bank Vault

## Hot Springs Bank Robbed

Two men robbed the Hot Springs branch of Wachovia Bank & Trust Company of an undisclosed amount of money about 10:30 a.m. Monday and escaped the scene in a pickup truck.

At press time Tuesday, Sheriff E.Y. Ponder said the suspects had not been located, but he "has an idea" as to their identity and should know more once the film in the bank camera is developed. The unmasked men were reported to be armed with a pistol and a knife.

The FBI has joined county and Hot Springs officers in the investigation of the case.

Hot Springs Police Chief Leroy Johnson said the men were described as white males in their late teens or early 20s, one with light hair and the other with darker hair.

Hot Springs town clerk Mrs. Gene Autrey was the only customer in the bank on Bridge Street at

the time of the robbery, along with three bank employees.

The robbers forced bank employees to give them money, and then locked the employees and Mrs. Autrey in the bank vault. No shots were fired, officers reported.

Witnesses told officers the men left the bank on foot and climbed into their vehicle which was parked some 500 feet away near the Post Office and drove out of town.

Ponder indicated officers had a strong suspicion as to who the robbers might be and said when robbery photos are available they could lead to a positive identification and possibly an early arrest.

Sheriff's department spokesmen said the bank was robbed once before in 1957 when it was then a branch of Citizens Bank.

### Mayor Asks State Bill For Marshall

At the request of Mayor Lawrence Ponder, Senators James McClure Clarke and Robert S. Swain have introduced a bill to add Marshall to those towns eligible to participate in the federally-financed Urban Development Action Program.

This program authorizes the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to make Urban Development Action Grants to cities and towns "to alleviate physical and economic deterioration."

The bill also permits eligible towns to lend or grant moneys received from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development to private developers who are carrying out projects in the depressed area.

Other North Carolina towns and cities already included in the same law are: Clinton, Fuquay-Varina, Goldsboro, Rose Hill and Warsaw.

## Residents Oppose Tax Hike

By ALAN ANDERSON

Some 60 Madison County residents attended a special commissioners' meeting on Friday, June 12 to voice their opinions about next year's budget and property tax rate.

Most of those who spoke argued strongly and at times emotionally against reducing the full-time, county-wide ambulance service now provided to county residents.

At the same time there was a strong appeal to hold real and personal property taxes to the level of the current fiscal year. Zeno Ponder, Democratic county chairman, offered the results of an informal, county-wide canvass which heavily favored a tax rate of 67 cents. Such a rate would bring in \$1,033,000 in tax receipts, Ponder said — about the same as those collected in the current year.

James Ledford, chairman of the Board of Commissioners, said that the meeting was called to hear testimony from representatives of agencies and the public at large. He said that a decision on the tax rate will probably be made during the coming week.

The commissioners face an

unusually difficult decision this year. On one hand, several substantial sources of funds from state and federal governments have shrunk or disappeared. Most notable among these are the CETA grants which, in the past, have paid the salaries of most of the ambulance service personnel as well as other employees.

At the same time, executives of the Southern Railway Co. have chosen not to pay their property tax to the county, arguing that it is unfairly high. This represents a loss to the county of \$103,000, or nearly 10 percent of the current year's planned receipts.

Both of these problems have arisen independently of the inflation that has forced the costs of virtually all county operations sharply upward.

Therefore the county has to make up for the loss of revenue during the coming year, as well as plan for reduced outside income.

According to County Finance Officer David Caldwell, the tax rate would not cover any requests for increases from county agencies. It would bring in a total of \$1,412,000.

Caldwell also said that the rate required to cover both the deficits and all increases that have been requested would be \$1.04. This rate would yield about \$1,610,000 in tax income. Commissioner Ledford

would not speculate on the most probable rate figure. He did make his own personal feelings clear, however: "If it were my decision, I can tell you what I'd do — I'd make it a dollar."

Of those testifying at the meeting, Superintendent of Schools, Robert Edwards described the greatest potential deficit during the coming fiscal year. He said that as much as \$111,000 in federal funds might be taken from the lunchroom budget, \$67,000 from Title I funds, and \$47,000 from Special Education, totalling some \$250,000. He also anticipates state cuts of up to 6 percent, undetermined cuts by the county, and inflation of 12 percent. "We're talking in terms of 50 percent less than what we operated the school system on last year," he said.

Health Department Director Ed Morton said that he still has only a vague idea of how much money his department will receive. It depends largely on the extent of reductions in money the state receives from Washington, and those reductions have not yet been announced.

Day Care Director told the commissioners that the staff has been cut the "bare minimum" that still complies with state law. She said that the nutritional and medical care received by the day care children is "well deserved and

well needed," and that the program allows parents to hold jobs.

Mildred West, acting director of the ambulance service, said that the service had responded to 439 calls in the county in the last six months, and 847 calls in the last year. She said that about 20 calls per month were made on the behalf of heart disease victims. "We're always getting little notes from people saying, 'Thank you for saving my life,' or some such message. I just don't see how we can do without the ambulance service."

About 10 others spoke in favor of maintaining the ambulance service in its present state, including Buford Marler, Ernest Snelson, and three employees of the service.

The only voice raised against fulltime, professional ambulance service, and the tax increase that would be required, was that of Zeno Ponder. Ponder said he spoke on behalf of the Democratic Party committeemen. He said he had called as many of the 110 or so committeemen as he could reach. He reported that the overwhelming majority — about 85 percent — had voted to hold the tax rate to 67 cents. This figure, Ponder said, multiplied by the current valuation, would yield the same tax income collected during the current year.

Ponder reported few dissenting votes: about a dozen abstained, four voted for an 80-cent rate, and one voted for a 55-cent rate. He also said the State Representative Liston Ramsey of Marshall had suggested he "hold the line" on taxes this year.

Ponder recommended a volunteer ambulance service, funded by a flat grant of \$25,000 to each of the three incorporated towns.

"I think it's pretty clear that the overwhelming majority of our committeemen out there think this is no time to raise taxes," he said. "We're not as big as Fort Knox. We don't have all those dollars that Washington has rolling in. Can Madison County afford to pay for all those services? I got news for you. There ain't no way."

Without any CETA money it would cost the county about \$20,000 a month to maintain present ambulance service, or \$249,000 a year, minus some \$24,000 in revenues. Most of those who testified at the meeting said they would be willing to pay more in taxes to maintain the service.

During the meeting, Jerry Plemmons presented a 15-minute slide-tape show on county government. The presentation was contracted by the commissioners to explain where our budget money comes from and how it was spent.

### County Left Unshuffled

Madison County will apparently be left unshuffled in the move to split some county lines in order to reapportion North Carolina's 11 congressional districts. That move gained momentum last week with passage of a Senate resolution and the initial steps of a House subcommittee.

Faced with crumbling support for a redistricting plan that only last month appeared to have the support of a bipartisan coalition, the Senate returned its first realignment map to committee rather than bring the issue to a vote.

Voting 30-15, the Senate then approved and sent the House a resolution authorizing legislative committees to draw up new maps that divide counties in order to arrive at numerically similar districts.

The resolution was sponsored by Sen. Dallas Alford, D-Nash, who proposed it in an effort to head off the map approved by the Senate Congressional Redistricting Committee. The map shifted Durham County into the 2nd District, a move opposed by Alford and 2nd District Rep. L.H. Fouse.

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## Spotted Fever Reported Here

A 10-year-old county youth has been diagnosed as having Rocky Mountain spotted fever, according to doctors at the Hot Springs Health Program. The diagnosis was made last week by Grant Trevor, a physician's assistant at the Marshall-Walnut Medical Center.

At press time Tuesday, HSHP doctors were awaiting confirmation of the diagnosis from blood tests being conducted at Memorial Mission Hospital in Asheville.

Trevor said he can't be 100 percent sure that the child's illness is spotted fever until the results of the tests are released, but the symptoms exhibited by the youth — high fever, headache, a spotty rash on the palms and soles of the feet — were a classic example of those caused by the disease.

Trevor said the youth had been bitten by a tick five days before the symptoms began to appear.

Doctors Ron Plemmons and Chipper

Jones said they consider the diagnosis as a "real save," explaining that diagnosed early the disease can be treated with antibiotics; "miss it and your mortality rate is high," they said. Trevor said dosages of aspirin and Tylenol had no effect on the youngster's fever. He sent the youth to Memorial Mission where a spinal tap and initial blood tests proved negative, however, the white cell count in the blood "went along with spotted fever," he said.

June and July are prime fever months, and Trevor urged anyone bitten by a tick to be alert for the disease symptoms — a flu-like fever, headache, muscle ache, redness of eyes and nausea in the initial stages. After about three days, a spotty rash will break out on the palms, wrists, ankles and soles of the feet.

In 1980, 321 cases of Rocky Mountain spotted fever were reported in North Carolina, 30 percent above the 247 reported in 1979.

## Edwards Appointed To State Post

State School Superintendent, Craig Phillips, recently announced the appointment of Madison County's School Superintendent, Robert L. Edwards, to the State Superintendent's Sports Medicine Advisory Commission.

The purpose of the commission is to provide direction to the Sports Medicine Division and the State Department in an effort to prevent deaths and disabling injuries to students participating in school sports activities.

Phillips stated he depended on the Commission for leadership and guidance in the decisions and actions that were involved in state service to students.