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Photo By Scott Dedman

Allison Sentenced To 50 Years

SPENCER DALE ALLISON, 44, of Moore Haven, Fla., entered the Madison County Courthouse with Sheriff E.Y. Ponder Monday afternoon to enter a plea of guilty to the charge of robbery with a dangerous weapon. The charges of conspiracy and kidnapping stemming from the June 15 holdup of The Wachovia Bank branch

in Hot Springs were dropped in an agreement between Allison's attorney and prosecutors. Allison was sentenced by Hon. Judge Ronald W. Howell to 50 to 60 years in a state prison. The trial of another defendant in the same case, Charles E. Williams, has not been scheduled.

At Bo

Madison County Library
Marshall, NC 28755 9/81

Medical Consultant Questions Frozen Funds

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

A heated discussion involving frozen county funds which help to provide a medical consultant for the Madison County Health Department was the focal point of last Wednesday's board of health meeting in Marshall.

Dr. Charles H. Powell, Mars Hill physician and medical consultant to the health department, said he felt he was being coerced, through manipulation of county funds, into admitting patients to Madison Manor Nursing Center in Mars Hill.

During the meeting, Powell said James Ledford, chairman of the health board and chairman of the county commissioners, had told a health department secretary that the county portion of Powell's medical consultant fee would be eliminated unless he admitted patients to the nursing home. "Is that true?" Powell asked Ledford.

Ledford neither confirmed nor denied the allegation but said the \$1,700 "was a budget reduction approved by the board of county commissioners at the adoption of the budget" on June 3.

Powell told The News Record an announcement was made at the July health board meeting stating the county commissioner would be freezing funds for hiring a nurse practitioner and medical consultant. He said Ed Morton, health department director, talked with him during the latter part of August and told him that Ledford had said the commissioners would release the funds if Powell agreed to admit patients to the nursing home.

"They, Jim Ledford, Bobby Edwards and Virginia Anderson, sent word that

everything would be fine, my fee would be restored, and the family nurse practitioners position would be reinstated if I'd go ahead and admit patients," Powell said.

Morton, saying he "didn't want to be caught in the middle," declined comment when asked if he delivered such a message to Powell. But health board member Lillian Corbett said that she telephoned Morton after being told of his conversation with Powell and that Morton told her he had made the statement.

"It seems that some of the county commissioners have such a vested interest in the nursing home that they're willing to sacrifice the well being of another institution (the health department)," Powell said at Wednesday's meeting.

"I submit that this is abuse of public power — a conflict of interest," he said. Ledford, county commissioner Virginia Anderson, and Robert L. Edwards, school superintendent and health board member are members of the board of directors of Madison Convalescence Inc., the non-profit organization which spearheaded the construction of Madison Manor.

As medical consultant, Powell is responsible for the proper dispensation of medications and vaccinations administered by the health department nursing staff. He contends that eliminating or freezing funds for a medical consultant, resulting in the elimination of that position, would "jeopardize the well-being of the health department."

Powell receives \$5,100 per year as medical consultant. The county has been providing \$1,700 of that amount,

and the remainder is provided through Title V (Maternal Child Health) and Title X (Family Planning) monies from the state and federal governments.

Ledford said he "knows of no connection" between the freezing of the medical consultant's funds and the operation of Madison Manor, and maintained that the action was made by the commissioners in a budget tightening move. However, he told the health board that "it would be so much easier if Dr. Powell and all the doctors would work to make it (Madison Manor) a success."

Powell said he chooses not to do nursing home practice. "I think a professional should have the right to make that choice without being coerced with the county taxpayers' money. I don't think that's right," he said.

Powell said he has declined to admit patients to Madison Manor "for a variety of reasons." "It was an independent decision. I really don't like the concept," he said.

But Ledford argued that the county has a \$1.3 million Medicaid budget and county taxpayers support that budget with a percentage of their taxes. "If we transfer our patients into Buncombe, Haywood and other counties, we take our tax dollars out of Madison County," he said.

According to David George, Madison Manor administrator, Medicaid funds pay 85 percent of patients' expenses at the facility.

After the lengthy discussion, board members approved a motion instructing Morton to request the release of the frozen medical consultant's funds at the county commissioners' November meeting.

Messer Appointed To Division On Aging

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK

Declaring him a true "advocate for the elderly," Gov. Jim Hunt appointed State Rep. Ernest B. Messer, D-Haywood, as assistant secretary for the Division on Aging of the N.C. Department of Human Resources Thursday at a news conference in the governor's western office in Asheville.

Messer succeeds Nathan Yelton, who headed the division on aging from 1977 until his death on Sept. 28.

Messer, 67, a former teacher and basketball coach in the Haywood County school system, has served 19 years in the General Assembly. Hunt said that during that tenure, Messer "has become one of that body's most respected and influential members, and he is North Carolina's greatest champion of the rights of senior citizens."

Hunt said that since Yelton's death, "there has been an outpouring of

requests from senior citizens to appoint Ernest as his successor. The senior citizens of North Carolina are extremely fortunate that a person of Ernest Messer's stature would agree to assume the position of assistant secretary."

Messer has been chairman of the House Committee on Aging since it was created in 1977. The committee was responsible for legislation that established the Division on Aging with \$70,000, and Hunt said, "Today, the division administers more than \$7 million a year for programs to benefit senior citizens."

Hunt said that Messer and the Committee on Aging has led numerous legislative battles on behalf of the state's elderly. "These include increasing the state's compulsory retirement age from 65 to 70, expansion of the Homestead Exemption, a Bill of Rights for patients in nursing homes and rest homes, appropriations for

local senior citizens' centers, and establishment of in-home service programs which help keep senior citizens at home and out of institutions.

"The latter is an area in which we've got a lot of work to do," Hunt said.

Hunt said Messer is "uniquely qualified to administer the very programs he was so instrumental in creating."

Messer, who served Haywood, Jackson, Madison and Swain counties along with House Speaker Liston B. Ramsey of Marshall, said, "I assure you that it wasn't easy to decide whether to continue to serve in the General Assembly or to try to fill the vacancy created in the Division of Aging by the death of Nathan Yelton."

Messer, who will assume his new position on Nov. 1, said it will be difficult to give up his seat in the House and cease serving his constituents in that capacity, but "my service to them

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Replacement To State House Up In Air

When word spread that State Rep. Ernest Messer would be appointed to the state government post of assistant secretary to head up the Division of Aging last week, speculation was rampant about who would succeed him in the 43rd District House seat in Raleigh.

Early speculation, preceding Messer's appointment by Gov. Jim Hunt on Thursday, had Pat Smathers of Canton and Charles W. Hipps of

Waynesville as frontrunners for the seat. However, Hipps, an attorney who has been putting our feelers on a possible race against state Sen. James McClure Clarke for the 11th District U.S. House seat, emphatically stated he would not be seeking Messer's post in the General Assembly.

According to Wayne McDevitt, director of the governor's western office in Asheville, Smathers is also out as a successor to Messer. Contacted Friday, McDevitt

said Charles Bell and Jack Abbott, both of Canton, look like leading prospects for the soon-to-be vacated House seat.

McDevitt said he understood that Abbott was in Madison County Friday, indicating that Abbott may have been calling on district executive committee members to strengthen his chances for appointment to N.C. representative position.

The actual decision on a successor to Messer will be made by a district executive

committee made up of two people from each county in the 43rd District, but it is thought that these committee members will be guided considerably from the direction given by their county chairmen.

McDevitt said Madison County's committee members are James Ledford and Swann Huff, both of Mars Hill. He said selection of a successor will be determined by "weighted" votes based on population — one vote per 300

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The People Ask

The People Ask is a weekly feature of The News Record. The public may submit questions on any local subject by calling 649-2741 or by mailing them to The People Ask, The News Record, P.O. Box 268, Marshall, N.C. 28755.

QUESTION: Why are Madison Schools charging more for student lunches than surrounding county school systems?

ANSWER: First let's establish whether or not the price really is higher here. If you compare a high school lunch in Yancey County where the enrollment is very close to ours, you'll find the same price, \$1. But Madison County charges that dollar for all ages, whereas other counties reduce the price for younger children. Here are the figures.

School System	Elementary	High School
Madison	\$1.00	\$1.00
Yancey	80c	\$1.00
Haywood	70c	80c
Buncombe	85c	85c
Asheville City	75c	85c

There is a 50c difference here, but it's not much for some families, but when it adds up to almost \$5 a year, it could hurt. Madison County School Superintendent R.L. Edwards says that he doesn't know how the other counties can reduce the price for the younger children, since the state requires the same

Debbie Baker, Madison Co. Food Services Director, are enrollment and distance from suppliers. Haywood County serves three times as many lunches as Madison County every school day, so they are able to buy foods at larger quantities and thus at lower unit prices. Buncombe County's enrollment of 24,000 is eight times higher than ours.

Ms. Baker emphasized that many food suppliers are unwilling to bid on Madison County orders because of the cost of delivering to widely-scattered schools in a rural area. A food services director in Haywood County bore that out, saying that she solves the problem by having all staples, canned goods and frozen meat delivered in large quantities to a central warehouse for storage. A food services truck then delivers to the schools weekly. Fresh meat and produce are delivered directly to the schools from suppliers.

As far as we can determine there is no difference in the quality of meals served here or in the other counties, since all meal programs must meet the federal standards of 3 oz. of protein, 2 1/2 cup total of fruits and/or vegetables, 1/2 pint milk, and 1 oz. bread. The standards for third grade children and younger are lower, but not by much.

Neither is there any apparent difference in how many employees are on the food services payroll, since all programs must gauge their employee hours according to how many lunches are served.

Further questions or comments



SECRETARY ON AGING — State Rep. Ernest B. Messer (center) was appointed as assistant secretary of the Division on Aging Thursday. Messer was accompanied at the event by his wife, Nancy, and by other officials. He will assume his new post on

by Gov. Jim Hunt at a news conference