



THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY

Madison County Library
Marshall, NC 28753 9/81

80th Year No. 52

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

THURSDAY, December 24, 1981

PY

Rejoice

Merry Christmas
from
The Staff and Associates
of
The News Record



Dave Wilson Appreciation Day



Photo by N. Hancock

Thursday, Dec. 24 has been officially proclaimed "Dave Wilson Appreciation Day" in Marshall by Mayor Lawrence Ponder.

"Dave's dedication to his job of keeping our downtown area clean and debris-free in all kinds of adverse weather conditions, his cheerful personality and helpfulness in small matters of garbage collection have truly made Marshall a cleaner and better place to live," Mayor Ponder said.

Town residents and officials will gather at Town Hall at 6:30 p.m. Thursday to pay special tribute to Mr. Wilson with an old-time "pounding," the traditional mountain method of presenting food and gifts to mountain area preachers.

All town residents and businessmen are invited to attend the special recognition ceremony for "our friend and town Santa," Ponder said.

Local Officers Baffled By 'Break-ins'

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

Local and state law enforcement officers were baffled Thursday night by a rash of break-in incidences which spread like wildfire throughout Madison County.

County Sheriff E.Y. Ponder said reports began coming in to his office at 11:05 p.m. and continued pouring in until approximately 4:30 a.m. Friday. The sheriff called in units of the state Highway patrol to assist in apprehending a prime suspect in the bizarre break-ins, but the alleged culprit eluded state troopers after running a roadblock set up on U.S. 23 near Murray Mountain.

Ponder said once the suspect "disappeared over Murray Mountain," about 4:45 a.m., the calls stopped coming in at his office. But officers continued to investigate the break-ins through most of Friday. Few clues were found, the sheriff said, but he added that he has "a pretty good idea who's behind this."

The unusual series of events began when several residents of the Hot Springs area called the sheriff's department to report "someone bumping around in my livingroom," as one caller described it. Minutes later, the Hot Springs Police Department was flooded with calls from residents reporting a prowler in their homes.

Officers dispatched to the houses were unable to turn up a suspect, and reported that nothing seemed to be taken from any of the residences. On the

contrary, most residents told officers that items which they had never seen before had mysteriously turned up in their livingrooms.

Ponder said later reports began coming in from the Spring Creek and Meadow Fork communities, and seemed to spread further south and east in the county over Dogget Mountain and into the Little Sandy Mush area. A Morrow Branch Road resident reported "loud clattering noises" on the roof of his house shortly before hearing a prowler in his den.

Robert Weaver said nothing seemed to be missing from his residence, but, "I noticed that the packages under the Christmas tree were rearranged, and there seemed to be more of them."

Burder Reeves reported a suspicious vehicle "swooshing by the house at a high rate of speed" shortly before the Weaver report was turned in.

Residents along the southern edge of the county experienced similar disturbances later in the night, and Ponder said the unusual reports of strange noises and intruders began in the Marshall area about 2:30 a.m.

James I. Story, retired veteran reporter and former editor of The News Record, said his house was hit shortly after 2:40 a.m. "It all happened so fast I couldn't even interview the fellow," Story said.

When reports began arriving from the Mars Hill area, Ponder decided to call in the Highway Patrol

to assist deputies in an attempt to halt the fast moving intruder.

Ponder said break-ins began in the south Mars Hill area and seemed to progress northward. A road block was set up on U.S. 23 near the foot of Murray Mountain by Troopers Johnny Robinson and A.L. Cooper while deputies and the Mars Hill Police Department combed the streets of the town in search of the elusive suspect.

Ponder radioed the patrolmen that the suspect seemed to be heading in their direction and cautioned them to be on the lookout for a vehicle traveling at an extremely high rate of speed.

"I've never seen anything like it," Trooper Robinson said later Friday morning. "That thing was coming up the road like a bullet. I just knew we had completely lost two patrol cars if that thing hit us. But it just took off and flew right over us and sailed over Murray Mountain without ever touching the ground again. It just disappeared into the night," he said.

Robinson's report described the vehicle as a large, early model red metal sleigh with eight large brown furry creatures in front. The driver was described as a plump male dressed in a red suit. The man had a long, white beard, the report stated.

"It's strange," Robinson said. "I would have sworn I heard him laughing as he went by. Something like 'Ho, Ho, Ho!'"

County Gets Two Of Four Projects

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK
Editor

Fiscal year 1984 is the earliest that Madison County will see any actual highway construction begin, according to a revised highway improvement schedule adopted by the state Board of Transportation last Friday.

Flagged by soaring inflation and declining revenues, the North Carolina Department of Transportation will be working under a new Highway Improvement Program based on a 33 percent reduction in anticipated funds through fiscal years 1983-1991, Secretary of Transportation Bill Roberson announced at a Raleigh news conference.

"Our present Seven Year plan has, in reality, become a 15-20 year plan because of inflation and the shortage of revenues," Roberson said. He added that the governor's "Good Roads" program, based on the highway bond issue, will be used to increase

is "basically a maintenance program."

A third of the state highway projects planned over the next 10 years — estimated to cost \$1.2 billion — were cancelled under the new schedule, and many of the \$2 billion in construction projects retained by the program were postponed for years.

Only two major projects in Madison County were kept on the state's planning books while the transportation board listed two additional projects as examples of needs in the county's road system.

The board approved improvement construction of U.S. 25-70 from Marshall to N.C. 208 at Laurel River, and improvements to U.S. 19 in the Tennessee state line.

The U.S. 25-70 work comes under the state's rural program designed to upgrade numbered highways and principal secondary roads. The 12 mile stretch between road 208 and N.C. 208 will cost

approximately \$10.5 million with right-of-way work beginning in fiscal year 1983 and construction scheduled for 1984.

Total project cost for 10.6 miles of improvement to U.S. 19 is listed at \$34.1 million. Right-of-way work will be conducted in 1986 and 1988, according to the schedule, and construction will begin in 1988 and continue through 1991. Appalachian Region Commission money will fund the project.

In addition the board approved a \$5,000 landscaping project for the U.S. 25-70 and N.C. 212 interchange at Marshall for 1982. Source of funds is the state personalized license fund.

Improvements to U.S. 25 from N.C. 208 to Hot Springs and to N.C. 212 from Marshall to Hot Springs were recommended by the board as part of the state's needed highway improvements. Estimated three month total cost was \$4 million.

imately 50 percent of the total for those primary and urban highway needs," Roberson said.

The new plan says the state

hopes to spend \$212 million a year on primary highway improvements through 1991, down from the \$315 million a

Continued on Page 2

Public Meetings

The Marshall Board of Aldermen will meet Monday, Jan. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the town hall on Main Street.

The Hot Springs Board of Aldermen will meet Monday, Jan. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the town hall.

The Mars Hill Board of Aldermen will meet Monday, Jan. 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the town hall on Main Street.

The Madison County Board of Education will meet Wednesday, Jan. 5 at 10:30 a.m. in the courthouse in Marshall.

The Madison County Board of Commissioners will meet Friday, Jan. 5 at 7:30 p.m. at the courthouse in Marshall.