

# happy new year

## THE NEWS RECORD

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF MADISON COUNTY



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### From the Front Page

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## Here's Madison County's Year In Review

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times," Charles Dickens penned those words in the opening paragraph of "A Tale of Two Cities." And for years Walter Cronkite, hosting the television show "You Are There" intoned, "What sort of day was it? A day like all days, filled with the events that alter and illuminate our time." Madison County, in that respect, is no different from the rest of the world.

So we've gone back over the front pages of the past 52 issues of the News Record and culled from them a sort of catalog of what went on in 1981. You'll notice that we haven't included every single issue, because there were some weeks that, frankly, there just wasn't much happening. But we've stayed in chronological order and tried to make sure we've included everything good and bad that affected Madison County during 1981. Here goes:

**JANUARY**  
On New Year's Day, we reported that a large crowd was expected in Raleigh for Madison County's own Liston Ramsey's investiture as Speaker of the House in the North Carolina General Assembly. A reception was held for Ramsey at Raleigh's North Ridge Country Club, where preparations had been made for 800 persons. There were that many from Madison County alone, mostly brought to Raleigh by chartered bus.  
On the 15th, we reported that William M. Hendon had been sworn in as the new 11th District representative from North Carolina on the 5th.  
A feature story by Scott Fitzgerald on the 22 detailed how Mrs. Louise Dance had been rescued from her burning home by the Marshall Fire Department.  
The next week, we reported the swearing-in of the county's

new Industrial Bonds Board: Auburn Wyatt, Jerry Plemmons, Joe Justice, Ernest Snelson, Leonard Baker, Frank Moore and Myrtle Ann Ray. We also noted that the Madison Central Optimist Club of Marshall, and its president, Bryce Hall, had received awards for distinguished service from the national Optimist organization. On that happy note, January came to a close.

**FEBRUARY**  
February started violently. A young Marshall man, Charles Sexton Jr., was stabbed to death just outside the city limits. Two nights later, 19-year-old Rocky Flemming apparently shot himself in the parking lot of the Madison Plaza Shopping Center.  
In mid-February, a controversy arose over a \$147,234 carryover in the Madison County School System budget. The surplus had not been listed in the School Board's of-

ficial budget, and its disclosure sparked lively speculation as to the windfall's origin.

February also saw preparations under way for the proposed consolidated Marshall-Walnut Elementary School and initial steps towards the formation of a volunteer fire department to serve the western Madison County region.

**MARCH**  
In early March, the mystery of the carryover in the school system budget was solved; the money — supplied from County funds the preceding June — simply hadn't been listed on the new budget since it was in fact a carry-over item.  
On March 16, the School Board reluctantly voted to send notices of termination to 46 county school teachers. Board Chairman, Bobby Ponder cited proposed federal education cutbacks as the reason for having to take the

step.  
That same week, a widespread power failure left about 800 Madison households without electricity for most of the morning. Power was restored after lunch.

**APRIL**  
Madison County was shocked and dismayed in early April at the deaths of two men who apparently died from drinking a combination of liquid Methadone and alcohol.

On a much happier note, April also saw Kay Underhill of Shelton Laurel recover her sight after 11 years of total blindness.

Then there was the issue about the Little Sandy Mush Bridge and the school bus. The bridge had been condemned, but a school bus was making a twice-daily trip across it. The situation was eventually called to the attention of Gov. Jim Hunt. The bridge was replaced.  
Zeno Ponder replaced

outgoing County Democratic Party Chairman Bill Moore at that position.

And three men received active sentences and one a suspended sentence in a bizarre and sensational grave robbery incident that involved attempted theft of gold teeth from skeletons in a mausoleum.

**MAY**  
In May, the News Record's own Pop Story was honored at an appreciation dinner celebrating his three and a half decades as this paper's editor and publisher. In addition to testimonials from numerous colleagues, Pop received congratulations and a special award from Gov. Hunt.

Madison County agricultural extension agent Wiley DuVall was also recognized in May — he was one of four state agents to receive an "Excellence in Tobacco Extension Award"

for research and work connected with that crop.

May also saw groundbreaking for the new Mars Hill Branch Library on Cherry Street in that town.

**JUNE**  
The first week in June, 16 of the 46 teachers terminated in March were rehired. The Madison County Board of Education voted to reinstate those teachers who qualified as "career" teachers with tenure.

On June 15, two men robbed the Hot Springs branch of Wachovia Bank and Trust Company of nearly \$50,000. One suspect was captured during the following week in Florida.

**JULY**  
July, appropriately, started with several bangs. First, reversing its attitude in March, the School Board authorized the hiring of a total of 49 teachers and 33 teacher aides.

Then the Madison County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to set the county tax rate at 75c per \$100 for the coming year.

And Madison County people and places formed part of a CBS news feature on Appalachia which had been filmed in June.

Meanwhile, the School Board adopted a \$6.2 million budget for the coming fiscal year.  
In mid-July, Mr. and Mrs. Refford Cates of Reidsville presented the Mars Hill College with a highly-prized, complete collection of the first editions of the works of Thomas Wolfe.

At month's end, Zeno Ponder was appointed to the State Board of Transportation by Gov. Hunt. And Madison High senior Peggy Sexton won a five-way race for the office of State Reporter at the state



TV SANTA - Dave Wilson, Marshall's Santa's Helper, was interviewed Christmas Eve by WLOS-TV's Mike Bigham and cameraman Jim Craven for a special Christmas spot on the six o'clock news. Channel 13 news officials became interested in the town Santa after reading his story

in the Dec. 24 edition of The News Record. Wilson was honored at Town Hall Christmas Eve with an old-fashioned "pounding" given by town officials and residents. Mayor Lawrence Ponder proclaimed the day "Dave Wilson Appreciation Day."

## Searching For Happiness

By PAT CAUDILL  
The Mountaineer  
Special to the News Record

While most teenagers were looking for new rock 'n' roll albums, stereo equipment and new clothes under the Christmas tree, Barbara Cook was dreaming of finding her two sisters.

She lost them 12 years ago when she was four years old. After being abandoned by her mother and stepfather, she and her sisters, Jean, 2, and Nancy, about 6 months, were separated one day when a worker from the Welfare Department came to their grandfather's home in Madison County and took her two sisters away. "The younger one was crying and she wanted to get out of the car. I'm not sure, but I remember someone slapping her," she says. Two days later, they came to get Barbara.

Growing up in several foster homes in Western North Carolina and Tennessee, Barbara

often wondered what became of her two sisters, though she admits most of her thoughts were centered on finding a mother and a father. She has since seen her natural mother, who now lives in Madison County, but chooses to live with a family in Crabtree.

"I don't think of her as my mother," she says. Now that she is 16 and a junior at Tuscola High School, she is outgrowing the need for parents, and her thoughts have turned to her siblings.

"I think about them all the time now," she says. A desperate need to find them was sparked when she saw a movie, "A Long Way Home," and account about a boy who finds his brothers and sisters after they had been adopted. "If he can do it, so can I," Barbara says.

A few days ago, she contacted her social worker at the Madison County Welfare Depart-

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## Canton Dogs May Have Prevented Man's Death

By NICHOLAS HANCOCK

Ray Rogers can't reverse the tragedy of his brother's death in rural Madison County earlier this month, but he addressed the Haywood County Board of Commissioners last week to try to "turn the negative into the positive."

Roger's brother, Dean, a former Waynesville resident, was found dead Dec. 3 about two miles from the boarding house where he was a resident.

Search teams, including specially trained dogs flown in from Virginia, combed the area near Oshum's Boarding Home for several days finding no one. A farmer found the body lying near a gate at the entrance of a nearly unoccupied farmstead.

But some of the Madison County officials seemed to know that a rescue dog squad — the first in North Carolina — is located in Canton, waiting for just such an emergency.

Rogers said the search dogs from Virginia weren't able to arrive until two days into the rescue mission, and they didn't come close to finding his brother.

But had the Haywood County group been called in right away, Dean Rogers might still be alive, he said.

Rogers, an Atlanta businessman, appealed to the Haywood County commissioners to support the N.C. Search and Rescue Dog Squad, and said he would like to see Western North Carolina develop a standard plan to follow when people are reported lost in the mountains.

"I wish to God we had had them out there," Rogers said.

Madison County Sheriff E.J. Ponder said he wasn't aware of the specially trained dogs in Canton, "at least they're not as publicized as the dogs we got from the Army," he said.

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## Filing For Elections Begins January 4

Filing for elected offices in Madison County will begin Jan. 4, officially kicking off the area political season.

The Madison County Board of Elections says that deadline for filing for the offices of Clerk of Superior Court, Sheriff, Tax Collector, and for seats on the Madison County School Board and County Commission will be noon on Feb. 1, barring any unforeseen changes. Filings for the North Carolina State House of Representatives will be received beginning Feb. 15, with a deadline of noon March 1.

In Madison County, Commissioners James Ledford and Ervin Adams have already announced their intentions of running for re-election. Sheriff E.J. Ponder declined to state whether or not he had reached a decision yet. "I'll have to consult with my friends."