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River Crossing, 1916



THREE MEN, a team of mules and a load of lumber cross the French Broad River by ferry after flood of 1916 washed out the

bridge above Redmon. Everette Barnette presented The News Record with photo from the collection of Mrs. Bill Roberts.

House Approves Tax Package

The North Carolina House gave its approval Friday to a package of tax and fee increases totalling \$242 million. The tax package is due for consideration in the State Senate later this week.

The House wasted no time in approving the package of tax increases. On Thursday, the House finance committee approved the package by a vote of 34-11.

The House version of the tax package will increase taxes on alcohol sales, the sales tax on automobiles, boats and aircraft, and twin-trailer trucks. It also creates a new \$40 per machine tax on video games, increases the fee charged for license plates, title transfers, ABC licenses and court costs in both District and Superior Court.

Also increased are tuition fees at state-operated community colleges and fees charged by a variety of state agencies. The tax package also imposes sales taxes on rentals for periods of less than 90 days, repeals a \$200 interest exclusion to taxpayers, reduces discounts given to merchants for collecting sales taxes and accelerates tax payment schedules for insurance

companies, employers withholding income taxes and corporations with a tax liability of \$5,000 or more.

Under provisions of the tax package, small businesses would have their minimum tax liability increased from \$10 to \$25 and more lenient depreciation schedules for business properties would be rescinded.

The maximum sales tax on the sale of autos, boats and aircraft will increase from the present \$120 ceiling to \$300. Estimates are that the higher ceiling will generate an additional \$62.3 million in the 1983-84 fiscal year.

The tax on beer sales will be increased from the present five cents to 5½ cents per 12-ounce can. Liquor will increase from 22½ percent of the retail price to 24-3/8 percent and wine from 24 cents per liter to 26½ cents. The tax on liquor for resale as mixed drinks will increase from \$10 per gallon to \$15.

ABC license fees will be raised from \$250 to \$500 for renewals and from \$500 to \$750 for initial licenses. Increases in beverage taxes and license fees is expected to raise \$12.6 million in

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Nancy Anderson: Mars Hill's Compleat Gardener

By PAULINE B. CHEEK

"With discipline getting so bad and this new system of education, I decided I was too old to adapt. I enjoyed it while I was teaching, but I haven't missed it." Thus Nancy Anderson describes her retirement in 1971 from elementary school teaching.

In gardening, however, she is by no means unable to adapt to the most up-to-date methods. "It all started with 'Organic Gardening Magazine,'" she says of her garden plot's functioning almost like a terrarium, with moisture and matter in a continuous state of recycling. Constant enrichment of the soil through com-

posting, mulching, and crop rotation, companion planting, rejection of commercial fertilizers and sprays, the saving of seed from year to year, experimentation with food drying and recipes — these are some of the principals that have become a way of life for her and her sister, Gladys.

The land on which the ladies live is part of the Anderson tract that two generations ago extended from the base of Bailey Mountain in Mars Hill to Highway 19-23 and included the well-known Cussin' Knob, where a wagonload of lumber would tax the strength of as many as six miles.

"I wouldn't take anything for them," Nancy says of her two-wheeled cart and the shredder which she uses for composting. A visitor to her backyard can see why. The barn contains one stall of cattle manure, one of shredded leaves, one of shredded stalks of tobacco, sunflower, okra. Outside in separate piles are sawdust, rich dirt, tree prunings, and decaying vegetable matter — kitchen scraps, grass clippings, and herbs such as feverfew, catnip, comfrey, and nasturtium. From these compost ingredients, Nancy hauls mulch according to the needs of each plant.

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NANCY ANDERSON

Speaker Enjoys 'The Best Job In The State'

By RICK SLUDER
News And Observer
Staff Writer

Liston Ramsey asks little of life: a TV football game on a fall afternoon, a car that doesn't buckle under a lot of hard miles and a speaker's chair in the N.C. House of Representatives to call his own.

"Look at this one here," he says, lifting and relishing a red, white and blue cap bearing the word "Boss" across the front. He replaces it atop the hat rack in his Legislative Building office and chuckles. "I forget who gave me that."

It is, for Liston Bryan Ramsey, an unusually loquacious burst. Known as a man who speaks softly and bluntly when he speaks at all, Ramsey, a product of the Madison County mountains, lives up to the quiet, direct stereotype linked to life in the hills.

At 64 and in his fourth decade of elected office, he says he has attained his life's goal — "the speakership," he calls it again and again — and he would be perfectly happy to live out his days as boss of the N.C. House.

He assumed the post in 1981, in his 10th term as Democratic legislator, and was re-elected at the beginning of the current session. It's a job he wears with comfortable formality, a blend of friendly mountain man and serious lawmaker that, seemingly, is always a step away from a laugh — or maybe a rebuke. Kind of like an uncle you never knew well, but wished you had.

It's also a job that makes him happy.

"I have the best job in the state — in my opinion it is," Ramsey says. "The speakership, I think everyone admits, is the top position in

the legislative branch of government. This (the Legislature) is the only tax-levying authority we have on a statewide basis. The General Assembly prepares the state budget...

"I just have the best job in the state."

His most satisfying accomplishment in public life?

"Becoming speaker in '81." A pause. "Second best, becoming speaker in '83."

His greatest challenge?

"Getting re-elected speaker, I guess."

And so it goes with Liston Ramsey and "Mr. Speaker" — two in one, one in the same, each defined by the other. He hopes it never ends and plans not to let it in 1985, though no North Carolina speaker has ever served more than two terms.

"I will be seeking the speakership position a third term," Ramsey says. "I have to get re-elected back home every two years like every other representative... But if I'm re-elected back home, I expect to be the speaker in '85. And I expect to get re-elected back home."

If he indeed makes history in the Legislature by again assuming the House podium in 1985, few of his acquaintances will be surprised. They've come to expect success.

While Ramsey's position of power in the House would be expected to inhibit criticism by colleagues, longtime Democratic allies say his road to the speaker's chair was paved by a comprehensive knowledge of the legislative process — especially the rules.

"He can tell you what page and on what part of the page the rule is in the book," says Rep. Allen C. Barbee, D-Nash.

Republicans claim to admire his fairness

and frankness. "Liston is a man who, you know where he's coming from," says Rep. Harold J. Brubaker, R-Randolph, House minority leader. "You know what ground he stands on, and you understand the rules going in."

And even his pals back in the mountains say there was something about the young Liston Ramsey growing up in Marshall — intelligence, earnestness, something — that told you he was not to be trifled with.

Minuad Sexton of Weaverville in Buncombe County, a former classmate of Ramsey at Marshall High School, remembers a bright youth who took his schooling seriously.

"At the end of his junior year, he was second highest in the class," Sexton says, "and we were ushers together (at the graduation ceremony for the class of '35). He took it real seriously, but he took all his jobs seriously. If he thought it was worth doing, he put his whole self in it."

"There was no foolishness about him... I never knew of him being into a thing."

His approach to politics — the high school variety — reflected that. The year after that commencement, Ramsey's eye was on the presidency of the senior class, and one of his advisers was Zeno Ponder, who remained his ally through the partisan fights that later would wrest control of local politics from Madison County's Republicans.

"He was class president, class of 1936," says Ponder, still a resident of Marshall, "and I tell him today that was the hardest damn election we ever had."

Forty-six students were in the class — 23 boys, 23 girls. The strategy: "We thought the



REP. LISTON RAMSEY

boys would vote for him," Ponder recalls, "so we had to get some girls to vote for him, too. We talked to them," and together, they won the votes of two female classmates.

Ramsey won the election.

That no-nonsense style continued to develop at Mars Hill College, where he studied business for two years before leaving without a degree. It follows him still, Ponder says: "He can look (at a bill in the House), and if it's an exercise in futility, he sees it immediately. And when it comes time for an answer, you get a yes or a no, not a bunch of damn maybes."

"He doesn't tell you how the clock is made. He tells you what time it is."