

## 93 Arrested In Raid On Rooster Fight

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Nearly 100 people from five states were arrested in an Independence Day raid on an illegal rooster fighting operation in a barn in the Wolf Laurel section of Madison County.

Authorities from the Madison County Sheriff's Department, the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation and the state Alcohol Law Enforcement division participated in the noon raid, about one mile from the Yancey County line.

State law enforcement agencies in South Carolina and Tennessee had tipped off county and state authorities in North Carolina about the cockfight three days before it took

place, Madison County Sheriff Dedrick Brown said.

A total of 21 officers - four from the county and 17 from the state - participated in the raid. It took officers more than four hours to search and book the 93 suspects charged in the Saturday raid.

Many of those arrested were from out of state - South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Michigan. Most arrested were from Western North Carolina, but only a handful were from Madison County, according to authorities.

"I walked in there and didn't see a soul I knew," Brown said. "I thought half of my friends would be there, but there wasn't a one."

"One boy hollered 'The law's here' about one step in front of me."

Sheriff Dedrick Brown

The fight was held at a barn, owned by Walt Honeycutt, located off Windy Gap Road. Honeycutt had leased the barn to John Cantrell of South Carolina and was not arrested. Authorities say they believe people from South Carolina had organized the fight.

All 93 people arrested during the raid were charged with the misdemeanor offense of aiding and abetting a cockfight. Authorities also confiscated \$5,000 in cash and two

handguns. Brown said he would be donating the money to the Madison County Board of Education.

When officers walked into the barn shortly after noon Saturday, they saw a rooster fight in progress.

"There were a couple in the pit going at it when we walked in the door," Brown said.

"I took a bullhorn and arrested them all at the same time. One boy

hollered 'The law's here' about one step in front of me," he said.

Because of the large number of people charged in the raid, arresting officers decided that since they couldn't take the suspects to the jail, they'd take the jail to the suspects.

Two Madison County magistrates and two ALE agents accompanied arresting officers to the barn and issued citations to the 93 people at the fight.

Authorities would have had no way to transport 100 suspects to the magistrate's office in Marshall for booking, Brown said.

Officers also discovered an estimated 250 live roosters at the barn, and an undetermined number

of dead birds.

"Either they (the dead roosters) had lost the fight or they'd run," Brown said. "If he runs, they'll wring his neck."

Authorities, saying they had no way to care for the live roosters, returned them to their owners.

"We sure didn't want to have to feed 250 roosters," Brown said. "Some of those people had 25 to 30 chicken there."

There are usually two or three cockfights in Madison County every year - most of them during the late winter, Brown said.

The July 4th fight had been going on in Madison County for about 10 years, he said.

### Frivolity On The Fourth

Area residents had plenty of patriotic activities from which to choose this July 4th. The towns of Hot Springs, Mars Hill, Marshall and Weaverville all held Independence Day festivities. Left, Weaverville Mayor Reese Lasher waves the flag as Uncle Sam. Below, members of a wagon train group travel down the Marshall Bypass. See Page 6 for more on July 4th activities.



RANDY COX PHOTO



BILL STUDENC PHOTO

## Madison EMS Employees Want Benefits Untouched

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Nineteen employees of the Madison County Emergency Management Service have asked county officials to reconsider plans to decrease worker insurance benefits.

The Madison County Board of Commissioners, according to a proposed budget for the 1987-88 fiscal year, may drop life insurance benefits for county workers and require employees to pick up 50 percent of the tab for health insurance.

That plan, designed to reduce county spending and help keep taxes from skyrocketing, has upset some county EMS workers, who say they

already receive fewer benefits and lower pay than most county workers.

Larry Leake, Madison County attorney, read to the Board of Commissioners on Monday a letter signed by 19 EMS workers asking the board to reconsider any reduction in benefits.

"We find this cut in benefits, which equates to a cut in pay, to be extremely distressing. Our department is already grossly underpaid and receives less benefits than other county departments," Leake said, reading from the letter.

"We realize that through the use of legal loopholes and other 'mumbo-jumbo,' you do not have to give EMS personnel the same considerations as

other county employees," the letter continued.

The employees, in the letter, listed six reasons why EMS workers should not see their benefits cut:

- EMS workers do not receive holiday pay, although six employees are on duty each holiday.

- EMS personnel are required to purchase and maintain costly uniforms.

- EMS workers are among the lowest-paid county employees and are required to work 240 to 264 hours per month for a gross salary of \$1,000 a month. Workers say they do not know if they are paid by the hour, week, month or year.

-Continued on back page

## Chandler's Parents Say Son Assaulted In Prison

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

Parents of convicted child molester Andrew "Junior" Chandler say they want their son moved from Central Prison in Raleigh after an alleged assault by a fellow inmate.

Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Chandler Sr. of the Revere community of Madison County have asked Gov. James Martin and state Sen. Robert Swain to help them convince N.C. Department of Corrections officials to move Chandler to another prison.

Martin's office has also received petitions and letters from Madison County residents who want the Chandler case to be reopened - and some petitions and letters from

residents who don't.

The recent correspondence to Martin and Swain is part of on-going activity surrounding Chandler's April conviction on several child sexual abuse charges.

Chandler received two life sentences, plus 21 years, after being convicted by a Buncombe County jury of five counts of first-degree sexual offense, six counts of taking indecent liberties with a minor and one count of crime against nature. That Asheville trial came after a Madison County jury failed to reach a verdict in January on charges that Chandler, a former van driver for the Madison County Transportation Authority, had sexually abused

Marshall Day Care students, aged 2 to 5 at the time.

Since the verdict and sentence, a number of Chandler's friends, relatives and supporters have been working to win a new trial.

Chandler's parents, who say their son is not safe in Central Prison have been also trying to get Chandler moved to another prison. They say an inmate assaulted their son on June 14.

"We've been trying for about a month to get him moved, but with no luck," Mrs. Chandler said this week. "He's in the hospital now. He's just not safe down there. The person that did it to him threatened to kill him."

-Continued on back page

## Mars Hill Lowers Sewer Rates

By MARGARET A. STUDENC  
News Record Correspondent

The Mars Hill Board of Aldermen voted unanimously Monday night to approve a much-discussed sewage rate reduction for commercial and industrial customers.

"This change in rate will only affect commercial enterprises such as restaurants, laundromats and car washes," said Mars Hill Mayor Owen Tilson.

Businesses that will be affected include Western Steer Steakhouse, Texaco, Bantam Chef and Pizza Inn, all located on Big Branch Road.

The lower sewer rates will be put into effect retroactively to July 1.

Industrial and commercial sewer customers will now pay \$2.40 for every 1,000 gallons used above 10,000

gallons - down from \$4.50 per 1,000 gallons above the 10,000-gallon level.

Mars Hill businesses have complained since the town's sewer system went on line last year that their sewer rates are too high.

The lower rate comes as no surprise. The town board based its budget for the 1987-88 fiscal year, approved last month, on the new rate.

Customers will be notified of the change by town manager Darhyl Boone in the next water bill.

Rates for sewer usage less than 10,000 gallons will remain at their current levels. Businesses pay \$14 for the first 3,000 gallons used; \$5.50 per 1,000 gallons for the next 2,000 gallons; and \$5 per 1,000 for the next 5,000 gallons.

The board also heard from Geof-

fery Willitt of the N.C. Department of Natural Resources and Community Development on a proposed flood plain ordinance for Mars Hill.

The ordinance would apply to areas around waterways, including Gabriel Creek, Banjo Branch and possibly White Oak Creek.

Mars Hill is already a member of the National Flood Insurance Program, Willitt said. But in order to obtain federal disaster relief from the government in the event of a major flood, the town must adopt a flood plain ordinance, he said.

The ordinance would include the corporate limits and the town's one-mile extraterritorial zone.

A public hearing on the ordinance has been set for Aug. 3.

## School Funding Picture Unclear

By BILL STUDENC  
Editor

The Madison County Board of Education, during a nearly eight-hour marathon session Monday, approved a \$152,500 interim budget that will allow the school system to operate until it receives word on county and state funding.

"The amount of the interim budget is less than the \$175,120 Madison County school system would have received if the state budget had been approved," said Robert

Edwards, superintendent of Madison schools. "We're sure that will get us through until we can get our budget finalized and approved."

Madison County school officials are facing an annual problem faced by school officials across North Carolina - having to develop a budget without knowing how much money they can expect from the General Assembly.

Money for teachers' salaries comes from the state budget, but school officials won't know how many

teachers they will be able to hire for the opening school year.

Madison school officials face another problem with their finances this year - the Madison County Board of Commissioners has yet to adopt a county budget for 1987-88. The school system relies on county government for much of its funding.

The interim budget adopted by the board Monday night will allow the school system to operate until the county budget is adopted. A

-Continued on back page

## Ward To Run Again; Ramsey Will Not

From Staff Reports

Hot Springs Mayor Kenny Ramsey announced Monday that he will not seek another term of office, while Marshall Mayor Anita Ward became the first candidate to file for November's municipal election.

Two Hot Springs aldermen also announced Monday that they will not seek re-election.

Ward, a teacher at Madison High School, will be seeking her second term of office. Ramsey, owner and operator of the Trail Cafe in Hot Springs and an employee of the Madison County Emergency

Management Service, served one term as alderman and one term as mayor.

Ramsey cites his other commitments as his reason for not seeking a second term as Hot Springs' highest-ranking elected official.

"Being in business and working at the ambulance service is all I can handle," Ramsey announced at Monday's meeting of the Hot Springs Board of Aldermen. "I'll be happy to assist anyone wishing to run for this office in any way that I can."

Hot Springs Aldermen Gene Austrey and Wesley Stauds, who both had previously served as aldermen before returning to public office in 1985, have also announced that they will not file for re-election.

Alderman Don E. Franklin has yet to announce whether he will seek re-election in November.

Although at least most - and perhaps all - of the current board won't be returning to office after November's election, the board has heard that Springs grew, Ramsey

## Hot Springs OKs Interim Budget

By ANNE FITCHELL  
Staff Writer

The Hot Springs Board of Aldermen approved an interim budget of \$10,000 last Wednesday to tide the town over until a July 18 public hearing on the 1987-88 fiscal year budget.

The interim budget will enable town officials to pay their employees and other operating expenses until that hearing is held.

The board had originally approved a \$175,000 budget for the fiscal year last Tuesday, but it was rejected

because everything else it had to do was not done," Ramsey said. "I think that's a lot of good for the town."

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-Continued on back page