

Around Town

BY SAM C. MORRIS

Monday was the final day to file income tax returns and from my desk here at the office I look out on Elwood Avenue and see people going to the post office. Monday some people were mailing letters that I don't usually see on this avenue. It is also an advantage to have an auditor's office about three doors down the street.

Anyway we can all sit back and wait to see if we will be checked or just hope that we can mail the forms earlier next year.

Death and taxes are things you will have in this country, but I think sometimes that taxes will be the death of me yet.

Ever so often someone will bring an article by the office and say, put this in your column for us, because everyone reads your column. I was thinking that maybe I should be choosy about their articles or maybe people will stop reading what I write.

I have been somewhat under the weather this week with a cold, so I believe anything that comes my way will be used.

One announcement that should be read is as follows:

The Hoke Reading - Literacy Council is reminding all members of the board of directors to meet at the Hoke County Public Library on Thursday, April 20, at 5:15 p.m. The purpose of this very short meeting is to vote for the budget to be presented to the County Commissioners.

So all you directors show up and decide what will be done with the money.

The meeting at the courthouse last Thursday night concerning the MOA area over Raeford was well attended. Over 100 people turned out and it seemed most of them were against the project. Only one person was here from the FAA, but he had enough Army and Air Force brass to fill a couple of rows at the courthouse.

The write-up of this meeting is elsewhere on this page, but a couple of things that came out of the meeting I thought would be of interest to the readers of this column.

One was that when Earl Fowler, manager of the Chamber of Commerce asked who could set aside the decision made by the FAA, he was told by Mr. Harrison of the FAA very quickly and in two words, "The President." Fowler said "Thank You." Earl was by the office Monday and said that Harrison had called him to say that he gave him the wrong answer. He said there were two or three other places to appeal before getting to the president.

From the way Earl said "Thank You," I believe Harrison thought he was going right away to see "President Carter."

The other incident was the day after the meeting someone asked Attorney Bill Moses what he found out at the meeting.

Bill said he had heard of a push mower and a riding mower, and now he knew what a flying mower was.

Enough said.

It is only two weeks before we go to the polls to vote for our favorite candidate. With all the problems that have come up in the county lately, maybe the winner would be the loser. I am thinking about garbage, ambulance and also the county and school budget.

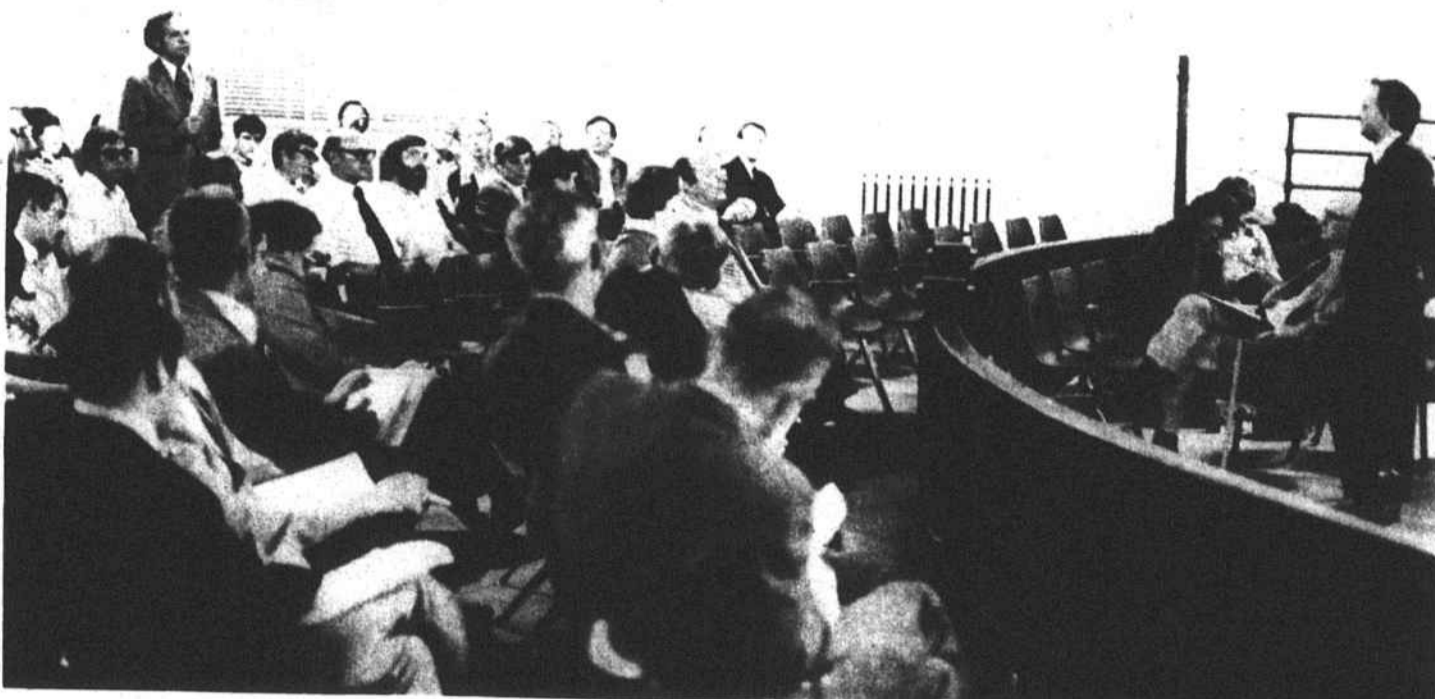
But someone must try to solve these problems and we should try to pick the person we think is best for the job.

Anyway if you don't vote, be silent.

Someone asked the other day if I was going to the dedication of the school building. This hit me, because I couldn't recall a new building being constructed in the school system.

When I pushed the man for further details he said that the Gibson school was having a name change. This even complicated matters more. So when asked who they were going to name the school for, he replied, "Not someone, but it will be called 'O.K. Corral.'"

Ambulance Problems Appear Solved



AIR ZONE HEARING -- Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce Manager Earl Fowler (left) addresses a question to a representative of the Federal Aviation Administration at a public hearing in the local courthouse last Thursday night concerning the proposed charting of a Military Operations Area [MOA] in the county. The meeting was well attended. FAA officials have said they will make no decision on the proposal until after the Army completes a report on the environmental impact of the MOA.

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Problems with the county supported ambulance service appeared well on their way toward solution at the Monday night meeting of the Hoke County Board of Commissioners when the board was told by a representative of the state Office of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) that Buie Ambulance Service now has three Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) available to man ambulances on emergency runs.

After monitoring the ambulance service over the weekend, Commissioner Danny DeVane said, "In the past he (Buie) got slack, but now I think the slack has been taken up."

DeVane was appointed last Friday as chairman of the board's ambulance committee and said at the regular meeting Monday that the sheriff's department is keeping a logue of ambulance personnel who go on each run. Of eight trips since Saturday morning, DeVane said at least one EMT went on each emergency run.

"He (Buie) has worked hard to try and comply," DeVane said.

Claire L. Hudspeth, regional EMS coordinator, told the board he had spent Monday reviewing the local ambulance service.

"There has been deviation in the past from the law, as is shown in his records," Hudspeth said. "We are proceeding with administrative action to review Mr. Buie's status. If he is able to demonstrate that he can man the ambulances properly, we can retain him on a permanent basis."

It was disclosed last week in a copyright story by *The Fayetteville Times* that the ambulance service here had been in apparent violation of state law for several months by not having an EMT in the rear of the ambulance on more than 100 emergency runs.

"According to General Statute, it is required by law that every ambulance operating on an emergency run in this state be manned by an EMT," Hudspeth told the board Monday. "It's a fairly new law, less than a year old."

The report in *The Fayetteville Times* appeared last Thursday morning and that afternoon the board of commissioners held an emergency session to discuss the ambulance service.

At that meeting, EMS regional supervisor Fred Hardy told the board: "We have to be assured that there is at least one EMT in the back on all emergency runs. He (Buie) is leaving himself and the county wide open. If someone should bring a law suit, it would fall in your laps."

"Personally I have heard a lot of praise for Buie over the years, from rescue squad personnel and from several people he has taken to the hospital," said Commissioner DeVane.

"So have I," said Chairman John Balfour. "Then all of a sudden this comes up."

Balfour said he had talked to Buie after receiving a letter dated March 8 from the state warning that the service was not in compliance with the law.

"I don't want to say I've been lied to, but when I contacted you about this the first time, you told me you had four EMTs," Balfour told Buie. "Then you said you had two, and now you tell me you've only got one."

Buie said he couldn't afford to pay four men to man the ambulances on a 24-hour basis.

"You took the bid at \$25,000 to provide the county with 24-hour service," Balfour said. "You knew you would have to meet the requirements."

"If someone wanted to make a big thing out of it, they could," Hardy said. "With your experience, you could probably treat a patient better than a young EMT," he told Buie. "But the world is full of paper work now and you have to have the EMTs."

At the close of Thursday's meeting, Buie promised to secure the additional personnel necessary to comply with state law. But Friday

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Rainfall

For those who are keeping records, *The News-Journal* weather watcher reports that 4.4 inches of rain fell on Raeford during the month of March. The rain chart for March has not appeared in the newspaper because the local observer has been on a trip abroad, from which he returned last week.

Local Citizens Question FAA, Military About Proposed Hoke County Air Zone

by Charles Blackburn

Local officials were assured this week that no action will be taken on a proposed military air zone in Hoke County until the Army has finished its environmental impact statement.

But many people here came away from a public hearing last week with the feeling that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) had already made up its mind.

"I'd like to feel good about this (the air zone), but I don't," one resident said at the meeting.

Both military and FAA officials at the hearing continued to maintain that the zone, called a Military Operations Area (MOA), was intended as a safety measure. But it was obvious from questions asked by the audience that doubts linger in the minds of some Hoke County residents.

When it was brought out that the Army is doing a study on the environmental effects of the zone on Hoke County, Buddy Blue asked officials: "Isn't that letting the fox guard the henhouse?"

FAA representative Leon Harrison said the zone "will not affect Raeford in the least."

"We've had many objections to MOAs in other areas of the country," Harrison said, "but once they've gone into effect, we don't hear any more complaints. We had heated discussions in Florida, fights even, but there hasn't been any heartburn since."

Harrison said the MOA does not give the military the right to violate FAA regulations. He said the military has agreed to avoid flying directly over the town.

"We're not talking about any land acquisition," he said. "We're interested in air safety and what's going on in the air. The MOA is to warn pilots that unusual activity is going on in the area."

Air Force Maj. Dave Skilling said the zone would not constitute a change in activity. For years fighter planes have circled in holding patterns over Hoke County while

flying ground support missions for troops at Ft. Bragg, he said.

"Yesterday 12 fighters were in this area," he said. "You can think back and remember if noise was a nuisance. Some weeks there are no flights."

"Without questioning your integrity, what assurance other than your word have we got that there will be no change in activity," asked Superintendent of Schools Raz Autry.

Skilling said he would be in this area another year to answer for his statements.

"How is the addition of armed military aircraft flying at 500 feet going to enhance the use of the local airport?" asked Raeford attorney William Moses.

"If pilots read their literature and stay current, they won't be scared off," Harrison said. "The activity is already here. Without the MOA, the jets can fly 1,000 feet over the town. The MOA restricts the military more than in the past. With the MOA, the military has agreed to avoid Raeford."

"We are suspicious because of the past," said Chamber of Commerce

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BOE Candidates Attack Issues At PTA Meet

Personnel stability in the school system and teacher morale were issues considered by candidates for seats on the Hoke County Board of Education at the Monday night meet the candidates session of the Hoke County P.T.A.

Walter Coley, Bill Cameron, and incumbent Dr. Riley Jordan were invited to speak to the group. Also present were candidate Richard Coker and current board member Robert L. Gibson.

The recent switch of principals and assistant principals in the Hoke school system brought about a wave of public concern as evidenced by the question and answer session at the Monday night meeting.

"People are not very happy (with the current school situation)," Walter Coley said. "I don't know if the board of education members want to hear this."

Coley explained that as many as 25 people had been in his place of business during the day Monday discussing the school system and their dissatisfaction.

An article in a Fayetteville paper revealed that, according to a study, schools where personnel remained stable had better showings on Scholastic Aptitude Tests (S.A.T.) given to students in the senior year than schools that were in constant turmoil because of changing personnel. Coley said.

"Teachers can't teach in fear," Bill Cameron said. "I believe in stability. You can't teach when you are wondering if your job is in jeopardy."

Dr. Jordan told the audience that "teachers make stability." He also explained that he had been closely involved with the school system here for 17 years and that he is less satisfied with the schools now than he was eight years ago.

"If you have been so closely involved with the schools for 17 years, then how much responsibility do you take on yourself for the deteriorating situation in the schools," Rev. Charles Litzenger asked.

"I think the people in Hoke County have to take that responsibility," Dr. Jordan responded.

"The people get what they want."

Candidate and P.T.A. member Richard Coker was asked what he thought was the answer to low teacher morale.

"I believe that morale is the greatest part of teaching. How would you improve teacher morale? Teacher morale is at the lowest point I have ever seen it," a member of the audience said.

"Personnel stability is the main plank in my platform," Coker responded. "Low morale affects job performance. I would assure the people they can expect personnel stability for the foreseeable future -- teachers, non-faculty and principals included. As a board member, I would establish policies to insure stability."

"I think morale is how the administration makes you feel about your job," a member of the audience commented. Coker said he agreed with the statement.

"Does the board have any say about the fruit-basket turnover that happens here every year," Coker was asked. He explained that the superintendent recommends transfers and the board can either approve or reject his recommendation.

Another subject discussed was discipline. One observer said discipline was still a matter for the schools, but the emphasis needed to be returned to the home.

Dr. Jordan told the audience he thought teachers should live in Hoke County.

"The school system is the fourth largest industry in the county," he said. "At one time, 47 percent of the teachers in our schools lived outside of Hoke County. They have no interest in the county and the money they earn here goes outside of the county. It doesn't help our economy."

In other business, the P.T.A. elected new officers for the coming year. The officers will be installed at the May meeting. Other candidates for the board of education will be invited to speak at a later meeting. Time, date and place will be announced.

County Risks Fund Cut With Crowded Offices

Overcrowding of offices at the Hoke County Department of Social Services could result in the loss of state and federal money if it is not corrected, the board of commissioners was told at its meeting Monday night.

Local Director of Social Services Ben Niblock said the county has a year in which to comply with the directive from the N.C. Department of Human Resources.

A letter was received here April 5 from that department in which Robert G. Stewart, Director of Region III, says:

"Although this is a new and modern facility, the necessary growth of staff has resulted in overcrowding and consequent difficulties for workers and clients. We do appreciate the efforts made in obtaining this excellent facility, but feel that it is necessary to eliminate the problem at this point because it can only worsen with the passage of time. In order that federal and state participation in the administrative cost not be jeopardized, it is requested that a corrective action plan be prepared... We will appreciate a response within 30 days, and we will make technical assistance available upon request."

"I'm sure they'll go the extra mile, as far as cooperating with us," Niblock told the board.

The board voted to let the

Department of Human Resources know that the county intends to correct the problem and to ask the local Board of Social Services to make recommendations.

Just prior to the regular meeting of the board, a session of the Board of Equalization and Review was held, at which Commission Chairman John Balfour announced that new construction for the county was up over \$800,000. The figures for this year were \$3,282,130 -- compared to last year's \$2,516,000.

Bill Altman told the board that the Community Development sewer line project has been completed and 40 people who previously did not have sewer service are hooked on. He said about five a day are being added.

The board was asked by Juanita Bryant, regional coordinator for the N.C. Council on the Status of Women, to make appointments to an 11-member council that would operate locally. She told board members that the state council advises the governor on programs for women and promotes education. The board took her recommendations under consideration and will make the necessary appointments at a future meeting.

A change order for shingles on the new Health Center roof that will save the county about \$3,600 was approved.