

Stepdaughter Charged With Rockfish Slaying

By Sherry Matthews

A 22-year-old Ft. Bragg woman charged with the February 7 stabbing death of her stepfather will be arraigned in Hoke County District Court on March 11.

Hoke County Authorities arrested Victoria S. Burnette, 22, in connection with the slaying of Roger Keith Shannon near the Rockfish area.

Burnette was in the Hoke County Jail under a \$50,000 surety bond on Tuesday.

"The physical evidence found at the crime scene matched that found in a truck owned by Shannon and provided us with the evidence we needed to arrest Miss Burnette," Barrington said.

The truck, a 1969 GMC pickup, was the key to solving the crime, according to Barrington.

The body of the victim was found on February 8 in a wooded area between Rockfish and Arabia by some hunters.

Authorities had said at an earlier date that a rope was found near the body leading them to believe the victim had been tied prior to death.

Shannon had been stabbed 10 to 12 times in the chest, back, and legs, the sheriff said earlier.

"At this time all I can say is that it appears the motive of the crime was apparently of sexual deviation," Barrington added.

Burnette made her first appearance in Hoke County District Court last Friday and is now being held under bond until the preliminary hearing set for March 11.

Hoke Fugitive Alludes Columbus Co. Officers

By Deuce Niven

State prison officials from the Brunswick County unit near Whiteville have spent more than a week in a futile search for a Hoke County man who escaped their custody on February 22.

Jesse Reaves, aka Willie R. Jacob, 31 ran away from a prison transfer bus at a stop sign near the Columbus County Prison Unit about 8:15 last Tuesday night. He had apparently jimmied open the back door of the bus, according to prison spokesman Lt. J.R. Hunt Jr.

Blood hounds were called in and other prison unit officials and area lawmen concentrated their search on the Williams Township community in southern Columbus County late Tuesday night and most of the day Wednesday.

However, Reaves had forced his way into the mobile home of Michael Cox in Williams Township and forced Cox to take him to South Carolina, according to Hunt.

"He(Cox) took him to a mile this side of Green Sea(SC)," Hunt said.

"Reaves told him to pull over to the side of the road, and he got out and ran."

Reaves was again seen in the Green Sea area late Wednesday night when he approached some men at a local church and claimed to have run out of gas, Hunt said.

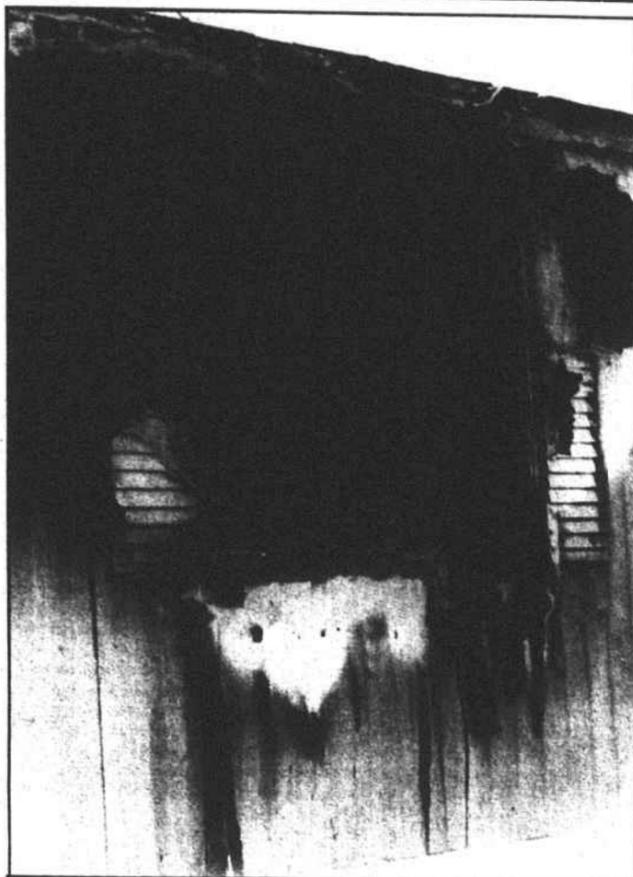
"One of the boys there gave him a ride to Mount Olive, and we haven't heard from him since," Hunt said.

Mt. Olive is located in rural Horry County, S.C., several miles from Green Sea.

Hunt said the search for Reaves continues although officials from this side of the state line are dependent on South Carolina law enforcement authorities since their jurisdiction does not cross the border.

Reaves was returning to the prison from Raeford last Tuesday, a day after a Hoke County Grand Jury indicted him on auto theft and felonious larceny charges for the 1980 theft of a 1976 El Camino truck.

Reaves was serving a 10 year prison term on the conviction of receiving a stolen vehicle in Hoke County, prison officials said.



KILLING FIRE: The charred remains of the mobile home where five-year-old Saundnate McDougald was killed early Saturday morning.

DSS Cracking Down On Food Stamp Fraud

By Sherry Matthews

Food stamp fraud is not a new thing in Hoke County, but cracking down on the offenders is, a spokesman for the Department of Social Services (DSS) said.

"About 22% of Hoke Counties population receives food stamps and with that number there is a great potential for fraud out there," Hoke County DSS Director Ken Witherspoon said.

In times past, fraud existed but was hard to detect and prove.

According to Witherspoon, changing regulations and time have played important roles in the lack of detection.

"The government keeps changing the regulations, and that makes it hard to detect who is committing fraud and who is not," Witherspoon said.

DSS is trying to improve interviewing techniques and the education of staff members to make them aware of the changing regulations.

Another valuable improvement is the hiring of a fraud investigator, Witherspoon said.

"The County Commissioners did us a great favor by allowing us to hire a fraud investigator," Witherspoon added.

On January 10, the temporary position was filled by Bill Altman.

"Since Bill has been here, we have had nine cases of suspected fraud reported and under active investigation," Witherspoon said.

Not only are there new reports coming in but the old reports that never "quite got going" are also being investigated and brought in to final stages, the DSS director added.

"We are trying to clean up all the old reports that we haven't had time to handle properly, as well as dealing with the more current reports," Witherspoon said.

Three To Be Charged For Stamp Fraud Here

Members of the Hoke County Department of Social Services (DSS) met Monday afternoon to determine what action should be taken on three new food stamp fraud cases.

The charges were recently uncovered by county fraud investigator, Bill Altman.

The members of the board voted unanimously to turn the cases over to Director Ken Witherspoon in order that warrants can be sworn out against those who are alleged to have committed the fraud.

It is to the department's advantage to catch the fraud.

"If we catch them and get the money back, the department gets half of the money," Witherspoon added.

For this reason as well as many more, the department has a high level of concern to "do it right," Witherspoon said.

"We investigate every report we get even if the caller wishes to remain anonymous," Witherspoon added.

According to Witherspoon and Altman, catching someone who has committed fraud benefits everyone.

"We have a responsibility to clean up client fraud so that we can avoid more abuse to the benefits of the food stamp program," Witherspoon said.

Client fraud can exist in a number of situations.

According to Witherspoon the biggest problem is unreported income.

Another problem in client fraud comes from the person who bounces from state to state or county to county applying for food stamps.

Witherspoon says that this problem is decreasing.

"Bouncing from county to county is becoming more difficult with the intensified verification process which allows us to ask for references we know are reliable," Witherspoon said.

"If everyone does their job, this problem will eliminate itself," Witherspoon added.

Witherspoon also said there were lots of ways to eliminate fraud if you had the time and the staff to handle the cases and the problems.

"I am not concerned with denying a problem exists, I'm concerned with dealing with it and cleaning it up," Witherspoon said.

Each of the three cases amounted to less than \$400, therefore, they will all be considered misdemeanor crimes, Witherspoon said.

At the meeting Witherspoon acknowledged that all cases of fraud turned in to the department are under investigation.

"We want anyone who knows or thinks they know about someone committing food stamp fraud to report it to us," Witherspoon said.

Child, 5, Killed In Trailer Blaze

By Sherry Matthews

A fire, which swept through a mobile home in the North Raeford Trailer Park Saturday morning killed a five-year-old girl and completely demolished the dwelling.

The young girl, identified as Saundnate McDougald, was trapped in her parents bedroom alone when the fire erupted, North Raeford Fire Chief John Baker said.

"Most likely the child succumbed to smoke inhalation," Baker said.

Anthony McCormik of Greensboro, who was also in the trailer when it caught fire, escaped unharmed.

According to the sheriff's report, McCormik, who was awakened by the child's screams, had attempted to save the little girl but could not get through a wall of

smoke which blocked access to the bedroom where she was trapped.

"When we arrived on the scene, the trailer was completely engulfed in fire," Baker said.

The young girl probably succumbed to the smoke several minutes before we were dispatched to the fire, the chief said.

"At this time the cause of the fire is still unknown, but we are working very closely with the electric company to find the answer," Baker added.

"It could have been so many different things, but the way the trailer was gutted, it is almost impossible to determine what really started the fire," Baker said.

The parents of the girl, Mr. and Mrs. Vernon McDougald, were not at home when the fire broke out.

According to sources at the scene, the parents were at work.

Animal Death Toll 88% In Hoke Pound

By Sherry Matthews

During 1982, 88% of all the animals impounded by the City of Raeford and Hoke County were killed and cost the taxpayers nearly \$1,400, records show.

Although over 1,300 animals were put to death last year, only 66 were adopted.

As a result of these figures, Jack McGinnis and other members of the Humane Society asked the County Commissioners several weeks ago to set up a committee to study the dog pound.

At last week's meeting, the commissioners gave the OK for the dog pound committee and named those who would be members.

The committee met last Wednesday night in what Jack McGinnis called an "organizational session".

Committee members, who are looking into the feasibility of constructing a new dog pound, hope to have recommendations ready for the county commissioners to study in four or five weeks, McGinnis said.

The conditions of the present pound prompted the Humane Society to call the problem to the attention of the county commissioners.

County health supervisor Lloyd Horne said earlier the existing facility has these problems:

--At times the pound is grossly overcrowded.

--Due to lack of pens, large animals are sometimes placed with small animals. The smaller ones are often killed.

--Sick animals are not able to be isolated from healthy ones and diseases are hard to check.

--There is no heat source in the facility and some animals freeze to death during the cold winter days.

--Roads leading to the pound are impassable at certain times during the year and make it difficult for residents who might want to adopt an animal to get in.

Another problem that has stir-

red the Humane Society into action is the fact that animals must be exterminated because the county cannot afford to keep them longer than 10 days.

Records show that of the over 1,300 dogs impounded by the city and the county in 1982, only 160 lived; the others were put to death.

According to city records, around \$14,000 a year is spent on everything dealing with the dog pound, including the warden's salary, travel expenses and maintenance and repair.

County records are hazy.

According to Horne there is no separate budget for the warden's salaries or the maintenance that has to be done to the dog pound.

The county does, however, keep separate records of the food bills which ran about \$700 for 1982 and records of the euthanasia bills which were a little over \$1,300 for last year.

Another important set of figures involving the dog pound are the ones dealing with the number of licenses sold during the year.

The City of Raeford in 1982 sold only 41 dog tags while the dog warden reported that 115 dogs were impounded.

For the County, reports show that nearly 1,500 dog licenses were issued and the dog warden reported that over 1,200 were impounded last year.

McGinnis, who has been appointed to head this committee is "very pleased with what is happening."

"Everybody wants to see something done and done quickly and this pleases me greatly," McGinnis said.

Last Wednesday night, the committee discussed such things as making the pound more accessible to the public and keeping the cost down, McGinnis said.

The committee will meet every Wednesday night at 7:30 p.m. until the recommendations have been agreed upon.

The public is urged to attend.

Around Town

by Sam Morris

The weather over the weekend was somewhat on the cold side and the forecast seems to be for rain the first of the week.

As this is being written Monday afternoon it is raining and the noonday weather report calls for three to four inches of rain near the coast. Also the winds will be about 25 miles per hour and with the full moon this means that tides will be above normal. This will cause more erosion at most of the North Carolina beaches.

Robert Gatlin was by the office Monday afternoon and said that we had already set a record for rainfall for February and that it should be more by midnight. An article about this rainfall will appear elsewhere in the paper.

With March now with us there shouldn't be too much cold weather left for this year.

The University of Nevada at Las Vegas didn't stay number one in the college basketball polls very long. Like all other teams the top spot spelled disaster for them. They lost two games during the past week.

Who will be the next to rise and fall?

Don't forget that the Democratic Party precinct meetings will be held at all polling places Thursday night, March 3 at 8 p.m. Officers will be elected and also delegates to the County Convention will be named at this time.

If are interested in party politics then this is where it all begins. So mark your calendar to be in attendance Thursday night.

(See AROUND TOWN, page 7A)



HONORED: Ron Matthews, Raeford City Manager, was recently named Chairman of the Hoke County United Way.

Ron Matthews Named To United Way Post

Raeford City Manager Ronald L. Matthews has been named Campaign Chairman for this year's Hoke County United Way drive.

Matthews, who has served as city manager here since 1978, hopes to lead this year's campaign into full swing by April.

Hoke County is one of only 70 organizations in the United States that holds its United Way drive in the spring.

"We have followed the lead of local industries, who believe that it would be less confusing to hold it in the spring," Hoke County United Way President Ken Witherspoon said.

In the fall, when most organizations hold United Way drives, Hoke County is in the middle of other programs, like in-gatherings, carnivals and plate sales.

These conflicts might siphon the manpower and funds needed for a successful United Way drive, Witherspoon said.

(See UNITED WAY, page 7A)



TOTALED: A county-owned Plymouth, recently loaned to Hoke County Ambulance Company owner James L. Henley for emergency use only, was wrecked Tuesday around 2:02 a.m. Henley was apparently driving north when the vehicle left U.S. Highway 401 four miles north of Raeford and struck a utility pole on the south side of the road, State Highway Patrol Trooper R.V. Lee said, adding that road conditions were poor at the time of the accident. Lee was unsure where Henley was going in the vehicle, and the ambulance service operator could not be reached for comment at press time. He was apparently treated and released from Cape Fear Valley Hospital. County Manager James Martin or County Commission Chairman John Balfour were also unable to be reached for comment prior to press time. There was no alcohol involved in the accident and Henley was apparently alone when it occurred, Lee said. The matter is under close investigation, he added.