

Airport Radio Sparks City Fireworks

By Sherry Matthews

Sparks flew Monday night between members of a Raeford Airport study committee and parachute jumping school owner Gene Thacker during a City Council meeting.

When the fireworks erupted, committee members, who were appointed to represent the city, Hoke County, the Chamber of Commerce and local industry, had recommended to the council that a radio be operated by Thacker at the airport during jumping operations to report take-offs, landings and the jumpers' exits from aircrafts.

The recommendation also included a provision that if the radio rules are violated by the jump school then all jumping shall be immediately suspended.

Council members unanimously approved the proposal.

"This is an absolute mandate for safety purposes, and I ask that it be acted on immediately, without delay," Committee spokesman Bill Moses said prior to the vote.

Following the initial recommendation, Thacker, who also operates the airport for the city, asked to address the council.

"This is a bad proposal," Thacker said.

The Raeford-Hoke Airport is an uncontrolled airport, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires pilots only to look out the window and separate themselves from other aircraft that might be in the area, Thacker said.

"In the 12 years I have been here there has never been an accident at the airport," Thacker said.

"One accident, and I would be out of business," he added.

The discussion became heated

after the mention of a recent incident involving a local industry executive, who had to maneuver his plane around parachutists during a landing at the airport.

Because parachutists were jumping very close to the runway, the pilot had to pull up and go around again.

This was a bad situation, and had something like this happened when the industry was looking at the area, they would have taken the plant somewhere else, Committee Chairman Tom Cameron said.

"The airport is a fine facility, and it is beginning to provide a good service to the community," Cameron said.

"That is why I feel the recommendations should be approved."

"I can't shut down just because some jerk from New Jersey wants to fly with his eyes closed," Thacker countered.

Anyone flying into the airport should know there is parachuting going on. It is listed on the flight maps, and the FAA Flight Service in Fayetteville also gives that information, Thacker added.

"I want safety at that airport, just like everyone else," Thacker said.

This committee is giving the impression there is no warning about the parachuting, but it is "the pilot's responsibility to find out," Thacker said.

In any opinion this incident with the industry happened because their pilot "contacted nobody," Thacker said.

"We really have a safety problem at the airport, and we (the committee) are not concerned with what's behind us, but what is ahead of us," Cameron said.

"We don't want even one near miss out there," Bill Moses added.

After the verbal battle ceased, the city councilmen voted to purchase the VHF radio and approved the study committee's recommendation.

"We need to spend the money to get the radio and do it right away," Mayor John K. McNeil said.

The councilmen agreed and the recommendation was approved.

Thacker agreed to operate the radio while jumping was in progress.

In other action, the councilmen took action on these matters:

-Voted to approve a request from Hoke County Chamber of Commerce Director Earl Fowler that the city share one third of the cost of printing a new Raeford-Hoke County brochure that Fowler said was vital to industrial and economic progress in the area. The cost of the brochure will be a

maximum of \$1,350 to each of three groups, the Chamber of Commerce, the Hoke County Commissioners and the City Council.

-Decided to study further a report from Moore Gardner and Associates engineer Hiram J. Marziano on the estimated cost of providing sewer service proposed for the Shawtown area.

The sewer would have the potential to serve about 56-60 homes, whose owners are asking to have their property annexed into the city.

Marziano said the total cost of the project is estimated to be \$256,000.

-Approved Mayor John K. McNeil's two proclamations that March 28-April 1 be named SADD (Students Against Driving

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Democrats Oust Precinct Leaders

The precinct leadership of the Hoke County Democratic Party changed hands last Thursday night, as a heavy turnout of members sparked the ousting of 10 of 13 chairmen.

New chairmen were elected in all precincts except McCain, Raeford 3 and Rockfish.

"We have a good mixture of age groups. It's a sign that the party is alive in Hoke County and doing well," County Chairman Harold Gillis said, noting that the turnout of 231 Democrats, was better than usual.

Those elected Thursday will have a vote at the county convention which will be held at the Hoke County Court House at 1 p.m. on April 30.

During Thursday's precinct meetings, these officers were elected:

*Allendale, 25 attended. Herbert Amaral, chairman. Donna Cooper, first vice president. Artie McPhatter, second VP. Gerald Lowery, 3rd VP and Jeanette McLaughlin, secretary.

*Antioch, 18 attended. Betty Rogers, chairman. Patricia Locklear, 1st VP. Myrdith Brooks, 2nd VP. Mike McNeill, 3rd VP and Carolyn, secretary.

*Blue Springs, 37 attended. Anthony Oxendine, chairman. Henry Cooper, Sr., 1st VP. William Kelly, 2nd VP. A.Y. McKinnon, 3rd VP and Debbie Brewer, secretary.

*Buchan 22 attended. Wilton

Around Town

by Sam Morris

If we didn't get enough rain in February then March is starting off right to fulfill the order. It rained hard Sunday and again Monday morning and the forecast is for rain into Tuesday.

The temperature has been above normal and even the nights have been in the 60s.

We were fortunate not to get any wind of tornado strength as occurred in other parts of the state.

We hope that it will be fair and dry next weekend so that we can return to the golf course.

Last week an item in this column said to look elsewhere in the paper for an article on the rainfall for February. I looked for the article and was told that it was crowded out at the last minute, but would be in this week's paper.

Read the article because if the rainfall does continue at February's rate, we would have an increase of over 50% for the year above the normal rainfall.

The circus is coming to town! The Raeford Kiwanis Club is sponsoring the Franzen Bros. Circus here Friday, April 1 at Armory Park. The circus will give two per-

(See AROUND TOWN, 6 A)



BLOOMING: With the warm sunshine over the weekend and the rainy weather on Monday, flowers like this one were blooming all over the country.

County To Try Tank Bid Again

By Sherry Matthews

Members of the Hoke County Commission voted unanimously Monday to resubmit an application seeking federal funds for the construction of an elevated water tank.

Funds for the tank, which is an important link in the planned countywide water system, were denied earlier by federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) because the project appeared to be "too costly."

The county submitted an application in 1982 for the funding of the Antioch-South Hoke tank, but the funds were denied because of the "major cost per unit," a representative from a Lumberton engineering firm said.

Skip Green, of Koonce, Nobel and Associates, told the commissioners that the 1982 project was basically a solid one but the major concern if the application was to be re-submitted would be "bringing down the cost per unit."

Green also said that it would be better to go into a lower budget amount so that some funding would be available for Hoke County.

Commissioner James A. Hunt made a motion that the application be re-submitted saying, "if Hoke County doesn't get it someone else will."

The rest of the commissioners appeared to agree with Hunt.

Green told the board that the application deadline was May 2, and that two public hearings had to be held before the application could be submitted.

The public hearings help determine what type of funding will be submitted on the application.

The applications appear to have more impact if the funding went towards development in low to moderate income areas. County Manager James Martin said.

The first public hearing will be held at the next County Commissioners meeting on March 21 at 7 p.m.

In other business, the county commissioners heard from Mrs. Mamie Godwin on a problem concerning the paving of State Road 1312.

The paving of the road is second on the priority list of the State Department of Transportation, but there are two people who refuse to sign a petition requesting

that the road be paved, Division Chairman Fred Beck said.

The road, which is a dead end, is in the northwest quadrant of the county and has 12 houses on it.

Two property owners are holding up the right of way, and without their signatures, the highway department cannot improve the road, Beck said.

The people living on the road could take the matter to court if they were willing to pay for the expenses that go along with the fight, Beck said.

"Most of the people that live on this road are dependent on social security checks and some are dependent on welfare. They just cannot afford the cost of taking the matter to court," Godwin said.

Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch and Chairman John Balfour both offered to help get the property owners to change their minds about paving the road.

"I realize this means a lot to you and the people on that road, and I will help in any way I can," Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch said.

The board agreed to hold off on its decision until the next meeting so that the residents will have a

(See COUNTY, page 12A)

Unemployment Rate Climbs Over 15%, As 400 In County Lose Their Jobs

Unemployment figures rose to new heights in Hoke County in January with a jobless rate of 15.3% and 400 more Hoke county residents out of work.

The January unemployment figures showed an increase in the rate by 2.7% from 11.6% in December.

Manufacturing and post-holiday layoffs were given as reasons for the increase, and state officials are optimistic that the jobless rate will decline in February.

In January there were some tem-

porary layoffs and that is figured into the total unemployment rate for the county, Hoke County Job Service Office Manager Danny Mann said.

Hoke County was not the only one hit by increased unemployment.

According to the Employment Security Commission, 94 counties had increases in their jobless rate in January while only four counties decreased the number of unemployed.

Of the counties surrounding

Hoke, Cumberland's rate was the lowest with only a 8.6% rate.

Robeson County had the highest of the five with a 17.5% rate.

Hoke County had the third highest unemployment rate of the six counties in the surrounding areas.

December figures were lower in all six counties.

We expect and hope that February's figures will show a decrease in the unemployment rate for Hoke county as well as other counties, Mann said.

Three Men Charged For Armed Robberies

By Sherry Matthews

Hoke County Sheriff's deputies made three arrests last week in connection with two armed robberies that occurred in the Hoke County area in less than two weeks time. Sheriff Dave Barrington said.

Alexander McArn, Dannie McArn and Sherwood McLean, all from Hoke County, were charged with the armed robberies of the Dixie One Stop on February 25 and Jack Tucker on March 2.

The March 2 robbery was reported after two black males scuffled with and held Jack Tucker at gun point and took an undisclosed amount of money, the sheriff's report said.

Tucker had just arrived at his residence after closing his business when one male jumped him from behind and threw him on the cement walkway.

According to the sheriff's report, Tucker had a .38 colt pistol with him but could not reach it during the scuffle.

When Tucker was able to reach for his gun, a second male ap-

peared with a sawed-off shotgun and shouted at him "hold it", the sheriff's reports said.

While the second male held Tucker at gun point, the other male took the gun and the money and both males fled on foot, Tucker reported to the sheriff's office.

Tucker's daughter also stated that she saw a third male run from behind some pine trees in the backyard.

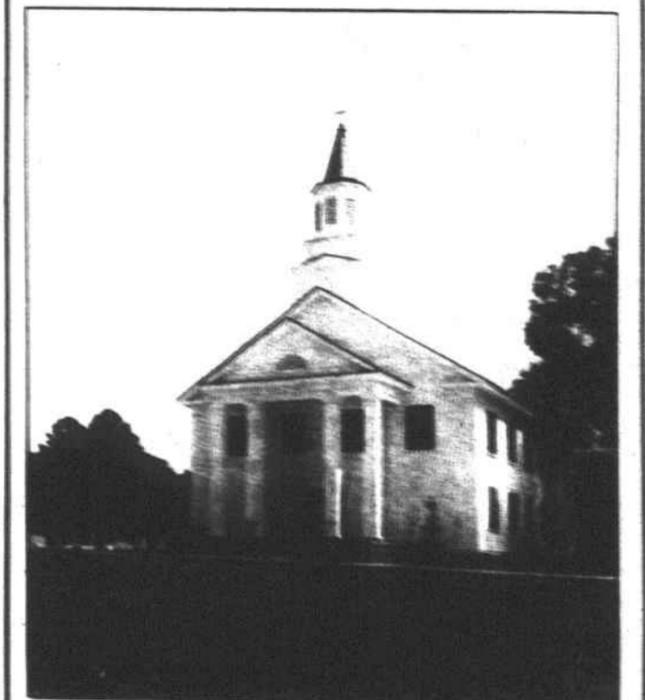
An investigation by the sheriff's department lead to the arrest of the three men.

"Detectives J.R. Riley and R.C. Hart worked on the case for several days straight through without leaving the job and I think they should be commended for the excellent job they did in cracking the case," Sheriff Barrington said.

A vehicle spotted at both crime scenes along with the results of some other investigative work were keys to solving both armed robberies, Barrington said.

These arrests will probably help clear up several armed robbery cases in Robeson County, Barrington added.

Inside Today



Religion

Hoke County Presbyterian preachers are split over the proposed unification of the northern and southern church. Please turn to page 11A for the story.

An Institution

Turlington School is overcrowded and in poor physical condition. News-Journal reporter Sherry Matthews takes a look at the school on page 1 of Section B in today's newspaper.