

McCain Gets Reprieve Until Friday

By Warren Johnston

Local supporters have gotten a stay from members of a Legislative appropriations subcommittee and will be allowed to present their side, before a decision is made about the future of McCain Hospital.

Although McCain appears destined to be converted from a tuberculosis treatment center to a prison medical unit, local supporters have vowed to continue the fight to get "all the facts on the table" before a decision is made.

A committee, which was appointed to represent Raeford and Hoke County government and the Chamber of Commerce, is pushing to have McCain retained for the treatment of tuberculosis and other lung ailments and will argue the case before the joint Human

Resources Appropriations subcommittee on Friday.

That subcommittee was expected to rule on McCain this Tuesday, but delayed action following pressure from the local Legislative delegation.

Supporters of the sanatorium feel the subcommittee is making its decision about McCain without having the proper information and with distorted facts provided by Department of Human Resources Chief Sarah T. Morrow.

Delegation members Rep. Daniel H. DeVane, Sen. David Parnell, Rep. Sidney Locks and Rep. Pete Hasty met Monday with McCain staff members, local officials and the hospital committee Monday to explain the status of the facility.

"At this point, it appears that

the bureaucrats from Raleigh have won," DeVane told the group.

"If it is going to be stopped, then you have to do it in the subcommittee," the Hoke County representative said.

Under the present proposal, McCain would be closed, and then reopened as a 300-bed prison hospital in October, Parnell said.

All of the present employees of the facility would be either allowed to retire or given other state jobs, perhaps at McCain, the Senator said.

Delegation members had been assured that no McCain employees would be fired by state Director of the Budget John A. Williams, Locks said, adding that Williams was over all other state agencies.

Morrow has allocated \$950,000 of her budget for the care of tuberculosis patients. Of that money

\$432,000 would go to local health departments for treatment of the disease.

The balance of the funds would be to provide care for 42 patients at Cherry Hospital in Goldsboro and to pay for their needs in community hospitals, Parnell said.

McCain currently houses over 70 patients.

McCain backers feel that Morrow's plan would not adequately provide for the tuberculosis patients, that the state is required under law to treat.

Although the number of TB patients seems to be dropping at McCain, supporters argue that the disease is increasing statewide and patients are being directed by Morrow away from the Hoke County facility.

A lung treatment facility would be economically feasible if McCain

was used to treat ailments in addition to tuberculosis, committee members say.

Supporters would like to see McCain upgraded to a 150-bed chest specialty hospital, which could treat not only tuberculosis, but other lung disorders like "brown lung," committee member Betsy Ann McNeill said.

McCain is being closed, not because of staff inadequacies, poor patient treatment or deteriorating facilities, but because of inaccurate statements being given to the media and the Legislature by Morrow, Mrs. McNeill said.

"If we are going to close McCain, let's do it with dignity," Hoke Chamber of Commerce Director Earl Fowler said, supporting McNeill's position that

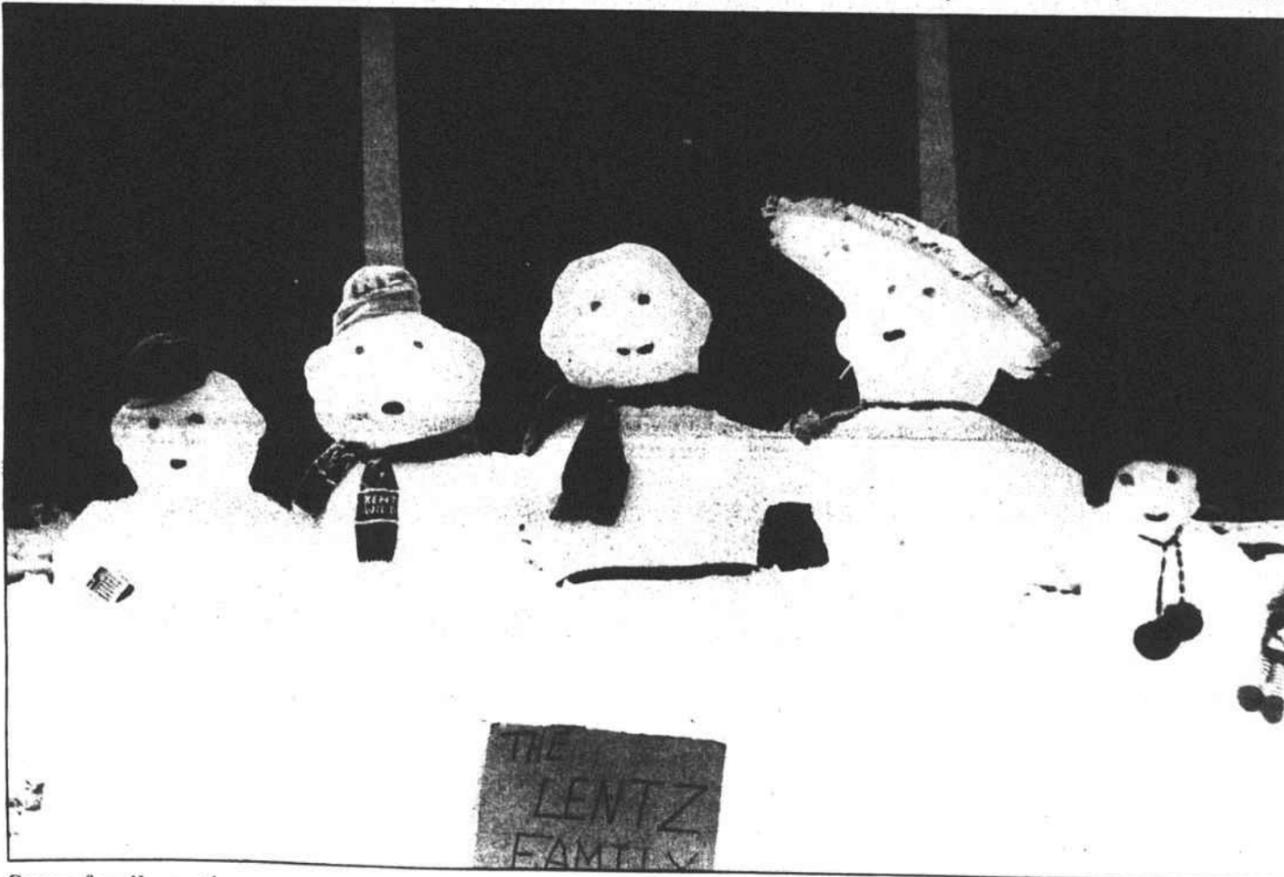
Morrow had distorted the facts about the hospital.

In a recent statement, Morrow noted that the per patient cost per year at McCain was \$67,000. The actual cost is approximately \$42,000, Fowler said.

Morrow has been attempting to close McCain for several years, and she has consistently issued misinformation about the hospital, Fowler said.

"Let's put the truth on the table. Don't close McCain because of inaccurate information," the Chamber director told the members of the Legislative delegation.

Local committee members will appear before the appropriations subcommittee Friday at 8:30 a.m. in Room 402 of the Legislative Office Building in Raleigh.



Snow family outing

The Lentz family carved out in snow by Rita Dicklesimer (sister of Mrs. Anita Lentz) after the unexpected blizzard kept her from returning to

Atlanta, Ga. About six inches of snow fell on Hoke County Thursday, closing schools early and all day on Friday.

Around Town

by Sam Morris

If the weather continues as it was Monday then the green thumb folks can get to planting on Good Friday. It has always been said that many things in the garden should be planted on that day. Of course the ground is wet, but with the sun and wind the way it was Monday, the fields should be ready for planting soon.

The forecast is for temperatures in the 60s for the remainder of the week. So make your schedule for the coming weekend for outdoor activities.

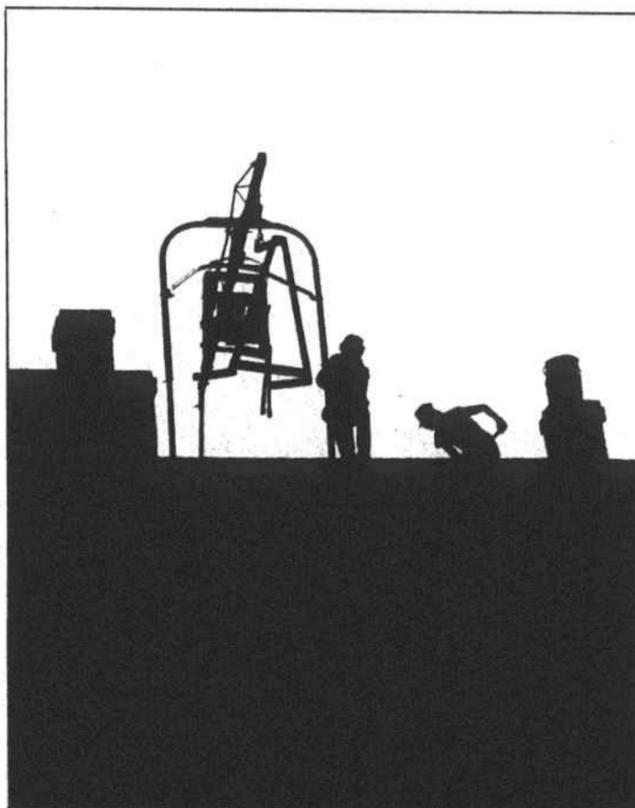
An article in a daily paper stated that we have had a record rainfall for March. The article said that over seven inches had fallen in the Raleigh-Durham area.

We can't check about Hoke County because the weather observer is on vacation. He is expected back in town by the time this paper hits the street and maybe he can set the records straight.

The snowfall has been estimated between six to eight inches last Thursday and Friday. Since Robert Gatlin isn't in town, no one will make it official. So now we see how much he is missed in the county.

Whatever the depth of the snow, once again the highway department and the city crews did an

(See AROUND TOWN, page 15A)



Full steam ahead

Construction is underway at the Pilot Building which was purchased by the county because more office space was needed. Workers were repairing the leaky roof last week in efforts to complete construction by the last of May or the first of June. The offices presently located in the annex building will be moving to the Pilot building while the sheriff's department will be moving its domain to the annex building.

Food Stamp Regulations 'Very Costly'

By Sherry Matthews

A new federal regulation requiring food stamp recipients to complete a five-page form before receiving benefits, is causing headaches in Hoke County.

Fifty-five county families were dropped from the food stamp rolls this week and more here are faced with "going without" next month.

Local Department of Social Services (DSS) officials are wondering if a new federal regulation, requiring clients to complete a five-page detailed form every month to qualify for food stamps, is worth all the time and problems that it is already creating.

Hoke County DSS Director Ken Witherspoon said that these new regulations were being tested here and in Pitt County, but would be statewide by August 1.

According to Witherspoon, the problems involved with these new regulations are "staggering", not only to the client, but to the agency as well.

"This past month we had to send out 586 monthly reports that clients had to fill out and return to us for analysis," Witherspoon said.

"Of the 586 reports sent out, 55 were not returned by the deadline so they must now go through the whole application process, again," he said.

(See DSS, page 15A)

EMC Board Governs Without Restraints

By Sherry Matthews

Regulations governing the operation of the Lumbee River Electric Membership Cooperative allows directors to change and amend by-laws at will without the consent of the membership, a Lumbee director said Monday.

According to the charter of incorporation, actions of the Lumbee board members are governed by the by-laws, and those regulations can apparently be changed, whenever the directors wish, board member Davis Parker said.

In addition, there are apparently no state or federal regulations which govern the actions of the board.

The most recent test of the director's autonomy came on March 10 when the board amended the by-laws, opening the door for them to choose the time, date and place for a recall election which is proposed for April 28.

An order recently issued by a Robeson County Superior Court judge calls for the recall vote to be held if a membership action group gets 10% of the coop's members to sign a petition asking for the election.

Originally the coop board consented to the order, which calls for the vote to be taken at any location other than Pembroke, but later decided not to agree to the court mandate.

By changing the by-laws, the board has the right to hold the election in a location which is convenient to their supporters, opponents have argued.

"The by-laws were amended, but the vote was not unanimous," Parker said.

According to Parker, the board members "periodically" rewrite or amend the existing by-laws.

Armed Robbery Arrests Made

Two Hoke County men were arrested Saturday and charged with armed robbery, a sheriff's report said.

Joseph Melvin and Elwood McNair, both of Raeford, were arrested in connection with the Friday night robbery of the Davis Cash Mart located on Highway 401 business.

Harry Carter reported the robbery to sheriff's deputies about 7:30 p.m. Friday.

Carter told the deputies that two black males came into the store and pulled a pistol while he was turned around getting cigarettes for them.

The two men grabbed Carter and pulled him down on the counter, and then one hit him on the head with a gun, the sheriff's report said.

Carter apparently escaped and was recaptured by one of the men, who got in a scuffle with him outside the store.

(See ARMED, page 12A)

Arch Hathcock, Administrator of the Rural Electrification Authority (REA), said that the REA had no real authority over the directors or the cooperative.

The cooperative is governed by its membership and the by-laws, the REA only steps in when the financial security of the system is threatened, Hathcock said.

"As long as the board's decisions are in accordance with the by-laws, we have no jurisdiction," Hathcock said.

Even when by-laws are violated, the REA is not empowered to do anything, it would be left up to the courts to determine, Hathcock added.

"When a coop or its directors does something that is adversely effective, we are concerned but legally there is simply nothing we can do," Hathcock said.

"That bunch of tyrants can do what they want to do inside or outside the law," Action Group leader Carl Branch said.

Nothing apparently can stop the board from doing as they please.

They have already withdrawn their alleged support of a court ruling requiring them to hold the recall election scheduled for April 28.

"This sort of thing is typical of that bunch," Branch said in an earlier interview.

Branch and his action group appear undaunted by the board's latest maneuvers.

"We are going full steam ahead to assure that this meeting gets off the ground," Branch said.

One board member seems unsure of what the end results of the three month old battle will be.

"The wounds get deeper on both sides the longer this thing drags out," the board member said.



Inside Today

The Franzen Bros. Circus is coming to Raeford Friday and proceeds from advanced ticket sales will benefit the Hoke County Children's Center. We take a look at the center and the special care provided by its staff on page 1B in today's News-Journal.