

The News-Journal

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Robbery Leads As Slaying Motive



Danny Morrison shown during a recent fishing trip.

Robbery has not been ruled out as a possible motive in last Thursday's slaying of a prominent Raeford businessman, authorities said Tuesday.

"Robbery is a strong possibility," Raeford Police Chief Leonard Wiggins said.

"We're looking into that (robbery), as well as a lot of other things," he added.

Wiggins, who is in charge of the investigation into the death of William Danuel Morrison, noted that officers had worked overtime during the Christmas weekend in an effort to come up with "some" answers in the case.

"We're checking out everything," the chief said.

The body of the 54-year-old owner of Morrison's Grocery on Harris Avenue was found by a customer slumped near the cash register around 9:35 p.m. Thursday.

Morrison died of multiple gunshot wounds, Hoke Medical Examiner Robert G. Townsend said.

Authorities have placed the time of death between 9:25 p.m. when Morrison was seen alive by customers and 9:35 p.m. when the body was discovered.

"We're looking for anyone who might have some information or who could have seen something during that period," Wiggins said.

"We need all the help we can get," the chief added.

Officers are looking for a red car, which had been seen near the store prior to the shooting, Wiggins confirmed.

"We don't know if it is tied in or not, but whoever was in it might be able to help us solve this thing," he added.

Although Wiggins and other local authorities have declined to comment about the details of the case, pending further investiga-

tion, *The News-Journal* has learned from police sources and others that:

- Morrison arrived at the store around 7 p.m. He relieved a woman cashier.

- The store owner was apparently shot four times. Although officers were seen Thursday night examining an apparent bullet hole in the ceiling near the store's air conditioning unit, the fifth shot could not be confirmed.

- The weapon was not a shotgun.

- Store receipts of about \$1,600 and Morrison's wallet were not disturbed.

- Morrison kept a gun near the cash register, but there was little sign of a struggle, except for a broken jar of honey.

- A witness saw one black male, possibly two, inside the store near the time of the slaying and at least

two other males sitting in a red car outside the store.

Wiggins said that he does not feel an arrest is imminent, but he is optimistic that the killer will be found.

A memorial service was held for Morrison Saturday afternoon at Crumpler Funeral Home.

Although Morrison was not a Hoke County native, he had lived in Raeford for a number of years and was a respected member of the county's business community.

While in Hoke County, Morrison operated a number of businesses including the Wagon Wheel Restaurant and Morrison's garage.

Morrison owned the Hoke County Ambulance service prior to former owner Jim Henley, and was an outspoken critic of Henley's operation.

(See ROBBERY, page 11)

Weather Drives Hoke Indoors, Causes Death

Hoke County appeared early Wednesday to have escaped the brunt of a storm which blanketed the south in up to two inches of ice and left thousands without power.

However, the Christmas weekend's frigid temperatures took their toll on the county, and authorities have pinned the cause of the death of at least one county resident on the sub-10° weather.

Two county dwellings were also declared total losses after they were ravaged by fires, which have been linked to the cold.

Scores of other residents suffered through having broken water pipes, furnaces that quit working and little preparation for the sustained cold that roared into the county on 60-mile-an-hour winds Saturday.

According to National Weather Service observer Robert Gatlin, temperatures in the county reached a low of 4° Sunday, 7° Monday and 22° on Tuesday.

Sunday's wind chill factor has been estimated at -25°.

As of Wednesday, authorities had tied only one county death to the cold.

Donald E. Holland, 45, was found dead by deputies Christmas morning after neighbors reported seeing his frozen body lying in the yard of his Rockfish area residence.

Investigating officers found Holland frozen near his front door around 10:20 a.m., Hoke County Sheriff Dave Barrington said.

An early report that Holland might have died from a blow to the head was proved incorrect by autopsy results, Barrington said Tuesday.

"The autopsy shows that he died from exposure," the sheriff said.

"The blow to the head was not enough to knock him out, much less kill him," Barrington said.

Investigators believe that Holland arrived home sometime early Sunday morning.

While parking his car into the carport, the vehicle apparently hit and knocked over a weight bench, the sheriff said.

Exhaust patterns on the driveway indicate that Holland remained in the car for sometime with the motor running.

The Rockfish man then apparently made his way to the front door, but apparently dropped his key while attempting to turn the lock, authorities speculate.

The keys were found near the door, Barrington said. Foot prints on the door and a broken screen door indicate that Holland attempted to kick in the door.

"We think that he lost his balance, and fell backwards. That's when he hit his head," Barrington said.

"He just couldn't get up," the sheriff added.

Holland had a blood alcohol content of .21, Barrington said the autopsy showed.

Holland was living alone at the time of his death.

In an unrelated incident, Hillcrest firemen believe the most likely cause of the blaze which destroyed a Scurlock residence was a wood heater, a department spokesman said Tuesday.

The fire erupted around 11:30 p.m. Sunday at the home of Willie Hollingsworth on Scurlock Court.

Hillcrest volunteers, who were assisted by firemen from Puppy Creek and North Raeford, battled the blaze and the cold for almost two hours before bringing the fire under control.

"It was freezing. We had ice all over us," Hillcrest assistant Chief Billy Norton said, adding that it was about 3:30 a.m. Monday before firemen returned to the station.

"The house was a total loss," Norton said.

The exact cause of the blaze was not known Tuesday, but investigators believe the most likely reason may have been a wood heater.

(See WEATHER, page 11)

Around Town

By Sam Morris

I hope everyone had a fine Christmas. There isn't much to write about this week except the weather. It has been cold in most parts of the nation and I don't remember a Christmas as cold as the one this year. As one weather reporter stated Monday, we will remember the "Christmas of 1983."

The Christmas Eve service at the Raeford Presbyterian Church was well attended even though the wind chill factor was about 20 degrees below zero. Most of the thermometers in Hoke County registered from four to seven degrees Christmas morning. Now this is about 30 degrees below normal for this time of year.

On Monday morning the temperature was down low again but it started warming up somewhat during the day. Maybe it reached 20 degrees more.

Now the forecast is for warmer weather Tuesday and then maybe snow or sleet coming in Wednesday. What has happened to the prediction that this would be the mildest winter in many years?

So far we haven't heard of any power failures in Hoke County, but we did see an announcement on television at the Lumber River Electric Coop. members to conserve power on Sunday night. It would be bad to lose electricity in the cold weather.

The Raeford Fire Department answered a call on Sunday morning, but I haven't heard for what reason. It has been too cold to investigate.

Then on Sunday night after I had gone to bed, the siren, which sounded like North Raeford, went off. No report on this either. Fires are bad in cold weather; not only for loss of property and heating, but it is almost impossible to fight fire with the freezing weather.

So please conserve electricity and watch your fire in your home. It pays to be safe.

This cold weather reminds me of the National Guard bivouac in late (See AROUND, page 11)



Happy New Year

Father Time has not changed much since he was depicted in this 1889 wood cut. He will still bring in the 1984 New Year as he did then, at the stroke of

midnight on Saturday. The staff and management of *The News-Journal* wish our readers a prosperous and healthy new year.

Sheriff: Daily Break-ins 'Normal' For Hoke County

Five Hoke County dwellings and two businesses were broken into during the week prior to Christmas raising the local break-in total to almost one unsolved incident per day for the last 40 days.

Although the number of incidents appears to be high, it is normal for this time of year, Hoke County Sheriff Dave Barrington said Tuesday.

"We generally have 25 to 30 a month," Barrington said, noting that the number of break-ins are down since the county started the neighborhood watch programs.

"Before the community watch programs, we used to have about twice this many," the sheriff said. "We have cut it down significantly."

During the past year, the sheriff's department has been solving around 34% of the county's break-ins, Barrington said.

The national average is about 21%, he added.

Sheriff's deputies were investigating last Thursday's early morning break-in at the Jiffy Stop in Rockfish.

Apparently \$900 in cigarettes and other items were taken from the store, investigation reports show.

The break-in was discovered around 6 a.m. Thursday when owner David Draughon found a lock on the door smashed and the door apparently forced open, the reports show.

Deputies are also investigating over \$400 in vandalism to a house under the care of the Hoke County Department of Social Services.

The dwelling, which belonged to the late Mary McLean, was apparently broken into sometime prior to December 20, reports show.

Windows were apparently broken, screens torn and furniture stolen from the unoccupied dwelling, the reports show.

In another incident, a R.I. Raeford resident returned home last Monday and found that someone had forced a door open, and that almost \$1,500 in clothing and appliances had been stolen, reports show.

Items, including a stereo, a rug shampooer, a kerosene heater and clothing, were taken from the home of Diane Chavis, the reports say.

Deputies were also investigating a break-in which apparently occurred on the same day as the Chavis incident.

Another kerosene heater, along with a television, a .22 caliber rifle and a shotgun were reported taken from the home of Andre Dorsey McLaurin. The items were valued at more than \$600, the sheriff's reports say.

In a still further incident, deputies were investigating the break-in and theft from a Lumber Bridge area residence, reports show.

(See BREAK-IN, page 11)

Inside Today



Share Your Christmas

These mounds of clothes were part of the many gifts that went to over 500 Hoke County residents who had a little nicer Christmas as a result of the Raeford Woman's Club effort in the Share Your Christmas Campaign. We take a look at the effort on page 10 of today's *News-Journal*.