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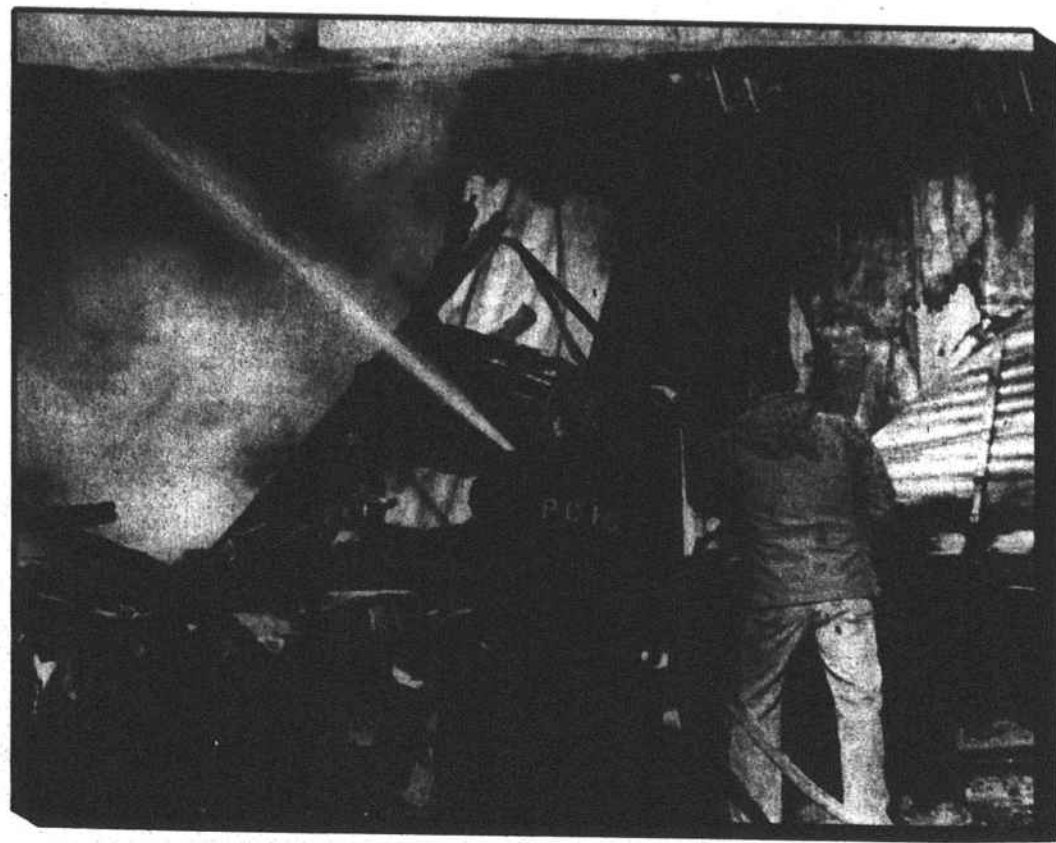
RAEFORD, HOKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

\$10 PER YEAR

The Hoke County Journal - Established 1905

25 CENTS

Thursday, February 16, 1984



Dousing the flames

These members of the Puppy Creek Fire Department clear away debris and douse the remaining flames which destroyed this Hoke County mobile

home on Friday, and took the life of a three-year-old who was trapped in the blaze.

Child Dies In Trailer Blaze

By Sherry Matthews

Fire that swept through a mobile home around 8:45 Friday morning claimed the life of a Hoke County youth and destroyed the dwelling.

Coniel McDuffie, three, who was apparently trapped in the blaze, died from smoke inhalation, sheriff's reports show.

The child's mother, Angela McDuffie, escaped the dwelling, which was located in Carolina Country Estates, but was apparently unable to rescue the sleeping youth.

The blaze, apparently started when a "kerosene heater" sitting in the hallway exploded.

Puppy Creek volunteer firemen,

who were assisted by firefighters from Hillcrest, fought the blaze for nearly an hour while rescue workers attempted to free the trapped child, reports show.

The child was found "lying in the front bedroom...face up" and apparently still alive, reports show.

Hoke Rescue Squad members and Hoke Emergency Medical Services (EMS) workers helped pull the youth from the trailer.

EMS workers transported the child to Cape Fear Valley Hospital in Fayetteville.

The child apparently died, around 9:15 a.m., in route to the hospital.

Although details were unclear at

press time, sources at the scene say some confusion occurred in the way firefighters and emergency personnel were dispatched to the scene.

One source said, EMS personnel, who played a key role in getting the child out of the burning building, were not dispatched by the Hoke Sheriff's Department, and there was also confusion over fire fighting backup equipment needed.

Members of the Hoke County Commission denied a request last week from Hoke EMS Director Bill Niven to establish a central dispatcher for emergency services.

The slaying, which took place nearly two months ago, is still a "top priority" with both Wiggins and Johnson.

"I still believe that we will get a break in this case," Wiggins said earlier.

The body of the 54-year-old Morrison was found around 9:35 p.m. by a customer. He apparently died from multiple gunshot wounds.

Police are still investigating robbery as a possible motive for the slaying although nothing had been reported missing from the store.

"We are checking every possible motive," Johnson said.

Although both state and local authorities remain mum about any leads they may have uncovered in the investigation, local police have placed witnesses at the crime scene "just a few minutes" before the shooting apparently occurred.

"We have some leads but nothing concrete," State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) senior agent Frank Johnson said.

"We have got it down to between three and five minutes before the shooting," Wiggins said.

"There is still a little blank spot we have got to fill," he added.

"We are still working very hard on this case," Johnson said.



Inside Today

These Hoke students are participating in a school store activity sponsored by the Distributive Education classes at the high school. We take a look at the distributive education classes and the general vocational education program at Hoke High during Vocational Education Week in this week's B-section of The News-Journal.

Decision On College Could Come By March

A decision on the feasibility of a satellite college in Hoke County is expected to be made within the next three weeks, Sandhills Community College President Dr. Raymond A. Stone said Friday.

Stone, who was in Raeford Friday with other Sandhills officials to tour a possible site for the Hoke County branch, said a decision on whether or not to go forward with the school would be reached at the beginning of March.

"We're looking at this seriously. We're going to try to make it fly," Stone said about the Hoke County satellite.

The Sandhills president, along with Sandhills Board of Trustees Chairman Ed Causey, Assistant to the President George Lewis and three local representatives, toured the downtown branch of the United Carolina Bank (UCB) Friday.

UCB is slated to close the facility in March and has offered the historic 72-year-old building as a gift to Hoke County for use as a college satellite.

Sandhills board members will decide on the Hoke plan during a regular meeting around the first of March, Stone said, adding that he expects the board to approve the satellite.

Before giving the OK to the UCB site Sandhills officials are checking to see if the three-story building complies with state fire and safety codes.

In addition, Sandhills needs reassurance from county officials that they will accept the financial responsibility of a college branch in Hoke County.

The initial "start-up" burden of the school would fall on the county. However, Chamber of Commerce Director Earl Fowler said he is working on a plan which would limit the expenses placed on Hoke taxpayers.

Fowler, who is spearheading the drive to get the satellite branch in Hoke, said he believes the costs of renovating the UCB building and bringing it up to Sandhills standards can be handled from private sources.

Although he was reluctant to discuss it, Stone also said there was a "slight" possibility of state funds being provided for the Hoke satellite.

"We need to work with the local legislators on that," the Sandhills president said.

Sandhills is planning an expansion of its Moore County campus. The shifting of Hoke students to a Raeford facility would ease the burden on the Southern Pines school, and some state funds might be available for the satellite, Stone said.

About 800 Hoke County residents attend fulltime classes on the Moore County campus.

Another 1,200 local students attend Sandhills extension classes, or take courses at either Fayetteville Technical Institute or Robeson Tech, Fowler said.

In preparation for the school, Sandhills officials plan to survey students in the Hoke High graduating class, members of the industrial workforce here and the county's general population to determine the type of courses which should be taught at a satellite facility.

Following the tour of the UCB building, Stone said he believed the structure would work well for the school's needs.

The second and third floors of the building are divided into small rooms which could easily be combined for classrooms, Lewis said.

A large third floor ballroom, which once was the meeting room for the Woodmen of the World, could easily be used by the school, the assistant to the president said.

The UCB building contains approximately 12,000 to 13,000 square feet.

Parking for the school would be available on a lot owned by UCB behind the building and on a county-owned lot near Candlestick Crafts on Elwood Avenue.

"What we need in downtown Raeford is a parking problem," Fowler said.

Payback Method Changes For Sandhills Mental Health

By Sherry Matthews

The state Department of Human Resources (DHR) has agreed to a new "payback schedule" presented to them by the Sandhills Mental Health Center for over \$200,000 in state funds that were allegedly "misappropriated" last year, Sandhills Director Michael Watson said Monday.

The schedule calls for \$114,500 to be paid back from this year's state allocations with the remainder being reimbursed to the state in July, 1985.

"The state has agreed to deduct the first \$114,500 from the money they will allocate us this year," Watson said.

With the money being deducted from state funds allotted to the center, no local tax dollars will be used to pay off the misappropriated state tax fund.

"The proposal has its advantages," Watson said.

According to the director, all the money allocated by the state "must be matched" with local funds.

"With the state reducing our allocation, it reduces the amount

of local dollars we will have to use this year," Watson said.

"If we fall short in local revenues this year, our agreement with the state will be helpful," he added.

Despite the payback agreement and a earlier state audit that shows funds were "misappropriated," Watson said "no actual money had been taken out of the center."

"There has never been any money missing," Watson said.

"It was just misspent," he added.

Raeford attorney Phil Diehl, who served on the Sandhills Board, agrees.

"All the dollars were accounted for in the audit," Diehl said.

"The funds were just spent without any authority," he added.

"I think the state is making them pay it back because they used and transferred the monies within the center without the proper authority," Diehl said.

According to the Raeford lawyer, the entire \$1.1 million in tax funds were "never missing" just "misappropriated."

The state audit, a "private

audit" by the center and a audit prepared by the Raeford Pittard and Perry Accounting firm showed that there were "never any monies missing," Diehl said.

According to the audit, \$800,000 was used for land purchases by the center.

"Those funds were not misappropriated," Watson said.

"We just transferred the land back to the center. That took care of the vast majority of the exceptions the state found in the audit," a DHR spokesman said.

"We are satisfied with the payback arrangements," DHR spokesman Bryant Haskins said.

Once the state is assured that the funds, which were misappropriated, are returned to the department, the investigation will probably be over, he added.

"Right now it is hard to determine if we will be in the financial shape to pay the remaining money back next July," Watson said.

"That is 15 months away," he added.

"We are going to make every effort to get it paid back so we can (See NO PROBE, page 11A)

Around Town

By Sam Morris

What a difference a week has made in the weather. As this column was being written last week, snow was on the ground. Now on Monday, February 13th it looks like rain, but the temperature is in the 70s. Maybe spring will come early this year, even if the groundhog did see his shadow.

The snow didn't hang around very long in Raeford last week, but it was still around in Wake, Lee, Vance and Franklin counties last Thursday, I went up to Henderson last Thursday and they still had about four inches of snow on the ground. The highways were in excellent condition and driving was the same as always. By the time I returned, the sun had melted a lot of the snow during the day. The weather this weekend must have cleared it all away.

The forecast is for the temperatures to remain above 60 (See AROUND, page 4A)

In 107 Years

There Has Been A Lot Of Living

Nearly a 100 years ago, Raeford and Hoke County were a "lot different" than they look today, according to 107-year-old Mary Jane Waddell Bention.

Bention, who came to Hoke County before Raeford was incorporated, remembers dirt roads and "lots of trees and farms" where the city stands today.

"Things were a lot different back then," Bention said.

"There was a lot of religious folks and down home farmers here back then," she added.

Although Bention recalls "tough times" in the Hoke area, she said things were "really" easier then than they are today.

"Kids today don't know what work is," Bention said.

"When I was growing up, we worked from sun up to sundown for fifty cents," she added.

"That was a lot of money back then," Bention said.

"It was appreciated then...it ain't now," she added.

Despite the "hard work" and long hours, Bention recalls a "lot of good times" in Hoke County.

"I used to love to fish," Bention said.

"I remember going down to the river, when we didn't have to work, and sit all day just fishing," she added.

"It was my favorite hobby," Bention said.

Although Bention admits she "can't do any fishing now," she said she passed that hobby down to her daughters.

"They love it as much as I did," Bention said.

During her 107 years, Bention has given birth to five children.

"All five were born at home," she said.

"I never needed a doctor for that," Bention said.

(See THERE'S, page 2A)



Two generations together

Mary Jane Waddell Bention, 107, is pictured here with one of her many relatives, remembers the "way it used to be" when people "worked hard" for little money.