

The News-Journal

The Hoke County News - Established 1928

The Hoke County Journal - Established 1905

Volume LXXVI Number 33

RAEFORD, HOKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

\$10 PER YEAR

25 CENTS

Thursday, December 6, 1984

United Carolina Bank robbed, three arrested, one charged

By Ed Miller

The main offices of United Carolina Bank, on Main Street in Raeford, were robbed at 11 a.m. Tuesday, and three suspects were taken into custody.

Tuesday's incident was the first time in at least 10 years that a Hoke County bank has been robbed. The last robbery occurred at the Sunset Branch of The Bank of Raeford.

Three men were arrested Tuesday, and the case was turned over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Raeford Police Chief Leonard Wiggins said Tuesday afternoon.

In custody now is 20-year-old Grady Dominic Cunningham, FBI spokesman Tom Burleson said Tuesday evening.

Cunningham was living at 225 Robeson Avenue in Raeford, Burleson said.

The FBI intends to charge Cunningham with bank robbery and he will appear before a federal magistrate Wednesday morning in Greensboro, said Burleson.

As of Tuesday evening, two other suspects arrested with Cunningham had not been charged, Burleson said.

Cunningham entered the United Carolina and passed a note demanding money to one of the tellers in the bank.

According to Burleson, the note was threatening enough that the teller gave him what he wanted.

Cunningham then left the bank, got into a car and was off.

He and the other two men were arrested shortly thereafter, Burleson said.

After the capture, it was discovered that Cunningham had a toy weapon, said Burleson.

There were no injuries in the holdup, said Wiggins.

Cunningham was arrested by the Raeford Police, Chief Wiggins said.

By the time Wiggins arrived at the bank, Sergeant Rodney Collins, Major J.C. Barrington, Patrolman J.R. McNeill and Patrolman Junior Ward had Cunningham and the two other suspects on the ground under guard, he said.

According to Burleson, the hearing Wednesday morning will be an identity and bond hearing.

If the federal magistrate is convinced that Cunningham is the suspect's true name, he will have bond set.

If he is held, he will be turned over to federal marshalls and placed in a federal holding cell.



Daytime holdup

Police Chief Leonard Wiggins and other members of the Hoke County law enforcement community survey the situation after a man held up Raeford's United Carolina Bank Tuesday. Grady Dominic Cunningham, of Raeford, was to be sent before a federal magistrate pending charges of bank robbery on Wednesday morning. It is not known how much money Cunningham got out of the bank with; however, he and two other suspects were arrested before they could leave the scene. A twist to the story is when the police dispatcher called the bank after the silent alarm went in, the operator of the bank's switchboard put the police on hold.



Heater flamed

Fire destroyed this home on Jones Hill Thursday morning. North Raeford Fire Department fought the blaze with assistance from Hillcrest volunteers. Cause of the fire was a "faulty wood heater," according to North Raeford Fire Chief Johnny Baker. "The house was gutted out real good and no doubt a total loss" Baker said. Willie Edward Smith,

owner of the house, was not at home at the time the fire broke out. It was reported that Smith's wife was in the dwelling but got out without injury. "The firemen did a fantastic job in getting this fire out," Baker said. A collection has been started to aid the family who lost everything in the blaze. For more information contact The News-Journal.

(Photo by Pam Frederick)

County hires health chief

By Ed Miller

After a lengthy executive session, the Hoke County Commission hired a new health director, approved a \$23,814 salary and OK'd moving expenses during a Monday morning meeting.

Robeson County Assistant Health Director Bobby Rogers has been hired for the new position, Commissioner Cleo Bratcher said. Rogers, 44, is married and has two children.

According to Bratcher, the new director will have to be a resident of Hoke County within one year, as per regulation passed last year by the County Commission.

As of now, the starting date of the new director is uncertain; however, it is hoped that Rogers

will be assuming duties here by mid-December, said Bratcher.

Rogers is retired military. He spent most of his time in the service as a health administrator, the Commissioner said.

Board activated

In other action during the meeting, the commissioners voted to re-activate the Hoke County Planning Board within 30 days to prepare a county zoning ordinance.

County Manager William Cowan recommended that the Lumber River Council of Government (COG) be asked to help in the zoning venture.

Upon Cowan's recommenda-

tion, the Commission voted to get COG assistance.

In another motion passed while discussing zoning, it was added that there should be seven persons on the Planning Board.

"I fully support the idea. It's got to be done," Commissioner Wyatt Upchurch said.

According to Commission Chairman John Balfour, there was a list of things planned for the new County Manager when he arrived and county zoning was about third on the list.

The appearance of Glyn and Marcia Snow at the morning meeting served to make commis-

(See PLANNING, page 12)

Cable rate hike given ax

Following a heated lobbying effort by an Alert Cablevision Company representative, Raeford City Council members held fast to a previously staked out position and voted unanimously to deny a proposed rate increase for cable television service.

Prior to voting on the matter, the councilmen vowed not to grant the rate hike "until service improved."

Although company Vice President Edwin Pettis attempted to pin the denial on a failure of Alert to provide the sports channel ESPN on the basic service, the councilmen dodged the assumption.

"We just want a good level of service, like it is spelled out in the

franchise agreement," City Manager Tom Phillips told Pettis, admitting that having ESPN back on basic service might be regarded favorably by the council.

Alert removed ESPN and the Cable News Network (CNN) from basic service in November and placed the channels on a premium programming level for which customers are charged as much as \$5 per month extra.

The two premium networks were replaced with Channel 18 from Charlotte and the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), which Pettis said many customers wanted.

The basic rate is now \$8.60. Alert is seeking \$10 per month.

With the additional fees being charged for the premium channels, the increase would be 51%, Phillips said.

Pettis would not commit to return ESPN to basic service if a customer survey showed the sports channel to be more popular than CBN.

"We would try to take a survey into consideration," Pettis said.

The Alert vice president charged the council with not treating his firm like other businesses in the city.

"We have a right to choose what we offer. We are a free enterprise. We feel we have the same rights as any other taxpayer business."

(See CITY, page 13)

Hunt appealing two-year jail sentence given Friday

By Ed Miller

Hoke County Commissioner James Albert Hunt has appealed a two-year active sentence given him by District Court Judge Warren Pate last Friday.

Hunt was given the active sentence when his probation was revoked.

The commissioner was on pro-

hibition for writing worthless checks last year.

Added into Hunt's probation was a clause saying that he should break no laws during his probation, court records say.

Recently, Hunt wrote two "bad" checks when a business deal fell through, the commissioner said, adding that was why his pro-

hibition was revoked.

There was no appeal bond set in Hunt's case, records say.

Hunt, who appeared unruffled by the sentence Monday said: "Home town judges are the only ones who give me sentences."

When the commissioner was in trouble last year, District Court Judge Joseph DuPree told Hunt

that if he would step down from the County Commission, he would suspend his sentence; if not, he would give him 90 days, according to the commissioner.

Hunt would not step down, and he got 90 days, he said.

According to Hunt, he will not step down now even if he goes to jail again.

"No way," said Hunt when questioned on the matter.

According to North Carolina law, there is no provision for impeachment or recall of a County commissioner unless he is convicted of a felony.

Hunt has not been charged with a felony, although he has been ar-

rested on numerous charges stemming from his financial dealings. The commissioner also recently plead guilty in Robeson County to a traffic violation.

Hunt could continue to serve even in jail, a spokesman for the state Attorney General's office said.

Around Town

By Sam Morris

The weather is still not the old time winter that you would expect for December. The rain Sunday night was needed, and according to reports, it should turn cold for the remainder of the week.

According to the long range forecast this section of the country should have above normal temperatures for the remainder of the winter. This is OK with me.

The Christmas Greetings section of The News-Journal will appear in the issue of Thursday. (See AROUND, page 12)



Swearing in Newly elected school board members Eddie McNeill (left) and Shirley Gibson take the oath of office during Monday's meeting.

Board leaves IEA group waiting on answers

By Ed Miller

As a first order of business Monday night, the newly formed Hoke County Board of Education, adjourned into executive session and kept a crowd of about 40 members of the Native American Council waiting 50 minutes for the public meeting to begin.

The group attended the board meeting to try to determine why a new Indian Educational Affairs (IEA) Director has not been hired.

Hiring an IEA director was discussed in the closed session, one board member said.

Members of the council's delegation expressed fears the IEA program would be lost to Hoke

County if a director is not hired soon.

According to Council Chairman Joel Dial Jr., there has not been an "active director" for about a year.

Former Director Earl Oxendine resigned from the post in August but went on sick leave last November, Dial said.

Hoke County Superintendent Dr. Robert Nelson told the group that he is taking time needed to find a qualified person to recommend to the School Board.

The major hold up is finding a qualified person who lives in the county, Nelson said.

Although there has been no policy adopted by the School

Board saying the director has to live in the county, a part of the IEA Council by-laws say that preference will be given to county residents, Nelson said.

One member of the delegation showed dismay at the fact that there are not more qualified Indians in the county.

In the future, she hopes that Hoke County Schools can turn out more educated Indians for the sake of the others in the county.

Better education for Indians was of major concern to the group.

"We owe our children that much," she said, adding that she hoped the School Board and the Indian population can "work together."

There have only been three applications received by the Board of Education for the job, Chairman Bill Cameron said.

Dial called for the return of Oxendine to the position if no other alternatives could be found.

Nelson will hopefully come to the Board with a recommendation for the position by the January meeting, he said.

In another matter, members of the board heard a proposal to make all the schools in Hoke County accredited by the Southern Accreditation Association.

Presently, Hoke High and Upchurch Jr. High are the only

(See SCHOOL, page 12)