



## Telephone woes force county firm to move

A Hoke County contractor said Tuesday he is moving his operations from the Davis Bridge area into Cumberland County because of the "exorbitant" costs of his telephone system.

Builder Danny Ratley, who owns Ratley Construction Company, said his telephone bill topped \$22,000 last year, and he is expecting that the charges will go higher this year because of the need to add additional direct Fayetteville lines.

Efforts to link the Hoke County 875 exchange with Fayetteville will come too late for Ratley. However, the contractor says once the direct service is established, he

might move his business back to Hoke County.

Members of the North Carolina Utilities Commission voted last Wednesday 4 to 2 to require Carolina Telephone to conduct a cost study of the service.

August 1 has been set as the deadline for the cost study.

The vote came after three weeks of delays, but is considered "positive," local supporters of extended area service say.

According to the ruling handed down by the commission, Carolina Telephone will conduct the cost study to determine the rates to be

charged to Cumberland County customers. Raeford customers would be charged fees based on a companywide cost averaging called the "matrix."

Although the order was not exactly what was sought by members of the commission's public staff, who represent Hoke County customers, it was positive, Raeford - Hoke Economic Developer John Howard said.

"The ruling will allow the commission to look at all aspects of the economic need of the question," Howard said.

The commissioners can now weigh clearly the public testimony given by Hoke County residents.

In a May 6 hearing in Raleigh, Hoke residents pointed out that the extended service was critical to Hoke County's economic survival, Howard said.

Telephone rates in Hoke County might increase as a result of the expanded service, but without the link to Cumberland County, higher costs, like greater ad valorem taxes, will be coming "out of our pockets," Howard said.

The loss of Ratley Construction is an example of why this county needs the extended service, the economic developer said.

Ratley now operates with six employees in the office and uses two direct Fayetteville lines, which cost \$160 per month each.

His business is expanding, and he currently needs to add three additional Fayetteville lines.

"I call suppliers and customers. They can't reach me now because my phone is busy," Ratley said.

The cost of the additional needed lines is enough to make it necessary to move to Cumberland County, the contractor said.

The cost of the five lines would be \$800 per month and could be replaced with cheaper Cumberland County rent.

"I think Hoke County will grow. The telephone thing is very important," Ratley said, noting that he would not be leaving if he had local service to Fayetteville.

Ratley is a commercial contrac-

tor, specializing in fast food franchise construction. He also builds custom homes.

Some homes have been built by the firm for customers in Raeford's East Woods subdivision, but most of the company's business is outside the county, Ratley said.

The utility commission's order does not set a date on a public hearing to air the question of the extended service, but the order does specify that there will be a hearing held.

If the commission does grant the extended service this year, it could be another year before Raeford customers can make local calls to Fayetteville.



**Summer blooms**  
Day lilies like these are adding a bright touch to yards around Hoke County. The blooms are just coming into their peak this time of year.

## Florida drug trial begins for jump school owner

**By Ed Miller**  
The trial of Raeford Aviation owner Gene Paul Thacker, charged almost 13 months ago with trafficking in cocaine, began Tuesday in a Florida Circuit courtroom, officials from that state say.

The jury was picked and one witness for the state testified as the trial got underway, according to Scott Palmer of the Statewide Grand Jury's office.

Palmer could not comment as to the nature of any testimony, he said.

Thacker, 53, was arrested on May 2, 1984 and charged with trafficking and conspiracy to traffic cocaine.

The trial was originally set for May 13 but was delayed by the defense until Tuesday, said Florida Department of Law Enforcement (DLE) spokesman Bill Wolfe.

Thacker has entered a plea of not guilty to the charges, Wolfe said.

According to Wolfe, Thacker allegedly provided a landing area for airplanes carrying cocaine and provided fuel for the aircrafts.

"According to witnesses" Thacker was at the airport when the planes landed, Wolfe alleged.

The Raeford jump school owner also allegedly conspired to allow \$14 million worth of cocaine to be smuggled through the Raeford-Hoke County Airport, Wolfe said.

"I don't think there's a court in the world that will convict you if you didn't do something," said Thacker in an earlier interview.

"Some guy I never heard of said he saw a truck," said Thacker. Florida officials denied a motion by Thacker's attorney to dismiss charges because his truck was seen

at the airport when an alleged shipment of drugs was flown in, he said.

In previous statements, Cumberland-Hoke Judicial District Assistant Attorney John Dickson said Thacker stands to spend up to 30 years in prison without a chance for parole if convicted of the charges.

Thacker is retired from the Army and a former Golden Knight.

He and his family currently own and operate a world-renowned parachute jumping school on private property adjoining the airport.

According to Thacker, his business will not suffer if he is convicted and sent to prison.

Raeford Aviation is an incorporated business and will function normally even without him, he said.

## Appeals may delay nursing home more than two years, state says

**By Ed Miller**  
It could be more than two years before a nursing home is built in Hoke County because of state delays in deciding who will build the facility, a spokesperson for the North Carolina Department of Human Resources (DHR) said last week.

According to Certificate of Need Section spokesman Sandra Griff-

om, DHR "is in the process of assigning a hearing officer" to the case.

That hearing officer will act as a judge and make a proposal to the director of the division of facilities, said Griffom.

"When there is a contested case, there is no telling how long it could take," Griffom said.

Two companies, Britthaven Inc.

and Autumn Care Corp., are trying to get a certificate of need to build a nursing facility in Raeford.

Both companies submitted applications to Cardinal Health Agency.

Cardinal's staff originally recommended the home be built by Autumn Care, but after a public hearing on the matter, the Car- (See NURSING, page 2A)

## Planning board makes changes in mobile home ordinance

**By Ed Miller**  
Members of the Hoke County Planning Board made compromises Tuesday in a proposed ordinance that would regulate mobile home parks in the county.

The changes were made as a result of grievances heard during a public hearing on the proposal in the May 20 Hoke County Commission meeting.

Part of the ordinance's grandfather clause was changed to read as long as lot sizes are "safe and healthy," a mobile home park owner can expand without bringing all old lots up to the standards

of a new park. Members of the board also dropped the minimum lot sizes for a new park to 6,500 square feet from a proposed 7,500 square feet.

One part of the ordinance that was not changed was a clause saying that new parks must have paved roads and if an owner wants to expand, he must pave his old roads.

Also not changed was a section saying that for a person to put in a new mobile home park, the person must start with five acres of land.

"If an individual is going to get into the park business, he is going

to get into it big enough to take care of it," Board Chairman Brown Hendrix said.

A unanimous vote from the board sealed the five acre requirement.

According to Hendrix, the smaller lot sizes will not have any adverse affect on sewage drain fields.

"A 6,500 foot lot will let him (a park owner) cut his length but he still has to have width because of clearance distances between trailers," Hendrix said.

In addressing the question of paving streets, Hendrix said that a

person at the public hearing showed concern over a clause in the proposed ordinance that said all roads in a park must meet North Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) standards.

"That is not true," said Hendrix, adding that the person may have misread the clause.

"Upkeep on an unpaved road would eventually be as much as paving," Board Member Bobby Strother said.

Although Board Member Mable Riley showed concern that rental rates might go up if park owners were forced to pave with any ex-

pansion, she also said: "I think park dwellers should be able to get in and out of what they are paying for."

"I think all new parks should be paved," she said.

"I think one of the main objectives of this board is to beautify this county for all its citizens," Board Member Ralph Barnhart said.

"If we can't do that, we have no business here," said Barnhart.

"We're trying to create a better environment for park dwellers," said Board Member Marcia Snow.

According to Hendrix, the "high density traffic" on mobile

home park roads requires paving to keep them passable.

Planning Board members also did away with part of the grandfather clause which would require mobile home parks to put in a 10 foot buffer zone all the way around the park.

Under the old proposal, when a park owner wanted to expand, the owner would have had to take present lot space to incorporate the buffer zone.

Board members changed that to say that a wall, barrier or appropriate fence could be put up in place of the buffer zone.

## Turkey pickin' prizes on tap

More than 20 prizes will be given away in a raffle at the First Annual Turkey Pickin', to be held at 5:30 p.m. Thursday night.

A John Deere lawn mower, which retails for about \$2,300, will be the grand prize.

Tickets are \$4 and are available at Howell Drug, Western Auto, Southern National Bank, the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce, The News-Journal, United Carolina Bank and Revco Drug.

A limited number of tickets will be available at the door.



## Scouts plan Hoke monument

**By Ed Miller**  
There are no monuments in Hoke County. There is nothing in stone, metal or even scratched in sand permanently that commemorates Hoke County or the contributions local residents have made to the world in peace.

There are no statues, but there are two Raeford Boy Scouts who plan to remedy the situation.

Josh and Jay Pate, members of Scout Troop 404, plan to erect a monument on the Hoke County Courthouse lawn.

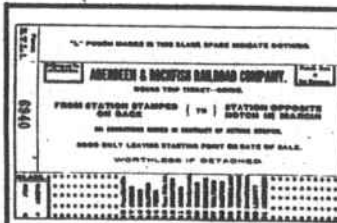
The Pate brothers have undertaken the task as their Eagle Scout

project. They will need about \$1,000 to have the statue erected.

According to Jay and Josh, they plan to have Arthur Gore, a former Hoke County resident, sculpt the monument.

Gore, who now lives in Denver, Colorado, is best known for his work in photography, but is also recognized as a sculptor.

If these two young men can deliver what they promise, they will indelibly commemorate the war dead of the county and achieve the highest honor a Boy Scout can earn.



**Ticket to ride**  
This ticket was good for a ride on the Aberdeen and Rockfish jitney. More about the jitney on page 1 of section B in today's News-Journal.

## Around Town

**By Sam Morris**  
The weather was somewhat cooler the last of the week, but it has turned back to summertime on Monday. The temperature is about 90 degrees and should be about the same for the next several days. The nights are in the 50s, so it is good for sleeping.  
We haven't received any rain to write about and we could use about two inches this week. The (See AROUND, page 2A)