

The News-Journal

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25 CENTS

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Pen pals

Students at Scurlock Elementary School last week met soldiers they wrote to while the soldiers took part in Desert Storm. More than 20 soldiers from Ft. Bragg took

part in games and classroom work, and dined with the students.

Plan: make Upchurch an elementary school

A committee told the School Board last night the best future use for Upchurch Middle School, scheduled to be abandoned in August, is as an elementary school.

"Our first priority is to deal with the overcrowding," Assistant Superintendent and committee member Lavetta Horton said. She said even with the addition of a new elementary school near Rockfish next year, the schools are pushed to their limits.

The consensus of the committee was to solve the crowding problem first; therefore, the committee made only the one recommendation, she said, with the possibility of rethinking the problem if school population figures don't rise as fast as predicted.

"A lot of these things are based on projections

from the state," committee chairman Doie Leach said.

The committee also strongly considered making Upchurch an alternative school, Horton said.

An alternative school could mean any one of many things; a place for students with disciplinary problems, a high tech magnet school, a center for gifted and talented students.

"It could be any special segment of the population," Horton said.

The committee also recommended the School Board keep Upchurch's gym, library and cafeteria open to public functions.

"They're really pretty good assets," Leach said.

He said the state suggested the board demolish (See UPCHURCH, page 14)

Hearing on sheriff enters second week

Prosecution still presenting case

District Attorney Jean Powell began calling witnesses last Wednesday to testify in the petition to remove Alex Norton from his job as Sheriff of Hoke County.

She continues calling witnesses today in the trial heard by Superior Court Judge Donald W. Stephens.

On Wednesday, Stephens dismissed a motion by the defense to throw the case out on grounds it is unconstitutional.

The first witness called was the sheriff himself; County Attorney Duncan McFadyen, who got permission to sign the petition by unanimous vote of the county commissioners, started the questioning.

Some witnesses since then have testified directly about Norton's actions; several have testified about circumstances in Hoke County Jail, which is Norton's responsibility.

Some witnesses, responding to questions from Norton's attorney, Randy Gregory, have upheld Norton's character; none have put it down.

The petition, filed May 7 and amended May 30, accuses Norton of willful and habitual neglect and refusal to perform the duties of his office and of willful misconduct and maladministration in office.

That language is taken from North Carolina General Statutes, which specifies reasons a sheriff may be removed from office by a judge.

The petition alleges Norton:

- failed to properly administer the Hoke County Jail by failing to adequately protect adult inmates under the age of 18 from those over 18 by segregating them at night; allowing a man to be held in jail for five days before charges were levied against him; and denying attorneys access to their clients in jail;
- failed to apprehend suspects in a drive-by shooting by driving in the opposite direction from that of the car suspected in the crime;
- told a deputy to commit a felony by altering court records;
- failed to charge a jail cook with a felony after a detective told him he had seen the cook, a felon on probation, in illegal possession of a handgun;
- failed to perform his duty through the timely sale of a van seized to be sold to satisfy a Robeson County court judgement;



Norton

Powell

McFadyen

- neglected to send a deputy to investigate a breaking and entering reported to his department;
- failed to make policies that would require a prompt response to reports of criminal offenses, giving priority to those still in progress; and
- broke state law by opening a bank account with funds from a gun auction.

Sheriff Hubert Stone takes stand

Hubert Stone, sheriff of Robeson County, took the stand out of order yesterday as a witness called by the defense to shield Norton's reputation.

He stood up for Norton's character and working relations with Robeson County under questioning from Randy Gregory, Norton's lawyer.

"I think a felony is a felony. I'm not going to cover up a felony charge"—Hubert Stone, sheriff of Robeson County

But he said he would have done things differently from Norton when questioned by the District Attorney.

Stone said Norton had done an excellent job in helping set up the Hoke-Robeson Drug Task Force, a two-county law enforcement group dedicated to arresting drug dealers. He said Norton has "substantial input" on creating the task force.

The task force has increased the number of drug arrests in both counties, Stone said.

He said Norton has a good reputation for honesty and integrity.

He said he empathized with Norton's pressures: "The drug situation's gotten worse and the public demands more from law enforcement."

He said there is nothing unusual about a sheriff (Continued on page 11)



Fatal accident

A beach trip ended in tragedy midday Sunday when Bobby Wayne Norman, 41, of New London was killed in this accident at West Palmer St. and Highway 211. Norman was driving this truck home from the beach when it crossed the center line of Palmer St. and struck the mirror of an oncoming car. Highway Patrol Trooper K.R. Snead Jr. says Norman continued to the

intersection, ran the stop sign, attempted to turn left, and was struck by a Jeep Cherokee driven by Lorie Dawn Hogan of Pinehurst. Six people were injured. Snead said seatbelts helped a few of the victims and would have helped a few others.

Shooting wounds three; is turned over to FBI

Three people were wounded Wednesday evening in a shooting that occurred just north of Hoke County's border with Fort Bragg.

Sheriff's officials and ambulances were called to an address on Hobson Road near its intersection with Plank Road on the Army reservation.

Sheriff's detectives were unable to comment in detail as a probe into the

shooting was turned over to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Drug Task Force arrests Hoke man

A Hoke County man was arrested by the Hoke-Robeson Drug Task Force and charged with growing marijuana. (See CRIME, page 14)

Around Town

By Sam C. Morris

The cool weather last week didn't last long enough. Monday and Tuesday the thermometer was once again reading over 90 degrees. The humidity is now as high as it was a couple of weeks ago, so the heat doesn't seem as bad. We need rain badly, but it doesn't seem to be in the forecast.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high temperatures to be in the high 80s and low 90s. The lows for the period will be in the 60s. We could have a thunderstorm on Wednesday.

Maybe the summer weather is here to stay.

Last week I had an item in this column about the addressing of mail and how it should be addressed for you to be sure to receive it. After the item appeared I received the following post card.

Dear Mr. Morris:

Thank you for your article in *The News-Journal*. You'd be surprised at the number of people who have commented on your article.

Thanks again,

Margaret Thaggard

I am glad that people have been going to the post office to find out about the new system. If people would give everyone the correct address, then it would speed up the delivery of our mail.

While on the subject of mail, I would like to comment on something that is amazing to many people of Hoke County. That is the receiving of cards and books from organizations that you don't want to donate money to or from which you don't want to purchase cards or books. If you ever send money to one of these organizations, they must give your address to every other group that uses this (See AROUND, page 9)