

The News-Journal

The 8th issue of our 84th year

RAEFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

25 CENTS

Wednesday, June 3, 1992

Morston gets life; attorney says he'll appeal guilty verdict

A jury sentenced Kerry Morston, the 21-year-old Hoke County man convicted of murdering police detective Ed Harris, to life in prison plus 60 years, sparing him the death penalty. Morston will be eligible for parole in 50 years.

Morston's attorneys said they will appeal the guilty verdict and the sentence.

Last April, Morston went to the home of the Southern Pines narcotics detective and shot him six times while eight other men allegedly stood by. Det. Harris' wife, Judy, was also shot in the hand during the April 4, 1991 incident.

Police believe that Morston and the others killed the 45-year-old detective because his

investigations led Bernice McDougald, a suspected drug boss, to flush an ounce of cocaine down a toilet earlier the same day.

District Attorney Jean Powell expects to bring 22-year-old McDougald to trial this summer. McDougald's attorney requested a change of venue for the trial due to publicity.

Two of the men, Timothy McKayhan and Shannon McKenzie, provided the state with information in exchange for a guilty plea to lesser charges of second degree murder.

Powell may seek the death penalty in the remaining six trials, but said only "after we try (See TRIAL, page 4)



Two youths await transport to the Hoke County jail after being caught inside Upchurch School Friday morning. (See story, page 5.)

Jordan, Leach emerge victors

Runoff settled by few voters

Riley Jordan, a local physician, and James Leach, a plant supervisor, proved triumphant on Tuesday in a runoff race for Hoke County Commission.

Jordan led in three Raeford precincts, and racked up 1041 votes as some 30 percent of registered Democrats turned out for the contest.

Coming in with the second-strongest showing was James Leach with 1007 votes, with the most support in Raeford #5.

Jean Hodges and Charles Crowder garnered 855 and 796 total votes, respectively.

"I hoped that I would win," Jordan said. "I'm not going to definitely say anything yet," he said of his immediate plans for the office. The new commissioner, a physician at McCain Prison Hospital, said he will evaluate past and present activities before making a specific statement of goals.

However James Leach was quick to say that as a newly elected commissioner he does not support a tax increase.

"I'm personally fed up with taxes," he said. "Give the people a break."

But Leach expressed a more positive reaction to the elections.

"I felt good about it all day," Leach said. "I feel like the people of Hoke County have spoken and made their decision. I feel good about it."

Leach said he plans to serve all of Hoke County's 22,856 residents.

"I am for the whole of Hoke County."

And he said he thinks his election committee succeeded in relaying that message to Tuesday's voters.

"I think my committee deserves the credit for a job well done."

Leach avoided making lofty campaign promises; however, he (See ELECTION, page 4)

Schools score higher on standardized tests

In the midst of budget cutbacks and takeover threats, Hoke County Schools scored higher this year in standardized tests than in the past.

Hoke, one of the poorest counties in the state, fell behind in education standards in recent years and faces threats of a state takeover of the school system to bring the county up to state accreditation levels.

Schools Superintendent Bill Harrison says two criteria come into play in state accreditation — Minimum Skills Diagnostic Test levels and California Achievement Test levels.

"Last year we met one of the cri-

teria and not the other," Harrison said. "This year we met both criteria. That's a big improvement in the overall scheme of things."

To satisfy the criteria, students in grades three, six and eight must score above the 25th percentile to advance to the next grade level.

Also, the schools administrator writing tests in accordance with state requirements.

For compliance, tutors work with students who scored low on the standardized tests, or who were at a high risk of scoring poorly. If a student scores consistently low, then he en- (See SCORES, page 4)

County plans 12 cent tax increase

Property taxes for Hoke County citizens will go up 12 cents per hundred dollar valuation if the budget as it stands is passed. County Manager Barry Reed marked the departments of Social Services and Health for substantial increases in his 1992-1993 budget recommendation. But the largest percentage of the property tax increase will go toward education.

The proposed budget would need a 12 cent increase in property taxes, or 3.3 percent from 72 cents to 84 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.

Although the Board of Education requested \$1,930,813, it will get only \$1,553,257 — a five cent increase, or 18.8 percent, in current school expenses.

Superintendent of Schools Bill Harrison said the Board of Education requested additional amounts to offset the loss of about \$165,000 in state funding.

Social Services

Another large allocation in the budget is for the Department of Social Services in the eligibility unit.

The state recommended five new positions in the eligibility unit, but the county manager allows for four new positions.

Three of the four DSS positions are will go in the eligibility unit and Reed said the fourth would serve jointly in the eligibility and fraud units.

Also, the department will gain in Medicaid funding.

As part of the Health Department proposal, the county would hire one new social worker, with additional outside (See COUNTY, page 3)

Raeford taxpayers face increase too

City taxpayers will pay higher taxes and garbage pickup fees if the City Manager's proposed budget is passed by Raeford City Council.

Tom Phillips is recommending a two cents per hundred-dollar-valuation increase in property taxes, and an increase in monthly garbage pickup fees from six to eight dollars.

Phillips presented his budget recommendation to Council at its regular monthly

meeting Monday night, but his original plan would have required a five cent increase.

Councilmen debated at length — should they increase property taxes, increase the garbage pickup fees, or cut something from the budget?

Councilman Joe Upchurch said the upcoming year may be a good one to raise taxes.

"The County is going to have to go up

— It might be a darn good year for us to go up," he said.

"As long as I've been here," Councilman Benny McLeod said, "we haven't said, 'Go back and cut something out.'"

"Well, you're going to have to do one of two things," City Manager Phillips said. "Cut back on service or the quality of service."

"I think you're in a better position than (See CITY, page 3)

Writer joins N-J staff

Not everybody gets a year after school to kick back, but Wendy Couey did. Now the party's over. She has joined The News-Journal as staff writer.

A graduate of East Carolina University and native of Fayetteville, Couey worked as

an intern for the Greenville Daily Reflector.

She has a working knowledge of Russian (that ought to come in handy in Hoke County—Ed) and computer programming.

She replaces Jim McBee who left the paper for a job at Hoke Social Services.



Wendy Couey

Newspaper wins ad awards

The News-Journal won two advertising awards in N.C. Press Association competition last week.

The paper won third place in the state in the Best Institutional Ad category for its Happy Hobby

Harvest ad placed by Raeford United Methodist Church.

It also won third place in the Best Signature Page for a 4-H Week Page.

The awards ceremony was held Friday in Charlotte.

Around Town

by Sam C. Morris

For the past two years the temperatures each month have been above the average normal temperatures. This changed in May when a below normal temperature set a record. The old record was 63.3 and the new record is 63.2. This should cause some of the ozone-layer experts to reconsider about temperatures getting warmer all the time.

The rainfall last week and weekend was over two inches for Hoke County. This was a slow, steady rain and about all of it went into the ground. Many times we have rainfall of up to four inches and it is a hard, driving rain and most of it will run off.

As mentioned above the temperatures were cool for the past week. The forecast calls for the mercury to

rise for the remainder of the week. Wednesday and Thursday the highs will be in the high 70s and Friday and Saturday we will see highs in the 80s. The lows for the period will be in the 60s. We could have rain on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Maybe it will warm up now. As you know summer is only three weeks away. * * *

Several weeks ago I wrote in this column that Raz Autry was still looking for wheelchairs. Last week Raz received a call from a lady in Fayetteville who said she read the item in my column and would like to help.

Raz said the lady's daughter had gone to school when he was in the school system, but he couldn't recall (See AROUND, page 12)