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RAEFORD, NORTH CAROLINA

25 CENTS

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Evacuation: Jason and Eugene McKinney use a box to evacuate a litter of puppies from heavy smoke as a huge woods fire approached their home. Firemen and forest rangers stopped the fire before it reached their T.C. Jones Road home.

Wicked weather strikes twice

"I ain't ever seen nothing like that," Virginia Johnson said. She was preparing dinner Wednesday afternoon when she looked out her kitchen window and saw a wall of smoke making its way to her home.

"I was scared it'd get my house," she said, as she pointed to the scorched earth mere inches from the side of her home. "It was a miracle."

Miracles occurred in several areas of the county as winds gusting to nearly 50 miles per hour pushed unrelated woods fires to within feet of scores of homes in Rockfish, Quewhiffle and North Raeford and prompting officials to evacuate areas. That no homes burned and no one was seriously injured was testament to the dedication of volunteer firemen, forest rangers and sheriff's deputies, residents of the area said.

The fires were pushed by strong winds, but the gusts paled in comparison to what Hoke was in store for Saturday.

Freak storm

Forecasters called it a freak storm and one of the most powerful this century. Hoke residents saw its fury not in a great amount of snow as did some N.C. communities, but in high winds that broke records (see related story, page 4) as the barometer fell to 28.50 — hurricane level.

Also toppled were trees and power lines and even part of one building.

The Raeford Sears store had erected a porch on the rear of the building last week. Saturday, a gust of wind flipped the entire structure up over the building, taking down a power line.

At Bethel Presbyterian Church, wind blew over one of four columns that supported the building's roof.

Though Hoke didn't get much snow, up to an inch fell Saturday night.

Dangerous combination

Saturday's impressive weather came on the heels of Wednesday's series of fires which threatened homes in three areas of Hoke County.

Twenty-five Hoke and six Robeson, Cumberland and Moore fire units battled the fires.

Hoke County Forest Ranger Larry Moser said Wednesday's high winds and low humidity (See STORMS, page 4)



Bethel Presbyterians found this wind damage to their church from Saturday's storm. Members said it appears this column was made from a single tree. Rotten inside, it couldn't withstand 50 m.p.h. winds.



Patricia Jackson, driver of Hoke School Bus number 18, with weary children after a two-hour wait at Hardin's Store in Rockfish last Wednesday. The bus, with 30 students, was kept out of a woods fire area by sheriff's deputies.

Two years after Tom Cameron's death one accused murderer goes to trial

On March 21, 1991 Clyde Upchurch found his cousin Tom Cameron murdered and robbed near his pond in northern Hoke County. Two years and many tears later, one of the accused will finally be brought to trial.

The trial of Tyrone Williams will begin next Monday, two years and one day from when Upchurch found Cameron beaten to death.

"When I'm asked to testify at the trial, it'll bring back unpleasant memories," Upchurch said. "I was the one who found him minutes after he was killed."

The memory of that fateful March day haven't faded for the

first cousin, business partner and best friend of Cameron.

"You don't ever forget," he said. "Having been with him nearly every day for 74 years, it would be difficult to do. It will be a scar, always."

The men used to fish at two ponds on property Cameron co-owned in northern Hoke County.

Cameron drove up to the upper, smaller pond as Upchurch and a friend finished fishing at the larger lake. That was the last time Upchurch saw his cousin alive.

The two ponds are separated by a large dam, and once Cameron drove beyond it, he was out of

sight. Thinking nothing wrong, Upchurch said he went to speak with Cameron, who was scheduled to retire as president of Upchurch Milling Company on June 30.

What he saw instead burned into his memory.

"I saw the three blacks running from the scene of the crime," he said in a March 27, 1991 interview with *The News-Journal*. The trio reportedly carried fishing poles.

He said Cameron was so recently dead that minnows of an overturned bait bucket were still jumping.

"Shock and grief and a feeling of futility," were his initial reactions (See CAMERON, page 14)



Tyrone Williams, when first arrested

Around Town

By Sam C. Morris

The weather has been the topic in the newspapers and on television. A storm that hit Florida Friday and came up the east coast was the worst storm in 100 years. The storm had hurricane force winds on the coast and in the inlands it brought up to five feet of snow. The roads were closed, as well as airports and it even stopped the rail service. Over a hundred people died in this storm. The estimated costs of the damage could run into the billions.

We in Hoke County were fortunate because the snow didn't cover the highways, but the wind did leave limbs and other objects on the ground. The power lines were not down and I don't believe that television went out. The temperature did get into the teens, but it warmed up during the day.

There are still patches of snow on the north side of buildings and in shady

spots in the woods. Let's hope that it leaves soon, because it has been said that if snow hangs around it is just waiting for more snow.

The forecast calls for the temperatures to be in the high 50s and low 60s during the day Wednesday through Saturday. The lows for this period will be in the 30s. There is a chance of rain on Wednesday.

Spring comes in on Saturday, March 20.

I attended the Hoke County Strategic Planning Project Public Forum held last week at the East Hoke Middle School. As stated in last week's paper this forum was well attended. Those in attendance represented all the people of the county.

The thing that impressed me about the forum and the people was that it was a place and time for the people to be (See AROUND, page 14)