

# The News-Journal

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## Around Town



By SAM MORRIS  
Contributing Editor

The rain ended Saturday, so the entire weekend was not a washout. The temperatures are about normal for this time of year. There was frost on my windshield one morning last week. I hope that the weather will continue in this pattern.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday calls for the highs to be in the low 60s or high 50s and the lows to be in the low 40s. There is a chance of rain on Thursday and Friday. One forecaster predicted that the lows on Sunday could be in the 20s.

The election turned out like I expected. I was a little disappointed that more people didn't vote. It would be good to see 75 percent or more vote. Then people would show that they are interested in who is elected and how they are doing their jobs.

All the candidates on the ballot were qualified, but most of the voters felt that the city government is in good hands and that the financial condi-  
(See AROUND, page 11A)

## Hoke County honors veterans

By PAT ALLEN WILSON  
Staff Writer

Some came with canes, some in wheelchairs and others walked to the courthouse lawn on Main Street to pay honor to comrades in arms.

On the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the Veterans Day ceremony — "a time set aside for this nation to recognize the vanguard of freedom" — began.

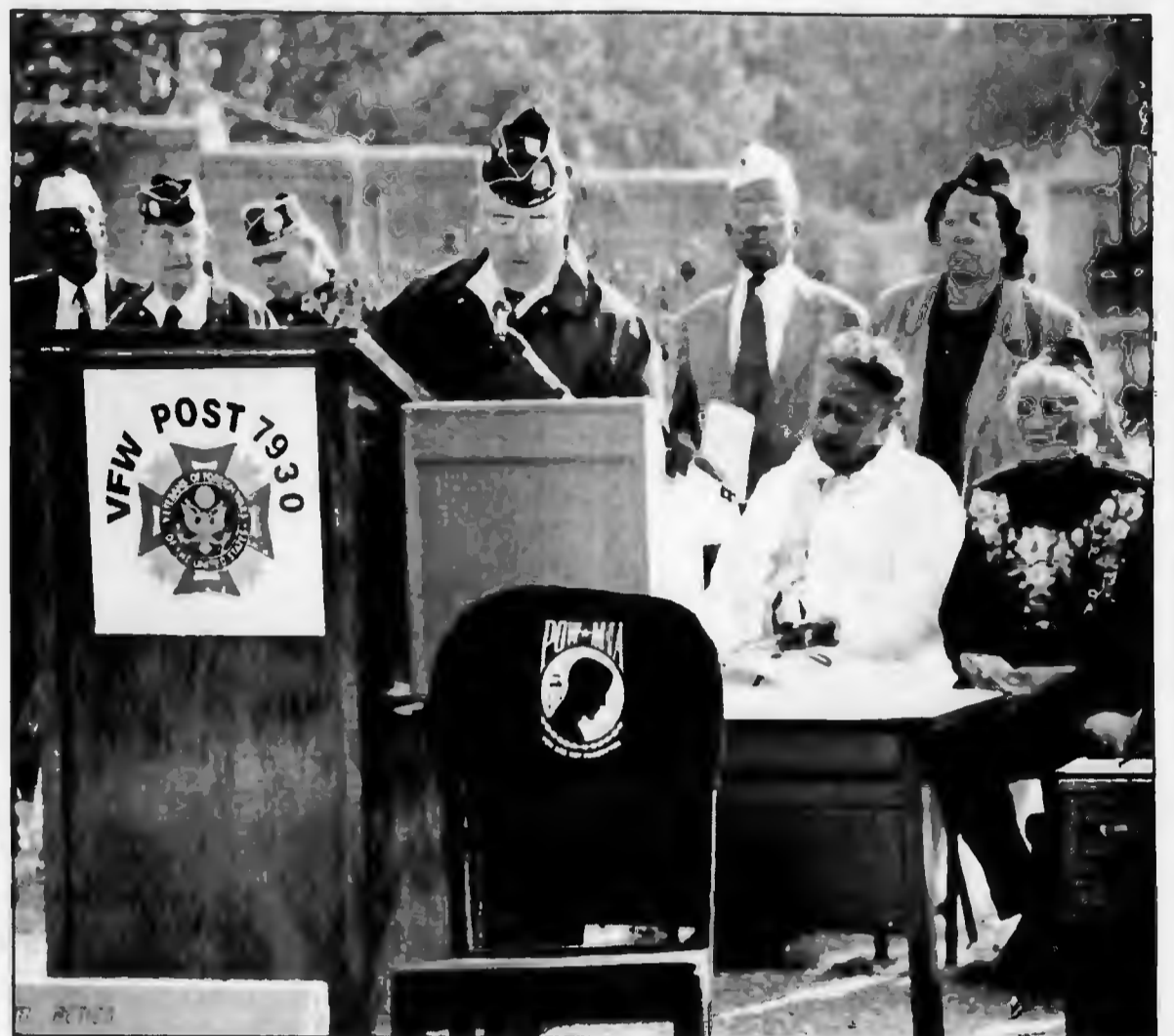
For many who attended, the sleepy country town of Raeford was transformed into foreign battlefields as they recalled the ones who didn't come back, those who could not stand to honor and be honored. And a vacant chair held a place of homage for those missing in action who are yet to be accounted for.

U.S. Army retiree Alex Schwarcbher, keynote speaker

for the ceremony, said the MIAs are missing from our lives but are in our hearts and prayers. "We will close no books, write no last chapters, reach no final conclusion until we have the fullest possible accounting for every service man and woman missing in action."

Schwarcbher, a three-tour veteran of the war in Vietnam and a combat participant in the Dominican Republic, praised fellow veterans as "unsung heroes, ordinary citizens who did their duty and gave unselfishly. Their deeds have never been chronicled."

"There are many who need us, many who seem forgotten," Schwarcbher continued. He said some veterans have lonely futures, having lost family and friends, some are homeless, and some struggle with war-related  
(See VETS, page 12A)



Pat Allen Wilson/News-Journal

A vacant chair served as a reminder that the fate of many who served during wartime is still not known. DAV Commander George Balsh is at the podium.

## Department of Social Services may lose funds

By NICOLE GABRIEL  
Staff writer

State officials say new child welfare law will make significant improvements in child protection, but if the state cuts Hoke from a list to receive state money Hoke's DSS personnel remain skeptical as to whether this legislation will really help Hoke's children.

A child protection package passed during the last legislative session made several changes to the state's child protection, foster care and adoption services.

The new laws provide additional state funding for training and additional personnel for counties who show a need for additional resources.

During a recent biennial review of Hoke County's Department of Social Services, the Child Protection Services department earned high marks, but state investigators said Hoke's foster care section remains overworked and understaffed. State investigators said Hoke's foster care worker's caseload "far exceeds" the state's recommended caseload and said Hoke needed

an additional worker.

Despite the findings, the state Department of Health and Human Services told Hoke DSS Director Bob Mercer, Hoke will not receive any state-funded positions, which leaves Mercer wondering, he said, whether this package will help or hurt the children it's supposed to serve.

"Those counties that have done really well with little resources are going to be penalized," Mercer said.

Mercer said the state's decision to decline Hoke funding for additional personnel appears to

be a way of putting money into programs that have problems while letting those counties that do well, but have little resources to fend for themselves.

"Everybody in the state of North Carolina is overworked, but you don't throw money at the people that have bad track records," Mercer said. "You make them do better."

### State's initial cut

In the wake of this newly passed legislation, the state asked each county for information that was not as comprehensive as the

biennial review and based its initial decision on that information, Jo Ann Lamm of the state's child services section said.

Despite what the state found during its biennial review, the state based its initial decision for which counties will receive the state's help under the newly passed child protection package on a few select criteria and left out a slew of other factors covered in the review, Lamm said.

"It's like comparing apples to oranges if your asking for a com-

(See DSS, page 11A)

## Schools to upgrade computers

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE  
Staff writer

At Monday night's meeting, the Hoke Board of Education unanimously approved the initial step in gaining \$1,000,000 for updating the computers throughout the school system.

With the approval of the Board, Superintendent Don

Steed, Associate Superintendent Jeff Moss and other supporters of the project can approach the county commissioners for their support. Moss said they will try to get on the commissioners' agenda for their next meeting. Assuming that the Commissioners fully support the local school board in its venture, the Board will head up to the State Depart-

ment of Public Instruction with its proposal. As with the Commissioners, Moss said he hopes the State Department will hear the Board's request in a timely manner. Hopefully, the State will respond within 30 days of the County's request, Moss said.

If all goes well, the \$1,000,000 could be in the hands of the local  
(See SCHOOL, page 11A)

## Prosecution presents case in Ferguson trial

By NICOLE GABRIEL  
Staff writer

The prosecution will continue to present evidence in the Rodriguez Ferguson murder trial throughout the rest of this week, calling on pathologists, SBI lab personnel and more of the victims' family members to give testimonies.

"I feel like we'll probably finish this week as far as our evidence," District Attorney Jean Powell said. "I'm not sure what day."

Ferguson, 20, continues to stand trial for allegedly killing Jamie Hunter, 39, Deborah Hunter, 37, Steve Locklear, 18, and Tim Powell, 20, at the Puppy Creek Game Room on New Year's Eve 1994. He is accused of shooting the Hunter's daughter who survived.

Ferguson is also accused of shooting and killing another victim — James Morrison Jr., 31, — a few hours later at the former Zodiac Lounge.

Yesterday a friend of Morrison's and an eye witness to the murder at the Zodiac Lounge finished his testimony, Powell said, as well as another eye witness and a de-



Ferguson

tective that investigated the Zodiac Lounge shooting.

Telly Stephens testified a fight broke out at

the club on Vass Road and Ferguson shot Morrison in the head.

Earlier this week Dr. Ricky Thompson, a pathologist who performed the autopsies on Morrison and Hunter, said he found bullet fragments in Morrison and he recovered a bullet from Hunter.

Thompson testified Morrison died from a gunshot wound to the left side of his head. He testified Hunter died of a gunshot wound to his head, which entered under his left eye in his cheek.

Powell said a firearms expert will testify later about the bullets.

Last week former Sheriff's Det. Bob Conerly finished his testimony concerning a sworn statement he took from Ferguson the day after the shootings.

Defense attorneys tried to  
(See FERGUSON, page 12A)



Nicole Gabriel/News-Journal

## In the playoffs

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