

The News-Journal

'If it happened, it's news to us'

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The weather over the week-end felt more like December. One day last week we had the biggest frost of the year. We also got a little rain on Saturday night and Sunday. My rain gauge registered four tenths for the two days. One place in the state had one and a half inches of rain. It is still dry and we need more rain.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Friday, calls for the highs to be in the 50s and the lows in the 30s. There isn't any rain in the forecast.

It is less than two weeks until Christmas and I can't remember the weather being this warm for so many days before Christmas.

Last week Jim Guy came by the office and he said that he was going to Hamlet to attend a funeral for someone he had known for many years. I asked him who had died. He replied, Bill Williamson.

Over the years I have received many letters from Bill when he renewed his subscription to *The News-Journal*. He (See *AROUND*, page 9A)

Davis wins go ahead to take oath

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Staff writer

The state Board of Elections voted unanimously yesterday to notify the Hoke County Board of Elections to certify Jim Davis as sheriff.

Davis will be sworn in as soon as the county issues certification.

Davis defeated incumbent Wayne Byrd in May's Democratic primary then won again in the November general election, defeating Byrd's chief of deputies, Wayne Gardner, who ran as an unaffiliated candidate.

Davis' certification was held up because 18 complaints were filed alleging he entered 12 of 13 polling places during the general election. The county board voted to certify Davis last month, but the state board told them they would have to withdraw the certification and investigate the



The local board of elections will certify Davis' election today at 4.

complaints. At an informal hearing earlier this month, the county board voted for certification, but five of the complainants filed appeals with the state board.

The complainants will have their opportunity to be heard at the state board's regular meeting on January 5. Yesterday's meeting (See *State B.O.E.*, page 12A)



Jim Davis, surrounded by reporters recently, will take office as early as late this week.

New school board members in

By KRISTIN GUTHRIE
Staff writer

At last week's Board of Education meeting, Judge Warren Pate swore in the Board's new members, Teddy Locklear, Tom Pilkington and Russell Smith. Being elected just last month, these three members will each serve on the board for a four-year term.

Ten-year board veteran, John McAllister, will again serve as the board's chairman. McAllister logs six years as chairman, now beginning his seventh term. Before being elected chairman, he spent two years as vice-chair and one year as a member. McAllister's work for the Board of Education began a decade ago, but his service to the county's schools began long before then. He claims 37 years employment with the school system, working as a teacher, principal, assistant superintendent, interim-superintendent and a variety of other leadership roles.



Tom Pilkington, Teddy Locklear and Russell Smith are sworn in at the Board of Education meeting. (Linda Richards photo)

In addition to his work on the board, the retired McAllister shares himself with several other boards and civic groups in the community. The McAllister's have four of their own children and one adopted child, all of whom all attended Hoke County schools.

Six-year board member Leland Strother was again elected vice-chair. Beginning his third term as vice-chair, Strother has two more years left as a board

member before his term expires in the year 2000.

Well established in the community, Strother owns and works diligently at Strother Land Surveying, a business in operation since 1981. He and his wife have two children, a sixth-grader at West Hoke Middle and a tenth-grader at Hoke County High School. They attend Ashley Heights Baptist Church and live in the Ashley Heights Community.

Shootings escalate tensions in Hoke

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Staff writer

A rifle from the Vietnam war era rests on the print couch in the comfortable living room of Sheriff Wayne Byrd. The sheriff went to get a haircut and left it with his wife, Frances, on Sunday afternoon.

The night before, the Byrds returned from a visit with their son in Greensboro and found 28 bullet holes in their house. Someone had fired 11 shots through the window of the front room used by the family as a com-

puter guest room.

Later that same night, someone shot through the door that leads to the campaign headquarters of Jim Davis, who defeated Byrd in the May primary, and to the office of his campaign manager, attorney Greg Thompson. And, shots were fired into the office of Thompson's brother, Dr. Mark Thompson, a dentist whose office is on Campus Avenue.

Mrs. Byrd said the shots in their home went into the area where her husband sits at the (See *SHOOTINGS*, page 11A)

Mediator seeks to ease tensions

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Staff writer

Ernie Stallworth, mediator with the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Justice Department, said he received a phone call to come to Hoke County and was told, "We need help... Tensions are high and getting higher."

Stallworth met with more than 200 residents at Leach Springs Missionary Baptist Church on Arabia Road Thursday night. Most were there to complain about the fact that the sheriff's candidate who garnered 265 votes more than his opponent in the November 3 general election was not yet sworn in.

Jim Davis' swearing in was to be December 7 but was delayed because of complaints that he violated elections laws by visiting 12 of 13 polling places on election day. Davis denied the allegations, and a preliminary hearing by the Hoke County Board of Elections dismissed the complaints on December 3. However, five of the complainants appealed to the state Board of Elections, and, according to state elections law, a candidate cannot

be certified until all appeals are heard or the 24-hour period allowed for appeals passes. In the sheriff's election, North Carolina law says there is no winner, according to Johnnie McLean, deputy director of the state BOE.

At the request of the state Attorney General's office, Sheriff Wayne Byrd, whom Davis defeated in the May primary, has stayed in office until the matter is resolved.

Stallworth said he is not playing down tensions. "We're very serious about keeping the peace," he stated.

Supporters of Davis have said his swearing in was denied because he was elected to be Hoke County's first black sheriff, a belief expressed by some at Thursday night's meeting with Stallworth.

It is the mission of the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Program to assist communities to reduce tensions and prevent and resolve conflicts based on race, color or national origin.

Stallworth said he would be talking to "a lot of people," including community leaders and office holders, and would stop (See *MEDIATOR*, page 11A)

42 Hoke children enrolled in state insurance program

FROM STAFF REPORTS

It's going to be a brighter New Year for 42 Hoke County children who have enrolled in the state's new insurance program for the children of working families.

"These children are going to get the ongoing, preventive health care they need," said Tom Vitaglione, chief of the Children and Youth Section. "That means kids who are healthy and ready to succeed in life."

"This is a good start," he added. "There are 413 Hoke County children eligible for the program, and we want to enroll every one of them. Hoke County parents who can't afford health insurance for their children should contact the Hoke County Social Services department to see if they are eligible for North Carolina Health Choice for Children."

North Carolina Health Choice for Children was launched October 1 by Governor Jim Hunt to

provide health insurance to the children of the state's working families.

North Carolina Health Choice for children is designed for working parents like contract employees; day care and nursing home workers and providers; state employees and entrepreneurs who work hard, but who can't afford private insurance. The amount of money families can earn and still qualify to participate in North Carolina Health Choice for Children depends upon the number of people in each family.

For example, a family of two can earn up to \$21,700 while a family of six can have household income up to \$44,100. Families with incomes near the maximum for their family size will pay an annual enrollment fee of \$50 for one child and \$100 for two or more children. They will also make small co-payments for services ranging from \$5 for a

doctor's visit and \$6 for prescription drugs, to \$20 for a non-emergency visit to the emergency room.

The program is comprehensive, covering well and sick child doctor's visits; hospitalization; dental care including x-rays and fillings; vision care including glasses; hearing care including hearing aids; care for children with special needs and prescriptions.

Applying for North Carolina Health Choice for Children is simple, all parents have to do is fill in a two-page application form. Your child is eligible for the program if your family meets the income test and your children have not had health insurance for six months prior to your application to the program. Children enrolled in Blue Cross/Blue Shield's Caring program those who have graduated from the Medicaid program and children (See *HEALTH*, page 12A)