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Wednesday, February 2, 2000

Townsend hangs up stethoscope

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Dr. Robert G. Townsend Jr., 70, a well-known Raeford physician, retired on February 1 after 36 years in private practice locally.

Townsend said he is leaving his practice in the capable hands of Cape Fear Valley Health Systems.

A modest man by nature, Townsend expressed regrets in retiring.

"My patients are my friends," Townsend said. "It's hard to leave them. I've always loved this small town, because I got to know the people better."

"It's been a fulfilling life to know people well and be able to treat them. I've studied a lifetime to help my patients," he added.

From emergency house calls to once delivering a baby inside a Raeford taxi on the way to the hospital and another infant born in a snowstorm, Townsend said his experiences have been enriched by helping his fellow man. He even saved the life of his own mother, Lois Townsend, when she went into congestive heart



Dr. Robert Townsend

failure some years ago.

However, health reasons prompted his ultimate decision to step down from his family practice in Raeford, which he established in 1964. Townsend had been semi-retired since September.

How did his patients react?

"I believe the Lord has saved him so many times in order for him to help other people," said his wife, Mina Townsend. "Some of his patients cried. He still has patients calling him for advice," she said. "His retirement has received a very emotional response" (See TOWNSEND, page 10A)

County denies request for meeting's minutes

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The County denied a request for notes or minutes of a meeting which did not occur, according to Linda Revels, clerk to the Board of Commissioners.

A private meeting was held between Hoke County officials on January 13 reportedly about "malfeasance of office" allegations concerning Sheriff Jim Davis, according to sources who

"This is a renegade situation and I believe a precedent set in North Carolina county government. It's absurd for these Hoke officials not to say who was at the meeting and go on the record ... you usually fight over whether it was legal or not, but not whether it happened! Was it legal? We think not. Why not let the public be the judge?"

— Amanda Martin, attorney for NCPA

wish to remain unnamed.

This January 13 meeting was referred to as "clandestine" by The North Carolina Press Association attorney Mike Tadych of Everett, Gaskins, Hancock &

Stevens in Raleigh. It was illegal, in Tadych's opinion, and in violation of the N.C. Open Meetings Law.

The News-Journal delivered (See MINUTES, page 10A)

Peterkin to run for sheriff

Former chief deputy eyes election bid in 2002

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hubert A. Peterkin, former major and chief deputy at the Hoke County Sheriff's Department, declared today he will seek office as the Sheriff of Hoke County, running in the November 2002 election. He's the first person to announce candidacy in the next Sheriff's race.

Peterkin, a life-long resident of Hoke, is employed with the

City of Fayetteville Police Department in law enforcement. He formerly served as major and chief deputy at the Hoke County Sheriff's Department, a position he held over one year before resigning on January 19 to join Fayetteville PD.

"I plan to seek election as Sheriff of Hoke County because of many people contacting me, voicing their concerns about the community," Peterkin said. "This wasn't something I planned to

do but I'm committed to start campaigning early," he said.

"My reason for running is to serve this community better. I need to be in the sheriff position from a law enforcement standpoint to make the county safe and secure," he said.

Peterkin, a Democrat, said he appreciated the support from Fayetteville's Police Chief Ron Hansen, who encouraged him to announce his candidacy, and (See PETERKIN, page 8A)

This week

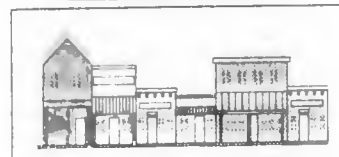
Ministers Shields and Hinkle prepare for reassignments page 5A

Local people honored during African American History Month page 1B

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

As I write this column Monday morning the sun is shining and the snow is slowly melting. The roads are in good shape and the schools of the county opened on a two-hour delay. We people in Hoke County can be thankful that the temperatures didn't get any colder Sunday, because then the rain would have frozen on the power lines and the roads. Many people of the state were without power for several days, but I haven't heard of any long time power failure in the county.

For the people who wanted to see it snow, I hope that you are now satisfied and we can all look forward to warmer weather. Let's hope that the (See AROUND, page 6A)



Long haul

It was a hard trip up but the exhilaration of the trip down was worth it. Nelson James, far left, helped youngsters Lauren Clark, Caleb Jacobs, Candace Clark and Cory Locklear take turns sliding down a steep bank at the U.S. Highway 401 Bill Herbin Overpass last week. (Photo by Pat Allen Wilson)

Candidates file as deadline nears

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The election filing deadline is approaching, eliciting an upswing in candidates filing for Hoke County Commissioners' seats. Director Caroline Shook of Hoke's Board of Elections reported eight contenders filed in the commissioners' race.

Those veteran incumbents in the running include: Commission Chairman James A. Leach and Commissioner Cleo Bratcher Jr., both Democrats. Challengers include: Robert A. "Bobby" Wright, Julius Vanner, Gene Paul Thacker and Perika K. Hardaway, all Democrats. Two other contenders include Hoke County Sheriff's Deputy Kevin Epps and Jim Knott, who both filed as a Republican. According to the Board of Elections, Epps is the first Republican, Native American to file for commis-

sioner in Hoke County's history. Two seats, currently held by Leach and Bratcher, are available.

"This filing was significant because Kevin Epps and Jim Knott are the only Republicans to file," Shook said. "If no other Republican opposes them, they won't be listed on the May ballots," she said.

"They will automatically be listed as nominees for the two seats for the November election." Shook said a lot of time was lost due to snow and holidays. She's encouraging candidates not to forget Monday, February 7, at noon is the deadline for election filing.

"We're very pleased with the turnout from those citizens who filed for public office," Shook said. "This gives voters a choice and a voice in our election process. This is the Presidential election year and that usually gener-

ates a bigger voter turnout."

Recent BOC filing

Epps, who filed Tuesday, has recently taken on additional responsibilities in the detective division at Hoke Sheriff's agency. Wright, who filed on Friday, is a large landholder and Hoke farmer for 36 years. Vanner filed on January 24; he serves as publisher of "The Weekly Record," a weekly Hoke County publication. Thacker, who filed last week, is owner of Raeford Aviation at the Raeford Airport, which he established in 1971.

Knott, retired from the military, is self-employed part-time as a beaver control trapper. He previously ran for a commissioner's seat in two other elections—once as a Democrat and another as a Republican. He also sought to be appointed Sheriff after Hoke's former sheriff (See FILING, page 7A)

Sheriff restructures to cope with cutback

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County Sheriff's Department is understaffed by eight deputies, keeping Sheriff Jim Davis busy replenishing the local law enforcement agency. This restructuring occurred after four deputy-supervisors resigned on January 19; two other deputies were fired plus two quit in December.

Capt. Thomas E. Carlton, current chief detective, was named acting chief deputy by Davis on January 30. Carlton temporarily replaced former major Hubert Peterkin who recently resigned to accept a position with The City of Fayetteville Police Department.

In his interim capacity, Carlton accepted additional responsibilities while he continues as primary criminal investigator for the sheriff, Davis said.

"The position of chief deputy will remain vacant while I'm conducting a search," Davis said. "I'm seeking a replacement."

Davis declined to comment if Carlton might ultimately be appointed as permanent chief deputy. If promoted, Carlton could achieve the rank of major.

Another supervisor at the Sheriff's Department said Davis is also planning to re-hire a former deputy, appointing him as a lieutenant to supervise road patrols. Davis declined to confirm if this is true.

"We're moving forward to make sure our operational needs are met," Davis said. "I'm also actively recruiting personnel to fill the four deputy's positions most recently vacated," he said, referring to the three supervisors who resigned in January, as well as Peterkin's position.

"We have two candidates waiting in the wings to fill two of the positions."

New, incoming law officers will be sworn-in as deputies—not necessarily supervisors, Davis said. He selected managers from within existing ranks, promoting several deputies. His staff was notified of these organizational changes in a memorandum circulated last week.

"I've promoted four deputies to fill the sergeants' positions that were vacant," Davis said. "They (began) their new assignments on January 30."

Davis declined to provide the names of those promoted. How (See RESTRUCTURES, page 8A)

Former deputy: give sheriff more deputies

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

"How quickly would you want a deputy to get to your home if someone was armed and breaking in to threaten your family?" said Richard "Rusty" Cockman, former sergeant at the Hoke County Sheriff's Department. "The answer would be: 'As fast as possible,'" he said.

"Hoke citizens aren't being given that choice because not enough deputies are hired on the

road patrols to protect property or people."

Cockman, a former road patrol supervisor, said one of the reasons he resigned was due to safety liabilities that existed. He said a crisis is most likely if county leaders don't provide more financial support to Hoke's Sheriff's Department.

Even if the eight currently vacant deputy positions are filled, Cockman said the Sheriff's agency still needs four additional (See COCKMAN, page 8A)