

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The small showers that Raeford has been having for the past few weeks turned into a heavy downpour on Saturday. There were approximately three inches of rain Saturday afternoon and Saturday night. In the yard of my house toward the old Fayetteville road it looked like a lake. Monday morning when I went by *The News-Journal* office, there was water standing under my desk. So the rain must have come in under the front door Saturday. The temperatures have also been nice for this time of year.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the low 80s or high 70s. The lows will be in the low 60s or high 50s. Rain is in the forecast for Wednesday.

Has fall come early?

Last Friday afternoon Mary Alice and I went to the media room of Hoke High School. A reception was being held for Raz Autry before the football game that night. During the half time ceremonies at the game the high school stadium was dedicated as the Raz Autry Stadium.

Attending the reception were former board of education members, the present board, school personnel and friends of Autry. A table of goodies was served to the guests.

(See *AROUND*, page 7A)

DA: no basis for sheriff's complaint

Determines from SBI probe there is no conspiracy or corruption

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

District Attorney Jean Powell this morning said an SBI investigation begun at the request of Hoke Sheriff Jim Davis showed allegations of corruption among local officials were "totally unfounded."

Powell was candid in her analysis of a two-month review she conducted on the "voluminous" SBI dossier submitted to her office in June.

"It was routine business," Powell said. "The only thing unusual in it was Sheriff Davis, himself, who spoke about allegations of corruption in high places, and

said he suspected two former deputies and a Raeford Police Department detective of misconduct," she said.

"The allegations are totally unfounded," Powell said.

In February, Davis said he had requested the SBI investigate possible public corruption and possible criminal misconduct

on the part of some of his deputies.

"There were issues raised by Sheriff Davis that when evidence was seized — in a number of drug cases — that the money may have been diverted improperly by the two former deputies and a Raeford Police Department detective," Powell said.

However, Powell said there is no credit (See *INVESTIGATION*, page 8A)



Hoke Farmer Benny Walters (left) peers at his pumpkin crop with mom Louise Love, and niece Beth Hester, a student at Flora MacDonald Academy in Red Springs. (Photo by Victoriana Summers)

Hoke's first known commercial pumpkin crop to be harvested soon

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

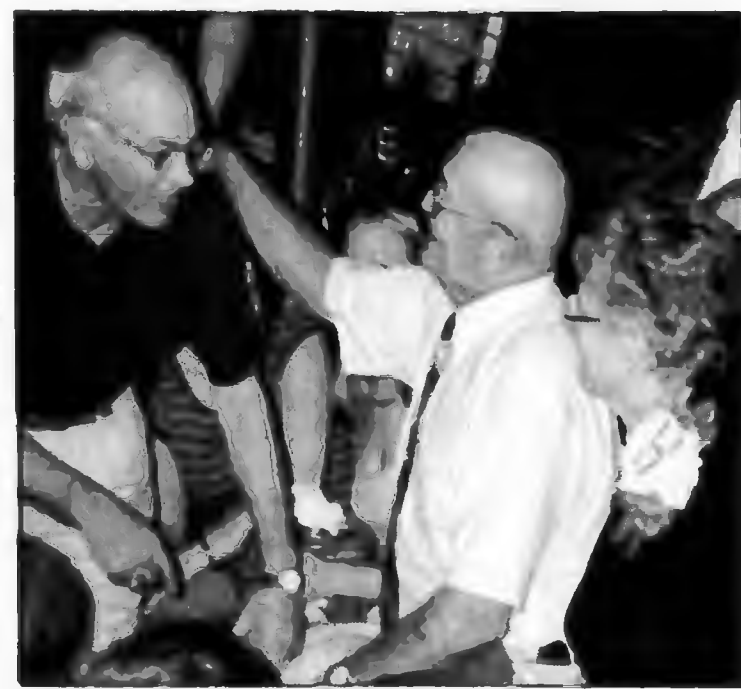
Plenty of pumpkins are growing in southwest Hoke County right now — a "phenomena" that farmer

Louise Love and son Benny Walters say they've never seen before. It all started with a bag of Big Max pumpkin seeds, a little bit of effort. The rest is likely farming history for the Sandhills, declares Walters.

"As far as we know, pumpkins have never been successfully grown commercially south of Vass, N.C.," Walters said. "Most Hoke people even go to Vass to pick up their (See *PUMPKINS*, page 7A)

Hoke High School stadium dedicated Friday to a speechless Raz Autry

By ARIEH SAMSON
Sports writer



Raz Autry, center, is greeted by well wishers Friday night.

"I am happy that God allowed me to pass your way," Raz Autry said to family, friends and the football fans who filled Hoke County High School's stadium Friday night.

"Breathtaking" is the word Autry said fit best when a white cloth was pulled away, revealing "Raz Autry Stadium" at the top of the Hoke's scoreboard during a half-time ceremony. The athletic field was officially dedicated in his honor.

The ceremony, although brief, will be remembered by Hoke High fans for many years because of Autry's bold printed name on Hoke's scoreboard — clearly visible from Bethel Road and across Hoke High's campus.

To Raz Autry, the years he spent in (See *STADIUM*, page 7A)

Silver City's delayed sewer finally funded

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A sewer system that was delayed for lack of funds is finally coming to Silver City — compliments of a state grant. Last Thursday, Hoke Commission Chairman James A. Leach and Commissioner Charles V. Daniels toured Silver City, a residential community flanking the northern fringe of Raeford. They began notifying residents of the good news, as their shoes squished through raw sewage seeping across some lawns.

"Folks in Silver City will no longer have to be burdened with septic tank problems, and worrying about their children playing in dangerous yards that are overflowing with raw sewage," Leach said. "The nightmare is over for these people," he said. "We've finally received a long-awaited grant to provide these folks with sewer."

After almost two years of waiting, Leach and the board of commissioners were notified on August 16 by the N.C. Department of Commerce that Hoke is the recipient of an \$850,000 grant to help

implement the project. According to Leach, the grant money will be used to install a modern sewer system in Silver City, eliminating the need for septic tanks dating back to the 1970s. Commissioners initiated the thrust to obtain grants for Silver City in February 1999.

"It is my pleasure to officially notify you the County of Hoke has been awarded an \$850,000 preliminary Community Development Block Grant for infrastructure," said Rick Carlisle, Secretary of the N.C. Department of Commerce. "I know (See *SILVER CITY*, page 8A)

Fleeing driver kills himself

Witnesses say man wasn't allowed medical treatment

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Authorities say a Raleigh man fleeing from police in a stolen car shot himself to death in Hoke County yesterday after a two-county high-speed chase that at one point proceeded through the Flora MacDonald Academy soccer field.

The 20-year-old man died just after 6 p.m. of a gunshot wound to the head after being stopped on South Hilltop Road near the Hoke-Scotland-Robeson counties border.

Questions have arisen over whether the man was denied medical treatment by law enforcement officers. (See *CHASE*, page 8A)



The scene on Hilltop Road where a fleeing driver died of a gunshot wound.

Judge weighs evidence in Hoke-state lawsuit on educational funding

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Superior Court Judge Howard Manning conducted a final hearing on August 18 in Raleigh, where he questioned representatives of Hoke County Schools and the State of North Carolina, opponents in a battle over educational funding. Hoke is challenging the state in the low wealth lawsuit, alleging the state is failing to meet the "basic, sound" educational needs of students in five low wealth counties.

Rob Tiller, a partner with Parker, Poe, Adams and Bernstein, the Raleigh law firm that represents Hoke, estimates Manning will reach a final ruling by October.

What's at stake?

"The state's position is reportedly that it has done all it is required to do under the North Carolina Constitution with respect to educating children," Tiller said. "If Judge Manning decides in favor of Hoke's position, the judge will ultimately decide if the state has violated the constitution, and also decide upon a remedy to resolve the situation."

Tiller praised Manning for reviewing 5,000 pages of court proceedings, including all the evidence that says Hoke County Schools doesn't have all the resources it needs.

"This case has been developed and pursued for five years," Tiller said. "From our standpoint, it's hard to sum up these issues in 25 words or less."

"I have great respect for Judge Manning, and he has an immense task ahead to review all this evidence," Tiller said.

In the Wake County courtroom hearing that lasted almost two hours, Manning heard arguments from a team of four lawyers from the State Attorney's office, defending the state's position, and from Attorney Bob Spearman, senior partner with Parker, Poe, Adams and Bernstein. Each side was given an opportunity to clarify questions Manning posed on summaries of evidence he received in June, after the trial ended last fall.

(See *LAWSUIT*, page 7A)