

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

Summer didn't last very long. We went from winter to summer last week and this week we went from summer to winter. The air conditioner was turned off Sunday and it didn't take long for the heating system to start up. Now if we could just get some rain to wash the yellow pollen off the cars and porches. It has rained all around Raeford, but we only got a drop or two of rain. Someone did say, Sunday, that it rained a little at the Easter Sunrise Service. Not enough to get you wet.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high Wednesday to be in the 60s and the lows in the 30s. Thursday the high will be in the 60s and the lows in the 40s. Friday and Saturday the highs will be in the 70s and the lows in the 50s. There could be rain early Wednesday.

Have you purchased your tickets for the annual banquet of the Raeford-Hoke Chamber of Commerce? The banquet will be held Tuesday, May 15 at the West Hoke Middle School Cafeteria. It will begin at 6:30 p.m. Come out for a good meal and you can also see who will direct the chamber for the upcoming year. New officers and directors will be installed at this meeting. Tickets can be purchased at the Chamber office (See AROUND, page 10A)

Hollingsworth picks Cleo Bratcher

Clerk chooses former commissioner to replace McLaughlin, end stalemate

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Vera Hollingsworth, a Democrat and Clerk of the Superior Court, appointed former county commissioner Cleo Bratcher Jr. on Tuesday to fill a vacancy on the Hoke Board of Commissioners. Bratcher, a proponent for better education, maintaining low taxes and economic

growth, returns to the board with 16 years as a veteran commissioner. He has also been a registered Democrat for 38 years. Bratcher is the proprietor of Elwood Barber Shop in Raeford.

He will fill the vacancy left when Commissioner L.E. McLaughlin Jr. died of cancer on Feb. 16. Bratcher always described "Mr. Mac" (McLaughlin) as a strong mentor in his memory.



Cleo Bratcher Jr. Vera Hollingsworth

Hollingsworth described her decision to appoint Bratcher as "soul wrenching" — achieved after much agonizing.

"I have made a decision that in my judgment and discretion would allow this board to move forward with a minimal amount of interruption," Hollingsworth

said. "I do not want to further polarize the board by appointing one of the two individuals (Clyde Thomas Jr. and John D. McAllister) that have been considered by the board."

Thomas, former Raeford city councilman, subsequently became the Democrat's choice for recommendation to the commissioners. He won the majority of votes at the party's March meeting. He was supported not only by party chairman Charlotte Kelly and other executive committee members and precinct officials, but by Commissioners James A. Leach and Tony Hunt, who voted for him as commissioners during a split vote more than three times.

(See BRATCHER, page 8A)

An egg just to dye for



Chelsea Bennett, a student at the Children's Developmental Center, shows off the egg she dyed last week in advance of Easter.

U.S. Justice official conducts interviews here regarding audit

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Commissioners Bobby Wright and Charles V. Daniels are optimistic that a recent audit on the Hoke Sheriff's Office conducted by the Governor's Crime Commission on behalf of the U.S. Justice Department's division of fraud will turn out in a favorable manner. Sheriff Jim Davis has accused county officials of wrongdoing with a C.O.P.s grant.

Special Agent Christina Casis Andreozzi arrived in Raeford this week to interview all county officials involved in the administering of the \$88,000 federal policing grant that was placed on hold by the state.

Daniels said it is one of the final phases before the Inspector General's office in Washington D.C. determines if there was any wrongdoing.

"I have been looking over the budget and grants that County Manager Bernice McPhatter has handled and I can find no wrongdoing," Wright said. "I am looking forward to the audit results so that all of Hoke County will know the results and the truth."

"We certainly do appreciate Mrs. Andreozzi coming down, and we thank her for working with the county and helping find out the facts."

When Sheriff Jim Davis sent a letter to the U.S. Attorney General's office and Justice Department last year, he requested an investigation into alleged misappropriation or supplantation of funds by the county that were intended for the sheriff's agency. Davis said his agency never received the monies. He said he was to receive funds to purchase four vehicles

(See US JUSTICE, page 8A)

Hoke Demo official files complaint with state party

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

After the deadline ended on Sunday to select a commissioner to replace Commissioner L.E. McLaughlin Jr., the four commissioners remain polarized at their

Analysis of gender, race shows disparities

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

More than one race not represented in proportion to the registered Democrats' population, women not holding key precinct positions entitled to them, and an elected precinct vice chairman not even a

Monday meeting on their candidates of choice — former Raeford City Councilman Clyde Thomas, Hoke's Democratic Party nominee, and retired school board chairman John D. McAllister. Some precinct officials are disputing if a number of party members who voted for a Demo-

cratic nominee were even eligible to vote, and one female precinct official has filed a written complaint with the N.C. Democratic Party about alleged party discrimination on a local level.

According to another inquiry made to Hoke's elections board on Monday, Jane Quinones, vice chair of Rockfish's Democratic precinct, is not listed as a Democrat on Hoke's voter registration. Quinones, who voted for the Democratic commissioner's election, said on Monday she is registered to vote in Cumberland County.

In spite of controversy, state statutes require Vera Hollingsworth, Hoke's clerk of Superior Court, to legally intervene

within 10 days. She appointed former commissioner Cleo Bratcher.

Eva Jackie Haddon, precinct vice chair in Raeford No. 1, is still not satisfied with the way Hoke Democratic Party's election processes have been conducted. Haddon considers part of the Democratic nominee process as invalid and any vote cast as "illegal."

"Rules are made to be followed," Haddon said. "It is up to us to abide by what the Democratic Party's Plan of Organization says we are supposed to do. You cannot bend the rules for some and then change them for others."

In Haddon's protest received on Monday, she requested that the Democratic Party file a complaint with the state party.

(See FILES COMPLAINT, page 9A)

Number of vehicle fatalities in Hoke increasing

PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Roads in Hoke County are getting more deadly. N.C. State Highway Patrol statistics show a 60 percent increase in vehicular fatalities from 1999 to 2000 with five fatalities in 1998, five in 1999

and eight in 2000. The 2000 statistics do not include a fatality which occurred in Raeford city limits.

In 2001, less than four months into the year, six fatalities have already occurred in the county.

U.S. Highway 401 remains the leader in the top five collision roads, according to data collected by the State Highway Patrol's Troop H, District VI, which covers Hoke County. In 2000, Highway 401 had 108 wrecks, 66 were reported on N.C. Highway 211, with 35 on Rockfish Road, 21 on Arabia Road, and 16 on Old Maxton Road.

Patrols were stepped up on the top five collision roads over the past year, according to Sgt. R.D. Jacobs, and four of the five that were targeted had reductions in wreck rates. Highway 401 remains problematic, he said.

Another problem area is Rockfish Road in the Davis Bridge/Rockfish roads area. "Traffic has

County seeks solution to trash pickup inequities

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

It was back to basics at Monday night's commissioners' meeting as the board discussed household trash solutions, renewed the Hoke-Raeford Humane Society's contract to operate the county's animal shelter, and accepted a final bid on vehicles for the Hoke Sheriff's Office.

County Manager Bernice McPhatter presented commissioners with a renewal contract to officially support director Kim Shelton of the local humane society. The contract that takes effect July 2001 was unanimously approved by

commissioners. It endorses Shelton's continued operation of the county's animal shelter off Doc Brown Road next to the solid waste transfer station.

Shelton told commissioners she was toying the line at \$32,500 for all the expenses associated with the shelter. Shelton, who donates her own time, said she prefers to utilize all the resources provided for promoting a successful adoption program for the animals, and meeting other state requirements.

"Is that enough?" Commissioner James A. Leach said of her budget request. I have been out there, and it looks good out

(See TRASH, page 8A)

Hoke Roads with the most wrecks



(See FATALITIES, page 8A)