

The News-Journal

if it happened, it's news to us

No. 15 Vol. 94

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Wednesday, July 11, 2001

On vacation?
Hoke's top stories
are on the web
www.thenews-journal.com

This week



Hounds, people
gather for
Fourth of July
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VFW Post 10
Auxiliary officers
are elected
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Man is assaulted
in his home
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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The weather has cooled down some, but the humidity makes it feel hotter. Sunday morning as Mary Alice and I sat in church, I looked at the windows in the church and it was dark outside. Then you could hear some thunder. As we left the church about 12 o'clock the bottom dropped out. I got soaked when I went for the car and then picked up Mary Alice who was under the patio. My rain gauge registered just under a half-inch of rain. It is cloudy again on Monday morning as I write this column.

The forecast for the remainder of the week, Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the highs to be in the 90s and the lows in the 70s for the entire period. There isn't any rain predicted during this time.

How did you spend the Fourth? As I wrote last week, Mary Alice and I went down to Raz's peach orchard and had peach ice cream. It always amazes me that there is a breeze under the trees at the shed. We ran into many people who had the same idea. There were many subjects discussed by the group while they enjoyed the ice cream.

There weren't any peaches, but some people were buying some vegetables. Maybe a few peaches will be for sale over the weekend. Someone told me Monday morning that he

(See AROUND, page 8A)

Commissioner to request grant spending investigation Sheriff Davis seeks resignations

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

County Commissioner Charles V. Daniels announced on Monday he plans to request the board of commissioners ask Hoke DA Kristy McMillan Newton and the SBI to conduct a criminal inquiry and "full audit" into the alleged misuse of federal grant monies for the Hoke Sheriff's Office. He also called for the board to consider disciplinary actions against County Manager Bernice McPhatter in her financial role as the administrator of the reported mismanagement of \$93,000.

"It is not true Mrs. McPhatter took certain steps to make sure the county properly handled grants as she assured other news media last week," Daniels said. "Contrary to what she said, we have had a grant writer for several years and hired a contract grant writer in May of 2000, but that was done before anything ever came up about problems with misappropriation in a grant." In response to other printed statements attributed to McPhatter, Daniels said, "Commissioners L.E. McLaughlin was the one who insisted we hire a purchas-

ing agent to save the county money. Shirley Rush was promoted to finance director after the spending occurred with the sheriff's grant, and long before we realized there was any problem."

Daniels' call for an investigation coincided with a separate criticism leveled at McPhatter by Sheriff Jim Davis. On Friday, Davis alleged McPhatter had committed unethical violations of her oath, and misappropriation of more than \$93,000 in federal grant funds — an amount supported by findings of the U.S. Inspector General's office.

In a six-page letter sent to Commission Chairman Cleo Bratcher Jr., brother of McPhatter, Davis demanded McPhatter's resignation. Davis said he will be requesting assistance from the U.S. Government Accounting Office in order for federal officials to audit other federal grant programs in Hoke that were supervised by McPhatter.

"For more than a year now, the citizens of this community have been deceived, lied to, and the integrity of our county has been compromised by our county manager, Mrs. Bernice McPhatter, county attorney Neil

Yarborough and other current and former public officials," Davis said. "There were attempts made to deliberately undermine the integrity of the Hoke Sheriff's Office, restrict law enforcement services to the community and cause me personal harm in the process. All of these efforts are alarming."

Daniels said, "if Bernice McPhatter is wrong, it should be known. If Sheriff Jim Davis is wrong in his allegations about her, the citizens should be told. If the county commissioners are wrong, the voters should know."

"We want the facts. This is the only way we can take the cloud off Hoke's government."

Davis said Hoke's financial condition was a nationally reported disgrace. Hoke's grant mis-spending and the required return of misused funds for a community policy grant was publicized in the national newspaper *U.S. Today* in regional news events.

McPhatter was serving in a dual capacity as Hoke's finance officer and as county manager until July 1, 2000 during the period of time questions later arose in January 2001 about one federal C.O.P.S. grant and use of another state E-911 wireless revenue fund. Daniels said she did not inform the board about pending state inquiries on either the grant or wireless monies.

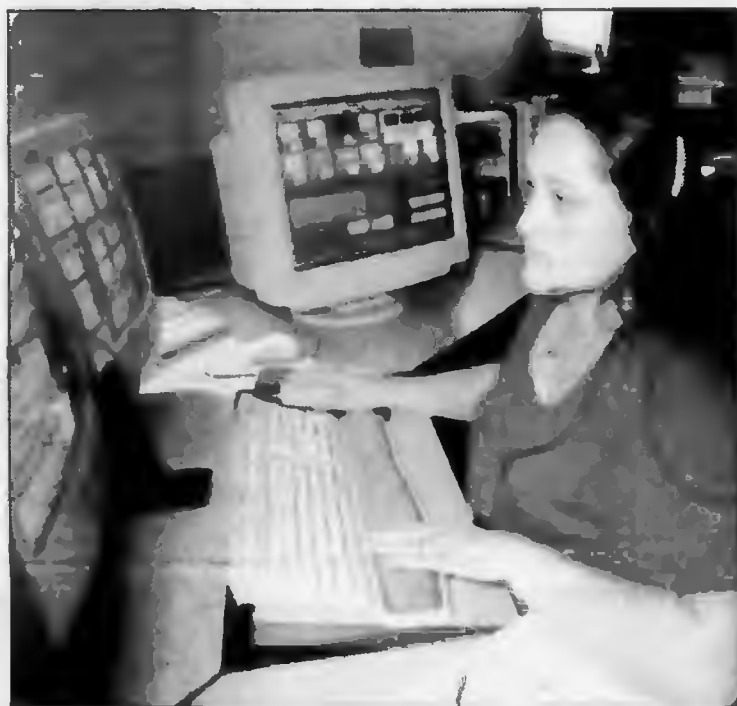
(See GRANT, page 5A)

E-911 cutbacks may weaken response calls

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The bank of computers in the E-911 command post seldom remain silent as 1.5 emergency and administrative calls per minute bombard five telephone lines operated by only two 911 communicators, said Ron Fairbanks, communications supervisor for E-911. In spite of a high volume of emergency calls, Fairbanks said the county chopped the 911 communications' budget down to \$258,545

(See CUTBACKS, page 7A)



E-911 telecommunicators Nikki Jenkins react to emergency calls in the Hoke communications command center.

New chief detective takes helm in Hoke Deputy turnover diminishes

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Sheriff Jim Davis announced last week he has hired a chief of detective to command his investigative division. Holding the rank of captain, Freddy Ludwig Johnson served as a former captain in the Cumberland County

Sheriff's office prior to being recruited in Hoke.

"Captain Johnson brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to his new position," Davis said. "We expect great things to happen now that we have fully staffed our management team."

Major Thomas Carlton has served as chief detective and sec-

ond in command since his promotion on June 14, 2000 until July 1, 2001 when Johnson accepted the post. Carlton retained both positions initially as interim chief deputy and as captain and chief of detectives. After former chief deputy Hubert Peterkin resigned on January 19, 2000 and accepted a position with the Fayetteville Police Department, Davis interviewed for one year to find an experienced deputy to step into the responsibilities.

"We are very fortunate to have Captain Johnson come on board," Carlton said. "He will be a tremendous plus to us, and investigate all the major crimes."

"I knew of his background before. He is highly qualified and brings experience and knowledge to our office."

Carlton said top priorities for Johnson will be solving the Britany Locklear murder case, and the disappearance of Troy Lee Jacobs. Johnson will also be assigned to focus on four other outstanding murder cases to be solved that include James

(See CHIEF DETECTIVE, page 5A)

County moves suspect expenses from E-911 budget Money transferred

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

While Hoke County officials await a meeting this week with Richard Taylor, administrator of the N.C. E-911 Wireless Board, to answer questions about possible irregularities in almost \$50,000 of items already spent from the E-911 wireless fund, questions have surfaced about other expenditures in the regular 911 fund. The state currently audits only 911 wireless funds, but legislation is pending that may call for future audits on 911 funds as well.

In order to eliminate any further doubts that funds may have been misappropriated, Hoke finance director Shirley Rush said the county reversed a substantial amount of expenditures at the end of June that were contained in the E-911 account. She was uncertain of the total

(See BUDGET, page 5A)

Incumbents, another file for town offices

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
EDITOR

All the incumbents, joined by another Raeford resident, have filed for the city offices that will be available at the end of the year.

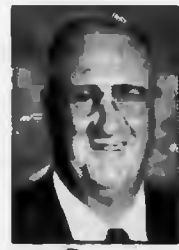
Mayor Bob Gentry filed for reelection yesterday, and city councilmen Benny McLeod and Eddie McNeill filed for reelection for their seats on Monday.

Filing opened at noon Friday and Patterson Avenue resident Pete Camp was the first to pay his \$5 to run for a council seat.

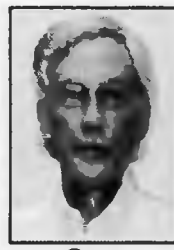
Although the race is non-partisan, Camp is an outspoken Libertarian. He is 53 and works as a loan officer.

"I believe that local government is the level of government closest to the people and should be small in size, be efficient and accessible and responsive to the people it serves," Camp said. "Raeford needs

(See CITY FILING, page 5A)



Gentry



Camp



McLeod



McNeill

3 charged with beating, robbing elderly woman

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
EDITOR

Three Ashley Heights residents have been charged by the Hoke County Sheriff's Office with the assault and burglary of an elderly woman of the same northwest Hoke community.

Marc C. Farnham, 21, Reservation Road; Sarah A. Hines, 18, Copperas Drive; and Richard G. Everington, 20, Reservation Road; are all in the Hoke County Detention Facility, according to Sheriff Jim Davis.

The victim was 79-year-old Bertha Boshier, a resident of Strother Road, the sheriff said.

"Mrs. Boshier was brutally assaulted with a crowbar during the burglary but was able to call 9-

1-1 for help," Davis said. The call was made at 4:12 a.m. Monday morning.

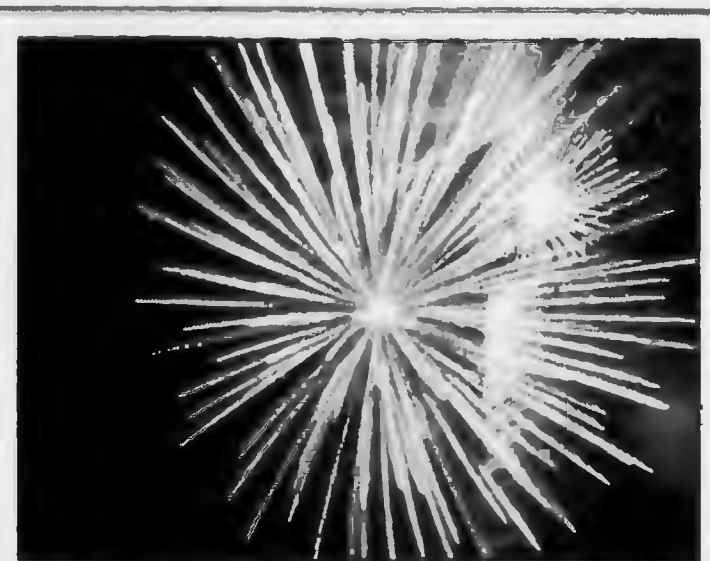
"Deputy sheriffs on duty shortly thereafter arrested three suspects in connection with the incident at a nearby trailer and hiding in the bushes," Davis said, adding that deputies also recovered most of the items taken during the break-in.

Boshier was taken to FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital in Pinehurst, where her injuries were treated. She was released.

Farnham is charged with first degree burglary, assault with a deadly weapon inflicting injury and possession of stolen property. He was placed in jail under a \$75,000 secured bond.

Hines, who shares an address with Farnham, is

(See ASSAULT, page 5A)



A colorful, glorious Fourth

The viewing field at Lafayette Ford on Highway 401 By-Pass was filled to capacity, and viewers of the company's annual fireworks show overflowed into Burlington Park, the Upchurch School parking lot and onto the road sides. Fort Bragg's 82nd Airborne skydivers, beneath red white and blue chutes, jumped into the scene prior to the fireworks display.