

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

No. 49 Vol. 94

50 cents

Wednesday, March 6, 2002

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

This week



Former sheriff Alex Norton dies page 5A

City tables request from County page 6A

Hoke wrestlers place in tournament page 7A

Our readers write page 4A

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Around Town



By SAM C. MORRIS
Contributing Editor

The weather still can't make up its mind. One day it will be hot and then it will turn cold. We haven't had any extremely cold weather, but the change makes it feel more than the thermometer registers. We did get some much needed rain that helped, but it is still dry. My gauge registered about 1/2 inches.

The forecast for the remainder of the week Wednesday through Saturday, calls for the high Wednesday to be in the 60s and the low in the 30s. Thursday and Friday the highs will be in the 60s and the lows in the 40s. Saturday the high could reach 70 degrees and the lows in the 40s or 50s. There is no rain in the forecast.

Last week I had an item about a mistake in my bank statement. When I wrote this column last week, I hadn't heard anything from the bank. When I didn't receive a call, I called again and asked to speak to the manager. This time in a very polite way the man listened to me and then got all the facts. He said that I would get an answer. In a few minutes I received a call that put everything in order.

To get anything done or corrected, you only have to reach the right person. It isn't (See AROUND, page 5A)

Tyler's sudden death stuns region

Hoke Schools superintendent beloved

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Education was not a career to Mitch Tyler, Hoke County School superintendent, it was a way of life that he balanced with his commitment to his family, said friend and colleague Allen Strickland in tribute to the life of the energetic Tyler, who died on Saturday.

"Both were so important to him,"

Strickland said. "It is devastating that we have lost him. He was a man of high stature who cared for this community."

"His goal was always to be a superintendent. His love was to also come back and work in the area where he had some of his roots



in Shannon," he said.

"Mitch Tyler fulfilled all of his goals and helped with the dreams of many students."

Thousands of mourners overflowed the church where Tyler served as assistant minister, deacon, pianist and Sunday school teacher, paying tribute to him during memorial services on Monday night and Tuesday afternoon at Shannon Assembly of God. Hoke's superintendent since July 2000, and former teacher/supervisor in Cumberland and Robeson counties, Tyler was laid to rest in the church's cemetery.

"There is nobody left in Pembroke."

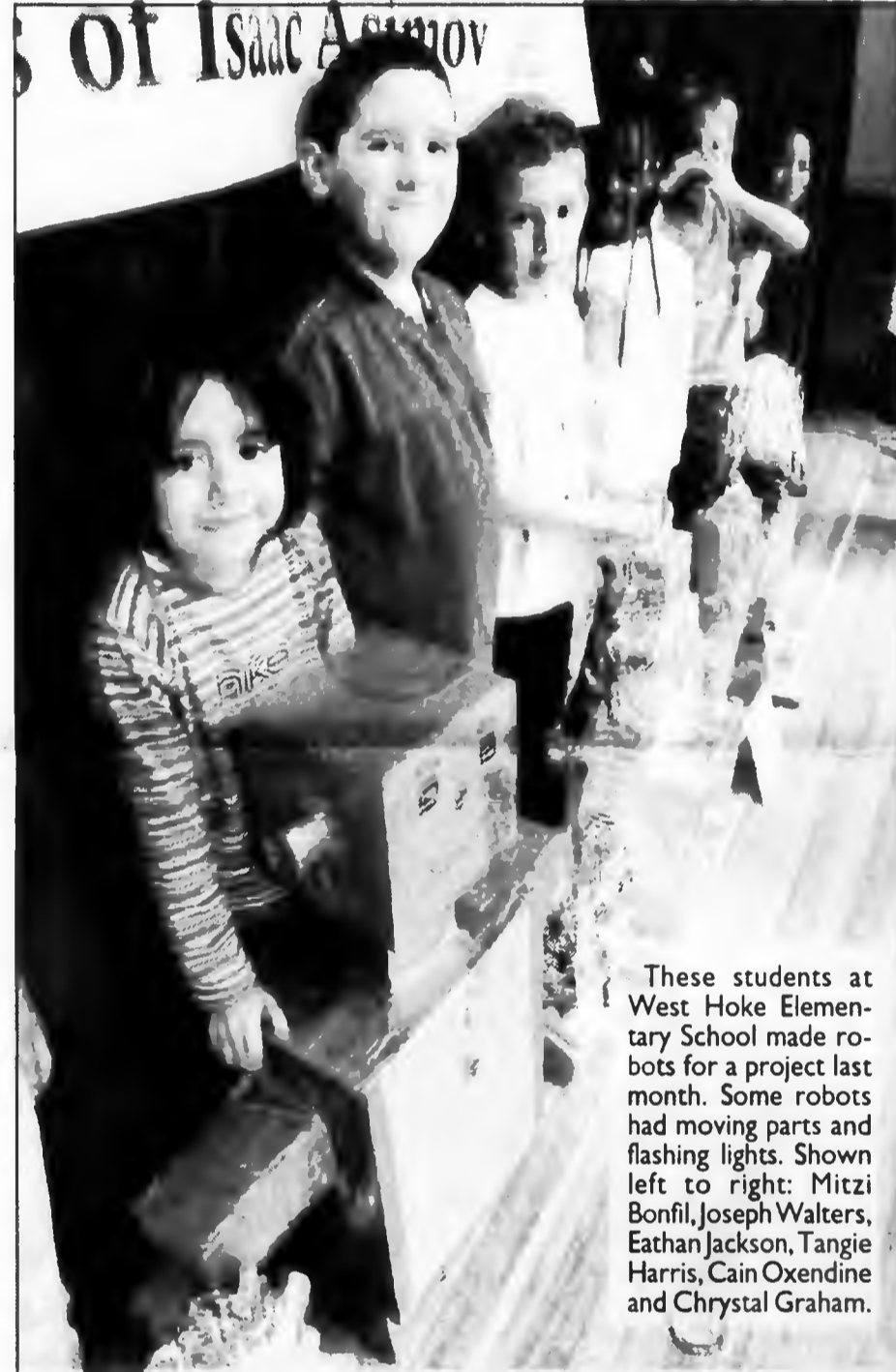
said one mourner who said everybody left town to attend the wake and funeral of the respected educator.

Tyler collapsed on Saturday morning of an apparent heart attack while in the company of his son Brent, a 15-year-old student at Hoke High. They were running their dogs at The Raeford Hunt Club located on Doc Brown Road.

"There appeared to be no warning — he just collapsed," a colleague said. "His son turned around and noticed his father's dog was not on the leash, which seemed odd. His son rushed back, spotting Tyler lying face-down on the ground."

(See TYLER MOURNED, page 10A)

Robot Makers



These students at West Hoke Elementary School made robots for a project last month. Some robots had moving parts and flashing lights. Shown left to right: Mitzi Bonfil, Joseph Walters, Eathan Jackson, Tangie Harris, Cain Oxendine and Chrystal Graham.



More than a thousand gathered at Shannon Assembly of God for Tyler's funeral Tuesday

Strickland named interim

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A somber Hoke Board of Education appeared overwhelmed on Monday night, facing what some consider the "impossible" challenge of replacing Mitch Tyler, superintendent of Hoke Schools.

Saddened by Tyler's death two days earlier, the school board unanimously voted to name assistant school superintendent Allen Strickland as interim super-

intendent. The board mourned the loss of Tyler in prayer, keeping the emergency meeting brief. They continued on directly to Tyler's memorial service, which was held at the Shannon Assembly of God.

(See INTERIM, Page 10A)



Allen Strickland

State demands 'corrective' action after county's audit

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

State auditors wrote Hoke officials in February scolding them for being seven months late in submitting the county's annual audit, and for incorrectly reporting its reserve fund balance.

Commission Chairman Tony Hunt received the letter Feb. 19 concerning the audit for Hoke's fiscal year ending June

30, 2001.

Hoke must take "corrective" action in numerous problem areas, but is still in satisfactory financial shape, said Tom Romocki, assistant director of the fiscal management section.

"A report received by the governing body (commissioners) seven months after year-end identifies financial and operational problems after it is too late for the board to take any effective action,"

(See AUDIT, page 8A)

Filing ends, the race is on for local May primaries

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A whole lot of hand-shakin' was going on during the two-week election filing period in Hoke as candidates maneuvered

for state and local positions. Filing ended last Friday with 20 candidates signed up to run in local elections. There will be Democratic and Republican primaries scheduled only for the sheriff's race, said Carolina Shook, supervisor of the Board

of Elections.

"I hope the next time we will have more candidates file for each party so we can have representation in the primary from both parties for every position," Shook said. "It has been an exciting two weeks,

and we have kept really busy with processing paperwork and filings."

The last person to file for office on Friday prior to the noon deadline was Hoke cattle rancher-farmer William "Bill" Cameron. He was preceded by two fellow Democrats, Raeford attorney Harry Southerland and incumbent Commission Chairman Tony Hunt, both filing last Thursday for commissioner. One Republican, real estate broker Buddy Blue, also entered the commissioners' race on Thursday.

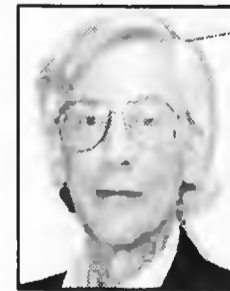
Though there are 10 candidates for commissioner, only two are Republicans, so there will not be a Republican primary for the commissioners' race. Since three seats are available, Blue and Pete Hathaway, a retired N.C. Probation officer who previously filed, will automatically be placed on the November ballot. The candidates who filed in the last week:

Hunt

Hunt, 39, was appointed as chairman in December after previously serving as vice chairman for two years. He is seeking reelection for his second term.

A Native American, Hunt is a member of the N.C. Health and Human Service Board and the Sandhills Mental Health Board. As pastor of Galilee Baptist Church in Red Springs, Hunt has served as a full-time minister in Hoke for the past 15 years. He also served in the U.S. Army for eight years.

(See ELECTION, page 8A)



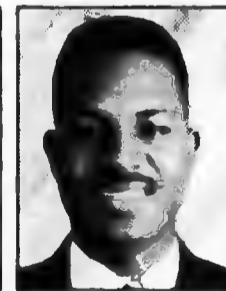
Pete Camp



Tony Hunt



Charles Daniels



Harry Southerland



Cleo Bratcher



Pete Hathaway

Scholarship established for twins of deceased Raeford police officer

An education scholarship has been created for Holly and Megan Stauffer, six-year-old twin daughters of Raeford Police Sgt. Clifford Stauffer Jr., who died in a vehicle accident February 4.

The News-Journal and Dickson Press began the scholarship fund with a contribution of \$500. Stauffer's widow, Susan, formerly worked as an advertising representative for The News-Journal.

"We're starting this fund to not only honor the memory of Cliff, but also to make sure Holly and Megan will be

able to have the education he would have wanted them to have," said publisher Robert Dickson. "We want to help Susan, our friend and former colleague, with the formidable task of educating her twins. We hope the community will join with us in this effort."

The Stauffer girls are students at McLaughlin Elementary School.

Donations may be made to: Holly and Megan Stauffer Scholarship Fund, c/o The Fidelity Bank, P.O. Box 416, Raeford, NC 28376. Donations will be placed in an interest-bearing account.



Bill Cameron



Jean Powell



Freddie McPhaul



Buddy Blue