



A Cumberland County Arson Task officer surveys the scene of a barn fire where a registered stallion died.

Flames take life of registered stallion

Fire believed to have been deliberately set

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

The person who set fire to a barn this weekend had to have known there was a horse in one of the stalls, according to the animal's owner. "Skip probably thought he was going to be fed. Whenever people come around, he nickers and talks," Beth Goerz said in the present tense — as if the registered quarterhorse was still alive.

Skip's charred body was partially hidden by a piece of tin as an investigator with the Cumberland County Arson Task Force checked out the scene.

Beth's husband, Keith, drove by the barn, which is about a quarter mile from their home off Calloway Road, near midnight Saturday. He saw a familiar car at the barn but did not stop. Later, he saw flames from his house but thought a neighbor was burning trash. Now he is sorry he did not check out the fire, thinking he might have saved Skip.

The following morning Mr. Goerz, a soldier, leaving for a temporary assignment in Florida, drove by the barn shortly before 6 a.m. and saw that the barn had been virtually destroyed with flames licking upward from burning timber. He did not know until full daylight that Skip's body was under a piece of tin that was once the roof.

"As soon as I saw it, I knew he

burned it," Mr. Goerz said of the man they suspect torched the barn. "We knew something was going to happen."

The barn, valued at \$10,000, did not belong to the Goerz couple, but was owned by a man in Spring Lake who owns an additional 16 acres at the site. He said he was approached by a man who asked about buying the barn. When the barn's owner refused, the man threatened to "get even" and said he "would make life hard" for him.

The Goerz couple believes the man who made the threats got his revenge by setting fire to the barn.

Mrs. Goerz points out that there was no electrical power in the barn, which held two horse stalls and two beds. She also said a "livable" apartment was in the building.

"It wasn't a junk horse," said the friend who sold Skip to Beth Goerz in exchange for the furrier services she provides. Skip, whose registered name is "Skip a Little Magic," was 20 years old and was used for breeding. "He was dark red and big and beautiful and he was bred for racing," said the former owner. She explained that, although Beth had owned the horse for just a short time, she had taken care of him for years.

Skip was valued at \$5,000. Said Mrs. Goerz, "He was the calmest stallion I ever had."

Mrs. Goerz is an animal cruelty investigator in Hoke County. "It is ironic this happened to an animal cruelty investigator," said her friend.

Pinchill Volunteer Fire Dept. Chief Billy Williams called the Cumberland County Arson Task Force to look into the fire since Hoke County Fire Marshal Al Schwarzbier was out of town. The responding investigator took a report but explained he could not investigate because it was not in his jurisdiction unless he was called in. He indicated his willingness to help.

Once an investigation into the fire by the Hoke County Sheriff's Office is completed, Skip will be buried in the field where her mares run. Mrs. Goerz said. The couple owns seven horses and expressed concern about the welfare of those animals. One is valued at \$25,000, she pointed out.

Mrs. Goerz thinks whoever set the fire might brag about it. Anyone who might have information is asked to call the Hoke County Sheriff's Office at 875-5111.

Rekindled

Sunday afternoon shortly after noon, sparks from the barn fire ignited nearby woods, and firefighters were called in to extinguish the flames whipped by high winds. A plow from N.C. Forestry Service plowed a line around the fire to contain it.

Hayes pays tribute on House floor to Tyler

WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Robin Hayes (Republican, 8th District) spoke on the floor of the U.S. House last Thursday to pay tribute to the Hoke County Superintendent of Schools Mitch Tyler who passed away February 2. Here is that tribute:

"I rise to today to join Hoke County, North Carolina in mourning the loss of one of our most respected citizens, Superintendent of Schools Mitch Tyler.

"At the age of 46, Mitch was taken from us far too early, and we will feel the loss to our community for years to come. Mitch had been Superintendent for less than two years, but his more than 20 years in education - from the state and university levels to Hoke and Cumberland counties - made him a well-known, trusted figure and a respected role model.

"Mitch, a Robeson County native, started his career in Hoke County. He was a teacher or administrator at West Hoke Elementary School, J.W. McLaughlin Elementary School and the Turlington School. From 1989 to 1992, he was principal of Hoke County High School. He also worked as a



Mitch Tyler



Congressman Robin Hayes

coordinator of Hoke County's Indian Education Program, a senior assistant to state Superintendent Mike Ward and a director at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, where he was a liaison to region schools.

"He was a tireless and selfless advocate for children, and an enthusiastic consensus-builder, encouraging camaraderie and teamwork among teachers and staff. They knew they could trust his word and that he would do things right.

"Mitch was also a man of faith

who served as assistant pastor and Sunday school teacher at Shannon Assembly of God.

Today we mourn the loss of Mitch Tyler, a man of great character, and a leader who always strived to do what was best for children. Barbara and I join the Hoke County community in prayer for Mitch's wife and two teenage children as they grieve the loss of husband and father, yet we celebrate the life of one who lived so well. Our thoughts and prayers are with you."

Hoke TeC to survey community technology

The Hoke County Technology Consortium (Hoke TeC) has announced a plan to survey and assess community businesses, agencies, organizations, and government as part of the ongoing initiative to link Hoke County residents and citizens to a better future. The underlying goals are to increase opportunities for lifelong learning, enhance economic development, and improve the overall quality of life for residents by employing Internet access and digital technologies to solve community problems.

The local initiative is part of the statewide e-NC Initiative of the Rural Internet Access Authority that has

similar goals and objectives.

Carolyn Olivarez, local Technology Champion said, "This survey/assessment process project will help us have a clear sense of the current level of electronic technology capacity we have in our community. We should not rely only on information assembled at the state level, but rather on our own research and information gathered here."

Olivarez continued, "As we plan for the future, we will have to know where we are and where the people want to go so that we can prepare a technology plan and vision representative of our community. We invite and encourage the participation of

businesses, industry, agencies, and government in these efforts."

Hoke TeC will be assessing a sample number of the more than 400 businesses and agencies in the county over the next month. The initially identified sample is representing roughly 10 percent of those entities. This process will be carried out as part of a joint initiative of the Hoke TeC Consortium, SchoolLink, and Fayetteville Technical Community College.

Interested agencies and organizations may contact Carolyn Olivarez at 910-875-4106; Donna Sullivan at 910-904-6536 ext.3; or Christina Davis-McCoy at 910-904-0312 for more information.

Rabies clinics

North Carolina requires that all dogs and cats more than four months old be vaccinated against rabies.

Several low-cost rabies vaccination clinics have been set in Hoke County:

• Saturday, March 16, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Raeford Health Dept;

• March 18, 19, 20 and 22, Raeford Animal Clinic;

• Saturday, April 20, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., Rockfish Fire Dept.

The cost is \$6 per animal. Dr. Russell J. Tate, veterinarian, will administer the vaccine.

Calloway Tract to be burned

The Calloway Tract will be blazing in the near future. A controlled burn is scheduled sometime between March 14 and April 26 — weather permitting.

The 2-500 acre Calloway Tract was recently bought by the N.C. Dept. of Transportation and donated to The Nature Conservancy, headquartered in Southern Pines. Longleaf pines cover the acreage, which was bought to provide a habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

The tract is located about five miles northwest of Raeford and ranges from N.C. Highway 211 West to the Fort Bragg reservation.

The burn is being done to "maintain natural communities on the property," according to a notice issued by The Nature Conservancy.

If anyone has questions about the prescribed burn, they may contact Terry Severson at (910) 246-0300.

A slight correction

The Rev. Rich Vaughan asked that we point out that Lenten Luncheons will be held each Wednesday through Mar. 27 at the First Baptist Church at noon. The cost is \$5.

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