

The News-Journal

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50¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, September 1, 2004

Gaston spawns tornados, drops heavy rain

No one injured, but damage reported as tornados strike opposite ends of county

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Remnants of Tropical Storm Gaston ripped into Hoke County Sunday afternoon, spawning at least two tornados. Although damage was reported from

at least four homeowners on Philippi Church Road, and more near Army, Aberdeen, and Calloway roads, no one was injured. The sudden twisters—coupled by driving rain—left a wake of uprooted trees and debris, according to witnesses.

Warning of the forming tornados was immediate, but without much advance notice possible, according to Mike Strickler, intern meteorologist at the National Weather Service in Raleigh.

"The Doppler radar at the National Weather Service in Raleigh picked up the

presence of tornados in Hoke, and our office issued a tornado warning at 3:22 p.m. Sunday over TV and radio for Hoke residents," Strickler said. "We reported tornados in the center of the county."

"There were several spiral bands from Gaston that caused the tornados.

"Hoke received the brunt of the storm because of these spiral bands wrapped around the storm. They spawned the tunnel clouds."

Strickler said a citizen also called in to report spotting the tornado near Pit- (See *STORM DAMAGE*, page 4A)

Clockwise from right: Roberto Viera's Calloway Road home is littered with downed trees; Viera shows a twisted trunk of a large pine tree in his side yard; a doppler radar image showing the center of the storm passing directly over Raeford at 3:30 a.m. Monday; The tornado forms inside a wall of rain, heading toward McCain.



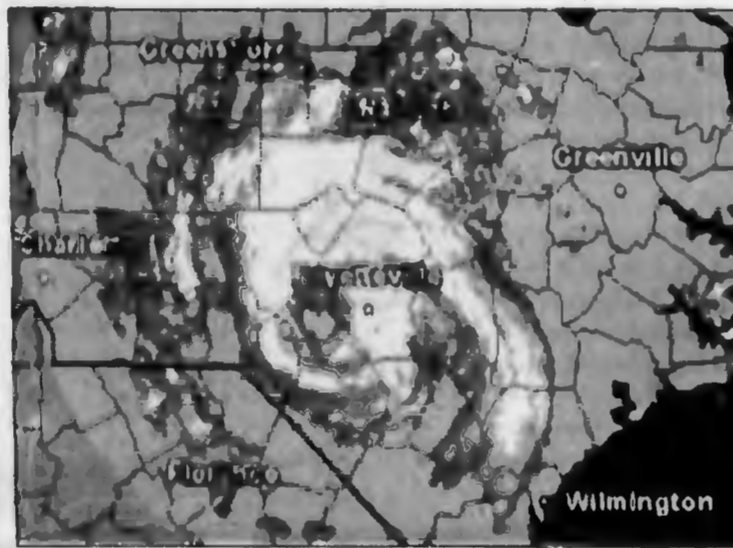
Photo by Cassie Blackard



Photo by Cassie Blackard



Photo by Ron Fairbanks, Skywarn



This Week



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Hoke's top stories are on the web; send us stories, subscribe

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Teen's murder confession admissible, judge rules

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer



Latoya McLean in court.

Hoke District Attorney Kristy M. Newton succeeded in stopping a motion on Friday by Wilmington attorney Mike Willis to suppress the murder confession of South Hoke teenager Latoya Neishawn McLean in the battering case of her six-week-old son last year.

The confession of McLean, which was obtained by the Hoke Sheriff's Office in December, will still be admissible to the jury during the pending murder trial. Her defense attorney, Wilmington lawyer Michael Willis, had requested to Superior Court Judge Craig Ellis on Friday that the statements be tossed out. Ellis denied

Willis's request after reviewing evidence presented in the case.

The 17-year-old, who said she took a parenting class at the Hoke Health Department, allegedly beat her son, Nasir Amare Jones severely.

In McLean's statements to Hoke detectives last December, she allegedly told them her son's crying frustrated her and subsequently she "shook, squeezed, and bounced him" and it might have been "too hard." She allegedly told them it was "not the first time."

McLean's prior, signed statements were introduced in court.

"I bounced him on my leg, but when I was bouncing him, I must have pressed him hard," she allegedly said. "I knew

I shook him harder than I should have. If I was not so frustrated, I would have known not to do it."

McLean allegedly said in the confession that she "knew" she did it, but her "mind was not right." She said she had loved her baby, and expressed remorse for his death.

Nasir was placed in a car seat on a sofa, sleeping in the home of his father, McLean's boyfriend Willie Jones, when the fatal injuries allegedly occurred. She was allegedly sleeping with Jones, 25, on a pallet on the floor. Awakened by the baby's cries, she said, she could not get him to stop crying.

Nasir died the next day, December 1. (See *CONFESSION*, page 8A)

Greensboro firm to raze Raeford Hotel, maybe in October

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

Raeford Hotel, formerly known as The Bluemont, is a step closer to being a part of the city's history.

Councilmen approved a bid to demolish the dilapidated three-story building at Central and Main at a called meeting Thursday.

Five contractors submitted bids, and councilmen followed the recommendation of Bill Bizzell of the Wooten Company, the engineering, planning

and architecture firm that is assisting with the city's downtown revitalization project. They awarded the contract to the lowest low bidder, EME Inc. of Greensboro, for \$129,838.

Bizzell commented on the wide range of bids received in City Hall August 19. Webster Environmental of Ruffin, North Carolina bid almost \$500,000. Other bids were \$235,300 from Linda Construction of Charlotte; P&J Contracting of Baltimore, Maryland, \$285,200; and DH Griffin Wrecking of \$278,745.

"Quite a range," Bizzell said, "I couldn't tell you why."

He said EME had called and asked more questions than other contractors. The hotel project is complicated because it contains asbestos, a cancer-causing substance whose removal is strictly governed by state and federal safety regulations.

Bizzell checked references supplied by EME, he said, and two projects were completed in Asheboro, where his firm is headquartered. There, (See *RAEFORD HOTEL*, page 6A)



The old Raeford Hotel. Its days are numbered.

First round of cockfighting sentences handed down

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor
By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Continuing a crackdown on cockfighting, District Court Judge Warren Pate last Wednesday issued suspended sentences to two men last Wednesday who admitted they were spectators at a cockfight.

A standing-room-only

crowd thinned after most of the cockfighting cases were postponed until October 6.

"The district attorney cleared out some of the cases this morning," Pate said at 10:40 a.m. "That is the reason for the late start."

The two offenders, Ricky Jackson and Eugene Oxendine, admitted they were spectators at an illegal "chicken fight" event held in Hoke in (See *COCKFIGHT*, page 5A)

The News-Journal

News Other stuff

By KEN MACDONALD
General Manager

Those of you who sang in the Hoke High Chorus or Chorale under Mary Archie McNeill's direction should know by now that an encore reunion of singers is going to be held next April. It's being called ChoralFest 2005 and will be held April 22-23 here in Raeford. The event was inspired by the Choral Fest 2000, at which

156 of McNeill's former students gathered here to honor her, and rehearse and perform in a concert at the high school.

A committee has been trying to notify former students, but of course some of them are hard to find. If that's you, and you don't get a letter in the next few days, email me (ken@thenews-journal.com) and I'll put you in contact with the head counters. Make sure not to include any of these words in

your email: toner cartridge, stock market, mortgage, mort*age, mortgage, valium, Viagra, diet, 75% off or enlargement.❖

Hoke County is about to be on the big screen, and no, this is not one of my April Fool's jokes. Well, technically, it's not really the big screen; we're about to be featured in a documentary. And I suppose you could say it's not really set in (See *OTHER STUFF*, page 9A)