

The News-Journal

If it happened, it's news to us

50¢

No. 41 Vol. 99

RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, December 29, 2004

Sleet storm transforms Hoke into wonderland

Storm misses Christmas by an hour, holiday credited with lessening impact

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Hoke County was transformed into a winter wonderland on Sunday morning as two-to-

three inches of sleet blanketed the county from remnants of a Texas snow storm sweeping up the eastern seaboard. However, the hazardous conditions wreaked havoc on some rural roads,

causing 15 wrecks related to the ice storm between Sunday and Monday night.

Mixed sleet and snow began falling across the county around 1 a.m. on Sunday --- missing

Christmas Day by barely one hour. Left over cotton plants in the fields and trees glistened with ice after the sun reappeared on Monday. Freezing temperatures on Saturday, Sunday and Monday

nights prevented many kids from enjoying winter sledding and snowball fights but that changed with a warm up Monday afternoon.

Although major highways such

as U.S. 401 and N.C. 211 between Aberdeen and Raeford were substantially cleared by the N.C. Department of Transportation by Sunday or Monday morning. (See ICE STORM, page 5A)

Rush trial moved to Robeson

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

The pending trial of former Hoke finance director Shirley Rush has been transferred from Hoke to Robeson County, according to a court order issued by Superior Court Judge B. Craig Ellis last week.

This, after two-and-one-half years elapsed since Rush was indicted by a Hoke grand jury on the felony charge of assessor after the fact in connection with embezzlement. Her arrest in August 2002 came after a 10-month investigation by the State Bureau of Investigation. District Attorney Kristy M. Newton presented the evidence to the grand jury.

Because of the six-month rotation cycle of area judges, Superior Court Judge Robert Floyd Jr. of District 16 B in Robeson County (See RUSH, page 4A)



Counterclockwise from top left: Tom McGirr, 2, is supposed to be helping dad Mike McGirr shovel snow, but finds the icicles on his truck more interesting; Sarah Wood and Cory Thomas stroll down Harris Avenue Sunday afternoon; a tree in McLaughlin Park early Monday; walking in a winter wonderland.

This Week



2004 reviewed page 1B



Dr. Rouse to speak at MLK service page 2B



Paralyzed dog runs with new wheels page 3A

Index

- Anniversaries.....3B
- Business/Farm..... 3A
- Classifieds.....7-8B
- Deaths..... 6A
- Editorials..... 2A
- Engagements.....3B
- Legals.....5-6B
- Religion.....2B
- Socials.....3B
- Sports..... 4A

We're on the web at www.thenews-journal.com

Christmas Eve fire razes Z.V. Pate warehouses

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A fire suspected as arson destroyed the commercial warehouses owned by the Z.V. Pate Corporation on St. Pauls Road early on Christmas Eve morning, Major Freddy Johnson, Hoke's fire marshal, said yesterday.

"The buildings burned to the ground as the fire continued burning in the dark before sunrise," Johnson said. "There is no doubt that this fire was deliberately set."

"We are just thankful

that no one was injured while fighting this fire."

Johnson said the buildings were unoccupied at the time of the blaze, and no firefighters were injured during their attempts to extinguish it. The origin of the fire appeared to have started between two buildings on the property, but details on the cause of the fire have not yet been released.

"This was a massive structure fire and a tremendous loss to the Hoke community," Johnson said. "The fire, which began around one in the morning, was reported by a motor-

ist who passed by. The blaze quickly devastated the buildings in spite of attempts to save the structures.

"We are urging anyone in the community who may have seen someone suspicious around the warehouses, or who knows of anything relating to the crime, to please contact the fire marshal or the Hoke Sheriff's office."

Damage
Preliminary estimates of damages at Z.V. Pate, according to authorities, has reached more than \$60,000 so far. Johnson said a farm

tractor and other equipment stored in one building were also destroyed.

"There was also a silo

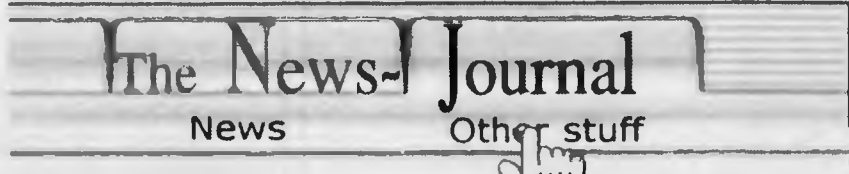
that was filled with some sort of beans, and that was ruined," Johnson said.

Located at North Old

Wire Road and Highway 20, the commercial warehouse fire was primarily fought by (See FIRE, page 4A)



Smoking wood, charred metal and a tractor frame are all that remain after several farm buildings owned by Z.V. Pate, Inc. burned Christmas Eve.



By KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

During Christmas dinner, I glanced out the plate glass window and saw the Russell family trying to take a group picture on the front steps of the house across Main Street. Figuring they'd like to have everyone in the photo, I walked across the road and volunteered my services as a photographer. When I returned to our dining room my brother John was standing just inside the door with a

stance like a preacher issuing a benediction. It wasn't the alarmed look on his face that got my attention next so much as the dark red stain that extended from his beltline to his knees. It seems while I was away, our dining room table collapsed in his lap and deposited there a glass of wine. (And I missed it!)

His look of alarm morphed to accusation and he said, "I'm going to need some of your pants. You're lucky I don't sue you." (See OTHER STUFF, page 3A)

A family's Christmas is stolen

Woman awakes to find car loaded with presents stolen

By PAT ALLEN WILSON
Editor

It was Albert Currie Road resident Tefanie Jacobs' plan that she and her two daughters spend Christmas day with her parents, James and Peggy Jacobs, who live around the corner on Shannon Road.

On Christmas Eve, Tefanie loaded up in the trunk of her car all the gifts she had wrapped that night except for those for nine-year-old Denise, whose

presents were already under the tree at her grandparents' home. In the trunk were presents for her parents, her siblings and their children and for her 17-month-old daughter Hailey.

Later, Jacobs added a basket of wet laundry to be taken to her mother's dryer and a gallon of milk for Hailey. She did not lock the car door and forgot she had spare keys in the console.

When she got up the following morning and looked out the window, the car, (See STOLEN, page 6A)