

The News-Journal

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, January 3, 2007

Annexation, election top 2006 stories

Others include improving schools, building an ethanol plant and wind tunnel

BY PAT ALLEN WILSON

The top stories of Hoke-Raeford include actions that tore at the fabric of the community. Yet another story involves unified efforts on behalf of educating the children.

A forced annexation that brought 151 acres containing approximately 135 residences into

the city limits pitted neighbor against neighbor, church member against church member and left most residents in the annexed area angry and upset.

Fake ballots that looked too much like the real thing distributed during the May primary may have changed the outcome of the election

and left some losing candidates outraged.

Meanwhile, Hoke got a new public schools superintendent, and, under his leadership, efforts to make education advancements and boost test scores have begun.

Annexation

While some say the annexation of the

Palmer Street/College Drive area was long overdue, those in the designated area, still reeling from higher taxes imposed by the county and higher water bills from the city, said they could not afford the extra costs and they did not want any services offered by the (See YEAR 2006, page 4A)

Judge Pate trades his gavel for golf clubs

Retires after 17 years on bench

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Chief District Court Judge Warren L. Pate retired from the bench last week after 17 years to enjoy riding the turf at his Raeford horse farm.

And trading in his gavel for golf clubs to play his favorite sport, the 62-year-old Pate leaves behind a legacy of five successful terms of office as an elected official. A Democrat, Pate has dispensed justice for more than 300,000 cases for Hoke and Scotland County's District 16 A.

When he relinquished his post on December 28, Pate was sporting a Hemingway-style beard at his retirement party. He also offered humor-

ous conversation instead of final verdicts.

"Goodness gracious, great balls of fire," Pate said in a Jerry Lee Lewis imitation on seeing the spread of food and many friends in attendance.

With a blush, Pate viewed a special cake with a decorated replica of himself. "Good gracious," he said of the likeness.

Posing for photographs, Pate presided over the event just like on the bench.

"Give me six months," Pate said to someone who inquired about his retirement. "It depends on how my checks turn out.

"But, if you have a (See PATE, page 4A)



Having a little fun, retiring Chief District Court Judge Warren L. Pate (right) polishes the head of Raeford public works director Johnny Melton.

This Week



Kershaw makes NFL debut
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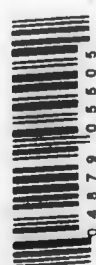
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Regina Joe takes office as district judge

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Regina "Gigi" McKinney Joe took office on New Year's Day as new district court judge for Hoke-Scotland counties, realizing a lifelong dream to serve on the bench.

Joe is also carrying on the tradition of her predecessor, retired chief district court judge Warren Pate, by residing in Raeford.

Making history twice, Joe is distinguished as the first African American

woman elected to serve as a district court judge in Hoke and Scotland counties. She was first recognized in 2005 when she was appointed as the first African American woman in the state of North Carolina to serve as a chief public defender.

Newly retired, Hoke-Scotland Superior Court Judge B. Craig Ellis presided over the festivities and swearing-in ceremony on Monday.

"It has been an honor to serve with Gigi," Ellis said of Joe's judicial experi-

ence. "She has done a marvelous job. I am delighted she has achieved this office because it is something she has worked for so long."

Ellis offered a special invocation at the oath of office ceremony.

"We ask your blessing on this proceeding, not just because a good and honorable woman is being invested, but so that justice and mercy may be enhanced," Ellis said. "We seek your favor... that all who come into the court over which (See JOE, page 5A)



Regina Joe



Jason Ward and Mary Tousignant, with baby son Tyler.

Couple copes with loss of home

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A young couple is still trying to come to grips with their home burning down the day after Christmas.

"It has really left us in a financial bind, and we are homeless," Jason Ward, tenant at the destroyed modular home on John Russell Road, said. "I do not know how we are going to make it."

Ward said he is praying the Hoke community may rally to help them in their crisis

situation.

He and Mary Tousignant and their one-month-old son, Tyler, left their doublewide mobile home to stay at his father's house on Christmas evening. Approximately five hours later their house burned, with nothing but twisted metal and cinders remaining.

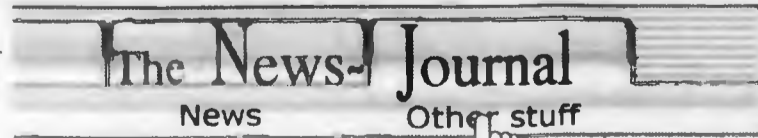
Shivering in the twilight last Thursday, the pair returned without coats to wear to view the gutted shell of their home. The remnants of a rocking chair formerly used

for rocking Tyler to sleep were left on the cement porch. Only the porch survived the fire somewhat intact.

Christmas presents, clothes, furniture and appliances were demolished in spite of the efforts of West Hoke Volunteer Fire Department and others. One of the families two dogs also perished.

A neighbor initially reported the fire around 1 a.m. on December 26.

In one area of the den, the (See FIRE LOSS, page 6A)



BY KEN MACDONALD
Publisher

We intended to make Sunset Beach by dark, and allowed a hefty margin for error since neither of us has ever ridden a bicycle that far. We used up most of the margin for error in front of Cheseborough Ponds when Charles suffered a flat tire.

That's right, just 1.3 miles from home we heard a psssssst psssssst psssssst and realized a cosmic jokester would again be at work on a Charles-Ken adventure.

Charles, an old college friend, and I try to do something adventurous together about once a year. Whether it's paddling in Chesapeake Bay where we were attacked by mosquito swarms of biblical proportions or rafting the Poudre River in Colorado where we sprung a huge leak, our outings always reach their intended conclusions but never without mishap. That Monday's first happened so soon seemed a sign.

We pulled over into the BP parking lot (See OTHER STUFF, page 3A)

Major drug suspect arrested

BY VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Candelario "Candy" Rodriguez Perez, a major drug suspect in Hoke County, was caught last week, according to Hoke sheriff Hubert Peterkin.

"He was one of our suspects we needed to apprehend in our Operation Drug Safe campaign," Peterkin said. "It took a lot of cooperation between law enforcement agen-

ciesto find him."

Perez, 21, of the 1100 block of Blue Springs Road, had eluded the Hoke Sheriff's drug task unit for six months. He was taken into custody by the Fayetteville Police Department on December 28 (See ARREST, page 6A)



Perez