

The News-Journal

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75¢

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RAEFORD & HOKE COUNTY N.C.

Wednesday, April 4, 2007

Teen killed as she sat in car

Friend and suspect says shooting was accidental



Jerticha Ford
By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A Turlington School sophomore described as a "super student" was killed last Wednesday around 7 p.m. allegedly by her ex-boyfriend.

Jerticha Ford, 16 of 156 Malloy Street, was wounded when a 9 mm gun discharged at close range while she was seated in the passenger side of a vehicle with suspect 17-year-old Jamel Gates, Hoke Sheriff Hubert Peterkin said. "She was struck in the side," Peterkin said.

The couple was parked in the vehicle at her next-door neighbor's home when the gun was fired, Peterkin added.

"One of our deputies who arrived first at the scene of the shooting tried desperately to save her life until emergency medics arrives," Peterkin said. "The response was very fast. Everyone tried to save her."

Ford was transported to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center on Wednesday

night, where surgery was performed. Marsha Ford, mother of Jerticha, said a hospital spokesman said Jerticha was only temporarily revived.

"I am thankful that everyone did what they could to spare my daughter's life," Mrs. Ford said.

Gates, of Reeves Street, was a former classmate of Ford and was labeled a troublemaker by some teachers. He has been charged with felony involuntary manslaughter.

"We do know that he did not just get the gun the day she was shot," Peterkin said. "But our investigation does show that the gunshot was not planned."

Gates is being detained in the Hoke County Jail on a \$105,000 secured bond after initially being held without bond. Though charged as an adult, he is incarcerated in a regular juvenile cell. A source that asked not to be named said Gates cried most of the first night in jail after being told Jerticha had died.

Mrs. Ford said she wants answers, saying she is suspicious of the circumstances of her daughter's fatal shooting. She said Gates fled after allegedly shooting Jerticha, and she said she is upset he did not appear to render aid to her daughter. Mrs. Ford said she was not acquainted with Jamel nor did she know there was a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship between the pair. (See related article on Page 1.)

"My other daughter said Jamel ran

away in the company of another boy after my daughter was shot," Mrs. Ford said. "I was also told by law enforcement that it appeared my daughter was struggling with the gun."

(See TEEN SHOT, page 4A)

Family, students moun victim

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Jerticha Ford, a popular teen student at Turlington School, was buried yesterday after a funeral held in the school's auditorium. A tribute of 100 balloons was also sent aloft by classmates and family at the gravesite

(See MOURNS, page 4A)



A student at Turlington School grieves.

Man chased, shot dead

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A second shooting last week ended in the death of a former Hoke High student who had returned to reside in Hoke after a hiatus in Tennessee.

Suspected as a victim of a high-speed pursuit, 34-year-old Michael Freeman was found with a gunshot wound to his head. The Hoke Sheriff's Office is seeking the assailant or assailants involved in the slaying of Freeman, of Purvis Court.

During the apparent chase that ensued on Murph

McLaughlin Road in South Hoke, Freeman reportedly lost control of his vehicle. He crashed into a tree at around 12:06 a.m. on Wednesday morning.

The motive for Freeman's murder has the Hoke Sheriff's Office baffled. However, an acquaintance of Freeman's said his killing may be domestic-related.

"He was in his car being chased," Hoke sheriff Hubert Peterkin said. "His car was being fired upon, riddled with over 15 rounds from a high-powered weapon."

"Our investigation shows

2 suspected drug kingpins arrested in three-county bust

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Two suspected interstate drug trafficking ringleaders have been arrested and one is still sought after a tri-county undercover drug raid was successfully conducted on Monday, according to Hoke sheriff Hubert Peterkin.

"This could have turned out to be a deadly situation, but fortunately none of our officers were injured in the drug busts," Peterkin said



Alonzo Vargas yesterday. "I commend all the officers for rounding up these drug trafficking suspects without them showing any resistance."

The Hoke Sheriff's narcotics task force, along with drug enforcement units from

(See DRUG BUST, page 4A)

This Week



Raeford Presbyterian gets new pastor page 2B

County wants to reduce budget page 5A

Aide convicted of assaulting patient page 6A

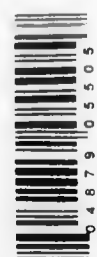
Beach Music Concert returns to Festival page 1B

Williamson signs with Elon page 7A

Index

Calendar.....7A
Classifieds.....7B
Deaths.....3A
Editorials.....2A
Legals.....6B
Schools.....3B
Sports.....7A

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County picks Fields as attorney

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

A united Hoke board of commissioners agreed to hire Raeford lawyer William Fields, who has served as Raeford's city attorney, as the new county attorney retroactive as of April 1.

The board also simultaneously voted unanimously to cancel their agreement

with Fayetteville attorney Neil Yarborough at their Monday night meeting. He served as county attorney for 14 years. During his tenure he was recognized by the N.C. Association of County Commissioners as attorney of the year.

Yarborough advised the county through the turbulent period when former county manager Bernice McPhatter was convicted of embezzlement.

Yarborough was complimentary of Fields. Likewise, Fields said Yarborough was a fine attorney whom he also admired. Fields is a partner with Willcox, McFadyen, Fields and Sutherland located on East Edinborough Avenue.

Fields comes to the county board with an array of experience in civic affairs. He has served with the Hoke Land

(See ATTORNEY, page 6A)



William Fields

McNeill honored, parking again discussed by council

By BILL LINDAU
Freelance writer

Mary Archie McNeill, a retired music instructor who played a key role in Raeford's redevelopment, was recognized for her efforts by the Raeford City Council at its regular monthly meeting Monday night.

Downtown parking was another issue to which council paid close attention, hearing some recommendations by a representative from the

North Carolina Department of Commerce.

McNeill, accompanied by her husband Neill, received a resolution of appreciation from the council for the years she served on the Raeford Development Commission, Dec. 6, 1999 to Feb. 12. She was one of the leaders in the city's StreetScape project, a downtown revitalization program.

In another matter, Jason Epley of the N.C. Depart-

ment of Commerce shared his observations on the parking situation in downtown Raeford, especially on the blocks between East Central and East Elwood avenues and from Main Street to North Stewart Street. Four members of the audience spoke about parking in those areas in the public comment part of the meeting.

Council took no action on the issue. (See COUNCIL, page 6A)



McNeill accepts plaque as her husband, Neill, looks on.

Minshew reflects on career dating to civil rights era

By VICTORIANA SUMMERS
Staff writer

Raeford resident Delbert Minshew dodged bullets and patrolled thousands of miles as a former Greensboro police officer and Highway Patrol trooper for 34 years.

During the racial tension the night Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, Minshew said, he narrowly missed being shot in Wilmington.

That night stands out as the retired officer and civic leader reflected on his career.

He was assigned to help with possible civil unrest



Minshew, seated center, with family: Larry (standing, left to right), Debbie, Laura, Tony, Brian; wife Jean (seated, left) and Lindsey.

when a barrage of bullets shattered the glass of his patrol car.

"One trooper had a bullet ricochet off his helmet, and it almost hit me," Minshew said.

"I never really anticipated something like that would happen."

"Pow—I hear that sound five times, and then I realized my

(See MINSHEW, page 5A)



Minshew's rear window was shot out the night King died.