

The News-Journal

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High school mourns death of two seniors

Just weeks from graduating, friends killed in wreck on way to band practice

By Jason Beck
Staff Writer

Students at Hoke High School are in shock and mourning this week, days after a pair of fellow students died in a car crash in Fayetteville.

Thadius Ian Markle and Kaleb Lee Valliant, both 18-year-old seniors with Hoke County addresses, succumbed to injuries received in the Saturday afternoon wreck at the intersection of Camden and Cumberland roads. Zariah Rebecca Campbell, 16, of Fayetteville, also sustained injuries in the wreck.

Now, less than a month before prom and graduation, seniors at Hoke High have replaced their youthful exuberance with mourning.

Close friends said Markle and Campbell had been asked



Markle



Valliant

to perform with a group of musicians in the Dogwood Festival, and the three teens were on their way to a band practice when the wreck occurred.

"I just can't find the words to explain the way it makes me feel to know such great lives have been cut short," one of the teens' friends posted on a Facebook page dedicated to their memory. Hoke High Principal Steve Hagen said he met with the senior class yesterday morning – a

class that has seen hundreds seek counseling over the last two days.

"The whole senior class was impacted by this, the whole school has been impacted by what happened," Hagen said. "And there were genuine moments of grief by them."

The teens died Saturday evening, a few hours after they were transported from the scene of the crash.

According to police reports, Valliant was behind the wheel of a 1995 Isuzu SUV on Camden Road at about 2:30 Saturday when he ran the stop sign at the intersection.

The SUV was struck by

a Lincoln passenger car and rolled over several times. At least one of the teens was ejected from the flipping vehicle.

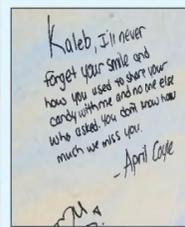
The two occupants of the Lincoln, Mary Evan McCormick, 71, and Teresa A.

Powell, 52, of Fayetteville suffered non-life threatening injuries.

The two students were known to be close friends, but both were involved in many activities at the school that put them in contact with much of

the student body, Hagen said.

"They were both in the band and they had established relationships with students from grades 9-12 and both had different types of curriculums and had relationships with (See MOURNING, page 4A)



From left: Art by student Darnell Scott; Kaleb (left) and Thadius were often together; Hoke High's campus sign; from a banner signed by students on MacDonal Gym.



Chicken house destroyed
An early-morning fire destroyed a chicken house at 160 Gladhill Acres Farm Road off NC 211 in west Hoke Monday. The house was being prepared for new hatchlings from Perdue Farms. The fire caused approximately \$250,000 damage and is under investigation, according to Freddy Johnson, Hoke fire marshal.

Raeford attorney retires

By Jason Beck
Staff Writer

A Raeford attorney who served the area for more than 50 years has retired and has been inducted into the North Carolina Bar Association's general practice hall of fame.

Bobby McNeill, who started practicing law in 1958, closed his office in Raeford earlier this year. He later became one of only about 115 lawyers honored with a hall of fame induction.

McNeill, who is modest, said he always just tried to help people's legal situations.

"I get a big enjoyment out of helping people by knowing



McNeill

what the rule is," McNeill said.

McNeill came back to his hometown of Raeford

after a tour in Korea and graduating from the UNC Law School, where he worked with three of the four lawyers in town. McNeill practiced all sorts of law and became the area's first public defender when that position was established.

"I was on several capital defenses and I never lost anyone," he said. "If you ever sat next to a man in a court of law and his life is dependent on your legal knowledge, it is quite nerve-racking."

After several years of criminal law, McNeill decided to focus on other aspects of the law profession. Several defendants he represented ended up re-offending, putting a sour taste in the lawyer's mouth.

"I said I'm better at this than I thought I was," he said. "I never considered myself a criminal lawyer."

It was in the field of real (See RETIRES, page 6A)

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West Hoke wreck kills Rockingham men

By Jason Beck
Staff Writer

Two men were killed in a crash Monday night in the western reaches of Hoke County.

The crash occurred after the victims' car ran a stop sign, according to the North Carolina Highway Patrol.

Wiley J. Ratliff, 59 and William Henry Liles, 62, both of Rockingham, died in the crash, which occurred at the

intersection of Calloway and Army roads.

Ratliff was driving an '80s model Chevrolet Caprice and Liles was his passenger. According to Tina Moore, a spokesperson for the Highway Patrol, the Chevrolet was traveling west on Army Road when it failed to stop for the stop sign at the intersection.

The car was struck in the door by an oncoming Honda Accord and rolled over onto

its roof.

"The car got hit in the door, right below the mirror, and that's what caused it to flip," Moore said. "(The car) flipped and came to rest upside down on the left side of the road."

The driver of the second vehicle, Larry McSwain, 24, of Raeford, suffered non life-threatening injuries in the crash and was transported to FirstHealth Moore Regional Hospital.



Two Rockingham men died when their car (background) ran a stop sign and was struck by the Honda in the foreground.

High school sends group to Egypt for first-hand study

By Jason Beck
Staff Writer

A group from Raeford, including nine Hoke High School students, are still excited even weeks after returning from the most exotic trip the school system has ever sponsored.

Everyone in the group, which also included three school chaperones and several parents, is still talking about having gone to Egypt.

"This is the first time Hoke County students have ever gone to Africa," said Kristie DeLuna, who, along with fellow teacher Rachel Helms, organized the trip. "When we first wanted to go, everyone

said we'd never get permission. Dr. Williamson stepped up and said he was proud of us for even attempting it and was very supportive."

DeLuna and Helms head up the school's history club, in which the nine students from the trip are members.

The students sold candy bars and participated in other fundraisers to generate money for the guided tour.

DeLuna said taking the students to historic sites was more effective than teaching about them.

"It wasn't anything like we expected," the teacher said. "To actually go to (See EGYPT, page 5A)



It's not hard to tell where these students are. Their trip to Egypt was a dream, said one student.

