

THE YANCEY JOURNAL

VOL. 5, NO. 50

BURNSVILLE, N.C. 28714

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1977

15¢



(L-R) Past And Present Mayors: Helmle And Bennett With Governor Hunt

John Beecher: Folk Hero In His Own Lifetime

[Reprinted from "The Arizona Republic" Thursday, November 24, 1977 issue] BY ROBERT McEWEN

History has a way of making heroes of men branded outcasts by their own generation, but many never live to enjoy the vindication awarded them in more enlightened times.

John Beecher is one maverick who hung around long enough to become a folk hero in his own lifetime.

In 1950 he was fired from what was then San Francisco State College for refusing to sign a loyalty oath inspired by McCarthyism. He was blacklisted for a time and the stigma ruined his marriage.

But the underdog who battled injustice at great

personal loss returned to campus in triumph this year after the state Legislature voted unanimously to reinstate faculty members who spurned the oath.

"I never doubted I would be vindicated," Beecher said in a recent interview. "I always had faith in the American system. I just wondered if I would live to see it."

Now 73, Beecher's snow-white eyebrows and flowing, long white hair make him look more like a contemporary of Melville than of Mailer. He walks the San Francisco State campus an almost legendary figure.

Most of his students grew up in an era when men like Eugene McCarthy were eras-

ing the ideology of men like Joseph McCarthy. And Beecher's 12 volumes of poetry—indicting war, racism, poverty and the exploitation of labor—are greeted by more receptive audiences.

Ironically, the children of students he was forced to leave 27 years ago now benefit from his wisdom, his zest for life and his Whitman-like fervor for American values.

Beecher had refused to sign the oath because he didn't see a need to prove his patriotism. His ancestry is studded with names like Henry Ward Beecher, who raised the Union flag at Fort Sumter after the Civil War, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, abolitionist author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

The poet himself spent eight years fighting for and administering New Deal programs in the South. He was one of the first white officers in World War II to volunteer for service under a black commander, and after the war he served as a director of camps for displaced persons in Germany.

His dismissal drew considerable protest from students but except for a few brief items buried inside the local papers, the press ignored the campus demonstration.

Beecher then began an odyssey he compares to "Paul Revere's Ride," explaining his plight to men in positions of influence and alerting them to the menace of McCarthyism. He was greeted by a general attitude of hopelessness and apathy.

"It wasn't an easy time for a man of 46. I had to start all over again," he said.

His marriage failed. "I couldn't blame it all on being fired, but that probably was the prime factor...and it didn't improve my relationship with my children."

But he says his time in exile gave him the opportunity to do many things he never would have done as a professor. Beecher spent time in Mexico, experimenting with ranching, ran a press to publish his work and that of

other poets, covered the Civil Rights movement for West Coast publications, taught at a black college in the South

[Cont'd on page 6]

Achievement Night Set

Yancey's Achievement Night for Extension Homemakers, 4-H, Community Development and Farm City Week is rescheduled for Thursday night, December 15, 6 p.m. at Higgins Methodist Church. This is a family occasion and each family is asked to bring a covered dish. Several clubs and groups are preparing exhibits. Dick Jensen, Arkay Enterprises, will be guest speaker.

Local Tax Collections

Local 1% sales and use tax collections were reported by county for the month of October, 1977 by Mark Lynch, Secretary of the Department of Revenue, Raleigh. The report shows Yancey County collections for that period amounted to \$22,305.

For the same period, Mitchell County collected \$26,889.98, Madison County collected \$14,760.93, and Avery County collected the sum of \$25,948.61.



Hi-Lo of the Week YANCEY COUNTY COUNTRY STORE Hi~640 20~30

Delivers Federal Money:

Governor Hunt Visits

North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt flew to Burnsville last Thursday by helicopter to deliver \$47,800 in federal flood relief money to the hard-hit town.

The Governor landed at the Courthouse and spoke briefly to Yancey citizens who gathered there to greet him.

"I know where Burnsville is," said the Governor, who was given a copy of the "Flood" book published last week by Yancey Graphics Printing of Burnsville. Governor Hunt later leafed through the book and commented on pictures showing devastated flood areas in Yancey County.

The Federal money will help Burnsville repair its water and sewer system according to Mayor Bob Helmle, who added that the amount of the check Hunt brought to Burnsville will cover about 75% of the preliminary damage estimate. Helmle also stated that Burnsville expects to get the full amount to cover actual expenses in repairing storm damage in the town which also tore up street pavement and culverts.

The state Department of Crime Control and Public Safety in Raleigh said the Burnsville check was the first federal money received for restoration of public facilities destroyed or damaged by the flood. It said checks of \$73,000 for Woodfin, \$59,400 for Old Fort and \$28,000 for Buncombe County had also been received and would be delivered later.

After delivering the check

to town officials, Hunt, along with incoming Mayor Mark Bennett, Yancey County Commissioners Carl Carter (chairman), Alton Robinson and Clay Miller, and County Manager David Blankenship, was driven to the flood-ravaged Bolens Creek and Pensacola areas to survey damages first hand.

The Governor stopped and chatted with workers from the highway department and French Broad EMC, complimenting them on the great job they are doing in restoring

electrical service and roadways throughout the county.

Blankenship praised the National Guard to Governor Hunt, telling him especially of the dangerous and dedicated services rendered by the helicopter pilots immediately after the flood. He told Hunt the pilots landed in the most remote and inaccessible areas to bring food, medical supplies and hope to isolated families while flying the sick and injured to hospitals in Asheville. The beaming heli-

[Cont'd on page 3]

Agencies Collect Yule Gifts

Christmas can be a happy time for many flood victims in Yancey County—if the Yancey County coordinating committee on disaster relief gets its wish...

The coordinating committee and agencies in the county and volunteers are involved in efforts to provide Christmas gifts for many persons.

Special efforts are being made to reach the elderly and the children with Christmas gifts.

Business firms and individuals in the Yancey County area and in other communities including the Asheville vicinity are donating items suitable for Christmas gifts and also candies, fruits and nuts. Agencies in the county, including Social Services and Community Action, will refer to the coordinating committee suggestions on persons who are in need because of the flood and should be eligible for the Yule packages.

The coordinating committee headquarters is in the Lincoln Park School in Burnsville, with the Rev. John Emory Jones of Asheville as chairman and treasurer, and Gene Cannon as vice-chairman. Jones is pastor of the Bald Creek and Pensacola United Methodist Churches.

Persons or business firms desiring to assist in the Christmas effort may telephone Community Action, Social Services, or the coordinating committee office at 682-7594. The gifts may consist of clothing, especially for elderly or children, bedding including spreads and sheets, pillow cases, blankets, etc., food items and toys.

The Yancey county coordinating committee invites residents of the area to make themselves available as volunteers to assist in answering the telephones and assist in other ways at the Lincoln Park School.

Persons interested in providing a few hours a week as volunteers may telephone 682-7594 or write the chairman-treasurer of the Yancey county coordinating committee on disaster relief, General Delivery, Burnsville, N.C. 28714.

In writing the committee, provide some information concerning availability by hours or days, and assuring the committee transportation is available to and from the office.

Already, individuals and groups have made donations to the flood relief through the agencies and churches. It is expected that many other persons will contribute to the assistance of flood victims through the agencies and churches of the community.

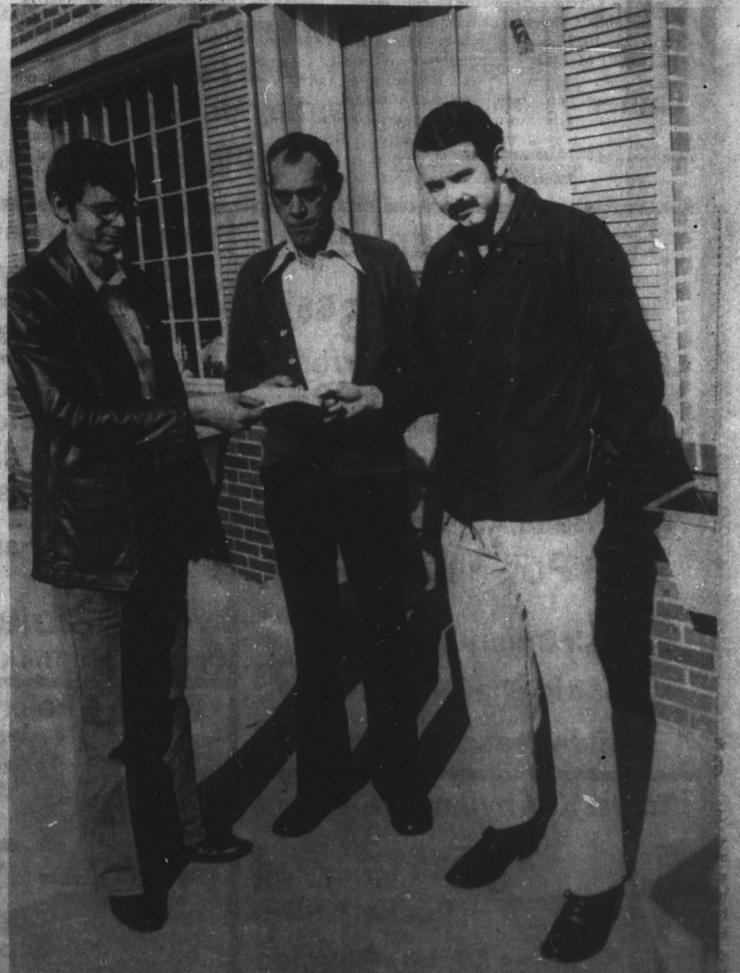
WAMY Receives \$544,000 Grant

A \$544,000 Federal grant has been awarded to the W.A.M.Y. Community Action, Inc. by the Community Services Administration. It was announced by Congressman Lamar Gudger and Senator Robert Morgan this week. The organization serves Watauga, Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties.

The program funded includes administration, hous-

ing assistance for 435 low income families, and transportation services for 1,490 low income, including 600 elderly. It also includes supplemental income assistance for 535 low income individuals, senior opportunities and services for 1,250 elderly individuals, and core services for 1,795 low income families.

Funding was scheduled to begin October 1, 1977



Summer Resident Gives \$400

Sheriff Kermit Banks Saturday presented checks for \$200 each to Jerry Laws for the Yancey County Rescue Squad and Jay Laws for the Radio Patrol. The two checks, totaling \$400, were sent to the Sheriff's Department by Talbot Patrick of Rock Hill, South Carolina, who has a country home on Seven Mile Ridge in Yancey County. In a letter accompanying the check, Mr. Patrick said, "Thanks to The Yancey Journal I have some idea of the fine accomplishments by you and your deputies as well as those of the members of the Radio Patrol and the Rescue Squad. As a taxpayer in Yancey County I support all departments of county government and am glad you do so well. Will you please pass along the enclosed checks to the Rescue Squad and the Radio Patrol. Thank you."

The Rescue Squad and Radio Patrol of Yancey County are manned by volunteers who pay everything from gas costs to vehicle upkeep out of their own pockets. They do not receive any federal or state money, but contributions from well wishers help to defray operating expenses.



John Beecher