

Lenoir County News Wins Editorial Page Press Award

1952
PRESS AWARD

North Carolina
Press Association

Best Editorial Page

Weekly Division

FIRST PLACE

LENOIR COUNTY NEWS

KINSTON, N. C.

January 23, 1953

Arthur C. Bell

Wanda M. ...

Editor Jack Rider is seen at right admiring the award he received last Friday night at the annual Institute of the North Carolina Press Association at Duke University. This award went to the papers Rider edits for what the judges called the "Best Editorial Page" among North Carolina's weekly newspapers during 1952.

Rider says, "You can't eat it but it looks pretty hanging on the wall and he invites both his friends to come by and look at it."

At left is a reproduction of the award certificate which went to the Lenoir County News for its editorial page in 1952. Along with the certificate came the bronze plaque Editor Rider is seen displaying at right.

In 1950 this paper placed third in statewide competition for feature writing among North Carolina's weekly and this year it moved into first place for its editorial page.

Editor Rider was a little puffed up by the award but was quickly deflated by the Business Manager of the paper who slammed him with: "Look what you could do if you'd work two hours a week."

JUST ONE ARREST

Just one arrest is logged for last week in the Sheriff's office in Trenton and that was one made by Patrolman Marvin Thomas of Thad Alonzo Hart of Dover Route one who is under \$200 bond charged with drunken driving.



Tax Statistics Interesting Even if They are Year Old

Although statistics are frequently cussed, laughed at and ignored there is still much of value to be found in the long rows of figures that accumulate through the years on various subjects, and not the least of these is taxation. The North Carolina Department of Revenue has just released its 1952 summary, a 451 page booklet packed with tax statistics on practically every phase of the North Carolina tax picture.

A few of the figures that may interest that reader who does not have the time or inclination to dig through the entire 451 pages are listed here: (Because

of the size of this study the figures do not reach beyond the fiscal year 1951-52 and in some instances a year earlier than this.)

Perhaps the most controversial North Carolina tax is the Sales Tax which was installed in the depression of the Thirties as an "emergency measure" and is still retained.

In '51-52 the gross take from this Sales Tax was \$51,871,509 and for the year '50-51 the figure was more than a million dollars less, \$50,061,875.

Of that total Jones County chipped in for the fiscal year

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Six Year Old Taylor Murder Mystery Still A Mystery

Six years ago this week, on January 30, 1947, a truck driver "started into the bushes" just back of Adkin High School and on the Eastern side of the Adkin Run which was at that time the city limits of Kinston. The grisly sight that confronted this truck driver before he had gotten many yards from the side of the road caused him to forget his "call of nature" and hasten to the local police department to report the finding of a body in a huge puddle of blood.

In a few minutes, George Canady, then chief of the Kinston police department, and Deputy Sheriff D. F. Wilcox, Jr., were at the scene and with the arrival of Coroner Raymond Jarman the body was identified as that of Kenneth Taylor, a just-past-middle-age bakery worker. Taylor's head had been but severed from the body by what might have been an extremely sharp knife. Later and more detailed examination revealed that he had suffered a compound fracture in the left top rear area of his skull, a blow that would have been sufficient to cause death.

At any rate Taylor had not been dead when his throat was cut as was testified by the great quantity of blood that had gushed from the wound which went completely around his neck, after beginning under his left ear and traveling around the back of the neck and under the chin and ending just below where it had begun.

There was no weapon of any kind, knife or club to be found at the site in spite of a long and tedious search of the adjacent area. Taylor's pockets had been emptied but a small amount of money hidden in one of his shoes had not been found by the searchers. The only person who was questioned at the time was a man who remained silent.

Dozens of people were questioned by city, county and state police in the days and weeks that followed the truck driver's frightening find. Taylor's whereabouts on the night of his murder were fairly well checked. After supper at his home he had visited a filling station operated by E. W. Stroud less than a mile north of the spot where his body was found.

His visit to the filling station lasted for about two hours and at some where near nine o'clock he departed for home and death. All of the questioning revealed that Taylor had last been seen alive at the brink of the hill leading down into Kinston and there he paused briefly to speak with a resident of that neighborhood who was on his way home.

Another resident of that section who had driven past where Taylor was talking a few minutes later returned in his car to town and in that few minutes Taylor had disappeared from the roadway and no doubt was in the process of being robbed and killed at about the time this man returned to town and missed Taylor from the roadway.

After the investigation had been underway for some weeks and every possible lead had been exhausted Sam Thompson, a Goldsboro native, who was in State Prison after having escaped from a prison truck in Rich Square, sent word to Kinston police that he wanted to "talk."

Kinston Detective Wheeler Kennedy and Police Stenographer Doris Tull went to Raleigh and there Thompson told them what appeared to be "the true story of Taylor's murder."

Thompson told such a convincing story that Lemuel Parrott, a native of Kinston, was arrested and charged with First

Degree Murder and held without privilege of bond.

Thompson's story stated that during the period while he was free after his escape in Rich Square he met Parrott and together they pulled a couple of minor robberies in the Kinston and Goldsboro area.

It was during this association that Thompson said Parrott committed the murder of Taylor. Thompson said they had ridden up behind Taylor, Parrott had gotten out of the car, walked up behind Taylor and hit him over the head with a length of iron pipe. After this, so Thompson's story went, Parrott dragged the unconscious form into the bushes and in a few minutes came back with blood on his shirt and a small amount of money.

Thompson told this story not once but several times and finally told it to a Lenoir County jury so convincingly that Parrott was found guilty of First Degree Murder and sentenced to die in the state gas chamber in Raleigh. Perhaps the most convincing aspect of Thompson's courtroom demeanor had been his own plea of guilty to murder in the second degree in connection with the crime and his humble acceptance of a 30 year sentence for his part in the crime which placed Parrott on Death Row.

Parrott throughout his trial and on every occasion maintained his innocence and denied any knowledge of the crime. That did not keep him from being carried to the Death Row where he lived in the shadow of the gas chamber for nearly six months.

With only a few days left before Parrott was scheduled to walk into that tiny room where death is legally meted out by the State of North Carolina,

Thompson again called for Kinston police to come talk to him in the Raleigh prison.

This time his story was a great deal different from what it was on that first occasion. Now, the handsome, young man, said that neither he or Parrott knew anything about Taylor's murder and that he had cooked up his original story after reading newspaper accounts of the death and had told the story on Parrott "to get even with him for squealing about the robberies they had committed together in Goldsboro."

Thompson offered proof to the police to back up his story. Proof that was checked and rechecked and was found to be true. Paradoxically, Police Chief Canady had in the interim become an agent of the State Bureau of Investigation and now part of his work was in corroborating the "new story" Thompson was telling.

Of course Parrott's execution was stayed and a new trial was ordered shortly afterwards when Thompson's "new story" stood up under the most intense examination. He had said that he was in the western part of North Carolina on the night Taylor was murdered. How did he offer to prove it?

By no less authority than the North Carolina Highway Patrol. Thompson said he had been riding in a stolen car and was chased for many miles on the night of Taylor's murder by a patrolman. His description of the wild chase through the mountainous area and his story about how he finally escaped checked down to the last detail with Highway Patrol records as well as with the memory of the individual patrolman who had chased him on that night. Other witnesses swore and swore again that Thompson was in

their home in the far west of North Carolina on the night of Taylor's murder.

When this new evidence was placed before another Lenoir County jury Parrott was found not guilty and he went from the courtroom a free man—as free as anyone could be who has lived in the shadow of the gas chamber for more than six months.

Perhaps the most ironical aspect of the entire case is that Thompson, the glib liar, whose conscience caught up with him at the last minute, is still serving 30 years in prison for his part in a murder he proved that he could not have committed. He has escaped several times from prison and in December of last year was apprehended again after having taken "French Leave" for a short period. Today he is an exceedingly bitter young man. He thinks justice has frowned on him for hanging around his neck a 30 year prison sentence for a crime he didn't commit. But there is a law, older than that of North Carolina, which holds that a liar shall suffer the punishment that might have been the lot of the man on whom the lie was told.

So, in that light, Thompson is lucky to be alive.

Vital Statistics

The Jones County Health Department reports five deaths and 29 births for Jones County during November of 1952 with full reports now in for that month from the State Department of Health.

In the last few years, from 51 to 61 per cent of North Carolina's cash farm income has been from the sale of tobacco.