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Hearing set on WNC Hospital

by Dan Ward

A 21-member task force was expected to hold a public hearing October 26 to hear citizens' input into the efficiency of the Western North Carolina Specialty Hospital and reasons why it should or should not be closed. The meeting, to be held at 2 p.m. Wednesday in the hospital auditorium, is the first to be held at the request of Dr. Sarah Morrow, secretary of Human Resources, at state specialty hospitals. At the request of Dr. Morrow, a bill to close down Western North Carolina Hospital was defeated last summer. Dr. Morrow asked that the institution remain in

operation for another year while her office studies its effectiveness. "From the response we get, it seems that people in this area are vitally interested in the operation of this hospital," said Jack C. Ellison, hospital administrative director. "The task force will be looking at all facets of the operation as it serves the region, including social and economic factors," he said. He added, however, that health care provided at the institution will be the primary consideration. The hospital, which specializes in the treatment of respiratory diseases, employs 280 Valley residents. The hospital treats 1200 persons per year, many of them with chronic diseases, from the western part of the state. One-

third of those have tuberculosis. The bill introduced last spring recommended closing the hospital to save the state an estimated \$2.8 million. Care for the hospital patients would be consolidated at the specialty hospital at Wilson, the bill proposed. Opponents of closing the hospital maintain that the best care could be given at the Black Mountain institution and that it would be a burden for patients from this region to travel to Wilson for treatment. The task force will make recommendations to Dr. Morrow after completing its study of the state's specialty hospitals. The task force will hold a meeting at 1:30 Wednesday prior to the 2 p.m. public hearing.



After the harvest

A row of cornshocks stand in a Swannanoa field as memorial to another harvest. (Dan Ward)

Neighborhood Watch meeting draws 24

by Dan Ward

Black Mountain Police will mail a letter to all households in the town in an effort to organize the Neighborhood Watch Program here. Twenty-four persons attended an introductory meeting on the program at the Black Mountain Club House on October 20. John Heatherly, of the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department, explained to those present that the Neighborhood Watch Program is an agreement between neighbors to watch

each other's property for suspicious behavior. A marked reduction in crime has been noted in other communities since the Neighborhood Watch program has begun. Buckeye Cove, Riceville, and Swannanoa are among a number of Buncombe County communities that have initiated the program. The only cost to participants is \$1.00 for a sign, according to Det. Bill Stafford. Stafford said another meeting will be held some time next month. He said the police department will try to enlist participants on a street-

by-street basis. If five families on one street sign up for the program, that street would become a Neighborhood Watch area, Stafford said. Stafford said that most of the persons attending the October 20 meeting were from the Vance Avenue and Blue Ridge Road areas. Few persons from the northwest side of Black Mountain attended, he said. The letter to residents, to be mailed within two weeks, will give the time and date of the next meeting, in which participants will be recruited, Stafford said.

Ervin not guilty in tractor deal

by Dan Ward

An intra-agency investigation of Gene Ervin, supervisor of the western district of Alcohol Law Enforcement, has shown that he is not guilty of wrongdoing in purchasing a state surplus tractor through Black Mountain town officials while he was an ABC agent in 1973, according to Phil Carlton, secretary of Crime Control and Public Safety. In a letter to State Sen. Donald Kinkaid, who asked for an investigation into the tractor deal, Carlton said his investigation discloses that Supervisor Ervin was not guilty of either of these charges and no disciplinary action has been taken against him. Carlton also noted that District Attorney Robert Fisher determined that no charges be made against Ervin or former Black Mountain officials, C.D. Lindsey and Richard Stone. Allegations that Ervin misused his position in

arranging the purchase of the tractor, at costs, through Black Mountain town accounts were first made by Bill Ingram, former supervisor for Alcohol Law Enforcement for the western district. According to Ingram, Ervin also conspired with ABC agent James Simmons to falsify arrest records by giving Simmons credit for arrests on which he only assisted. Carlton, in response to those allegations, wrote "we find absolutely no proof of conspiracy. Some harmless, though irregular modification in certain papers was made by Agent Simmons after the cases had been disposed of, but there is absolutely no evidence that this was done in conspiracy with Supervisor Ervin." Simmons, Carlton went on to write, would receive "appropriate disciplinary action"-having the record tampering incidents included in his file. Carlton wrote that Simmons "did not exercise the best judgement consistent with the high standards of law

enforcement; but was not guilty of any great wrongdoing in amending the arrest records, which were for cases that had already been processed. Carlton stated that Simmons' action did not warrant dismissal from the department. In 1879, with the completion of the engineering marvel that is the Old Fort-Asheville segment of the Southern Railway line, Black Mountain and Ridgecrest stopped being sleepy stopovers for Asheville bound travellers. The Swannanoa Valley established itself early as a tourist center. The Mt. Mitchell Hotel opened in 1882. The famous Gresham Hotel was later erected on the same site, south of the railroad tracks on Vance Avenue. Washington House, Entoffers Inn and Black Mountain Inn were all grand hotels erected before

Our Valley part two Grey Eagle grows

by Dan Ward

Ed. note—This article is second in a series on the history of the Swannanoa Valley. The main source for this segment is History of Black Mountain, by the Black Mountain High School Class of 1933. Grey Eagle, as the community at the site of the present Black Mountain was known, was first settled in by Frederick Lafayette Burnett, a hunter and fisherman, and his family in 1780. Like the first settlers who followed him, Burnett settled in the North Fork Valley. Among the other early settlers were William Stepp and his sons, John Kyle, Major John Dougherty, who bought Lynch's Cove with a felt hat, Elijah and Elisha Kerlee, Jesse Watkins and James McNair. In terms of business, Grey Eagle was noted only for its trading post on the stagecoach line in the early 1800s. Ridgecrest, then known as Swannanoa Gap Station, served a much more prominent role as toll house and overnight stop for westbound travellers. The origin of the name Grey Eagle, like that of Swannanoa, can only be speculated upon. Like Swannanoa, the name may have its roots in an Indian name. Speculation has it that the name may describe a bird-like rock formation near

Black Mountain. Why the town fathers opted to name the town after the tallest mountain range east of the Mississippi when the town was chartered is also unknown. In 1879, with the completion of the engineering marvel that is the Old Fort-Asheville segment of the Southern Railway line, Black Mountain and Ridgecrest stopped being sleepy stopovers for Asheville bound travellers. The Swannanoa Valley established itself early as a tourist center. The Mt. Mitchell Hotel opened in 1882. The famous Gresham Hotel was later erected on the same site, south of the railroad tracks on Vance Avenue. Washington House, Entoffers Inn and Black Mountain Inn were all grand hotels erected before

the beginning of the 20th century. The area became known as a health spa and scenic attraction. Until the turn of the century, Tabernacle Church and another log church shared by the Baptists and Methodists were the only houses of worship erected. Sermons at private homes by travelling preachers were the rule for early settlers. The first school, a small log hut, was taught by J.C. Jarvis, who provided his services three months each year for a fee of \$16 per month. In 1893, the town of Black Mountain was chartered, with T.K. Brown serving as its first mayor and P. Briggs, J.M. Stepp, and S.F. Dougherty as its first commissioners.

Police Report

The Diocese of North Carolina building at 510 Vance Ave. was victim to thieves and vandals who broke into the building on October 23. Black Mountain Det. Bill Stafford said approximately \$1000 damage was done. Three juveniles are being questioned about the incident, Stafford said. The department answered 72 calls last week, issued 10 traffic citations, arrested one for public drunk, and responded to one traffic accident.

Swannanoa Fire Dept.

The Swannanoa Volunteer Fire Department responded to six calls last week. On October 17, three trucks and 18 men answered a false

alarm of a brush fire on Central Ave. On October 18, on truck and nine men were called to remove the handle from a door

at 137 Central to free a child who had locked herself in a bedroom. On October 21, two trucks and 10 men responded to a false alarm at the Tack Shack. Faulty wiring in the alarm system was blamed. A barn fire at the Riddle residence in Buckeye Cove caused \$400 damage on October 22. Three trucks and 16 men were called to put out that fire. Also that day, one truck and 15 men washed down after a wreck in which there were no injuries. On October 23, the department held a mutual aid rescue drill with the Enka department. One rescue truck and 15 rescue personnel participated. Also that day, three trucks and 21 men were called to put out a car fire in front of M&M Grocery on Old US 70. Fireman Barry Roberts asked that everyone who still has a water can belonging to the department return it immediately.

Black Mountain Fire Department

The Black Mountain Fire Department answered three calls last week. One truck and 23 men were called to put out a soot fire in the chimney at the John Bradley residence at 105 Ninth St. on October 20. No damage was reported. On October 22, a car fire at 212 Ninth St. caused minor damage. One truck and 20 men responded to that fire. Minor damage resulted

from a fire caused by wiring to the water heater at the Nora Pierce residence at 307 Church St. on October 23. One truck and 20 men responded to that fire. The Black Mountain Fire Department ambulance made one emergency run last week. The Buncombe County Ambulance made six emergency runs, 14 routine runs and was not needed on three runs.

Bill and Marilyn and the Monte Vista Old-time image helps hotel

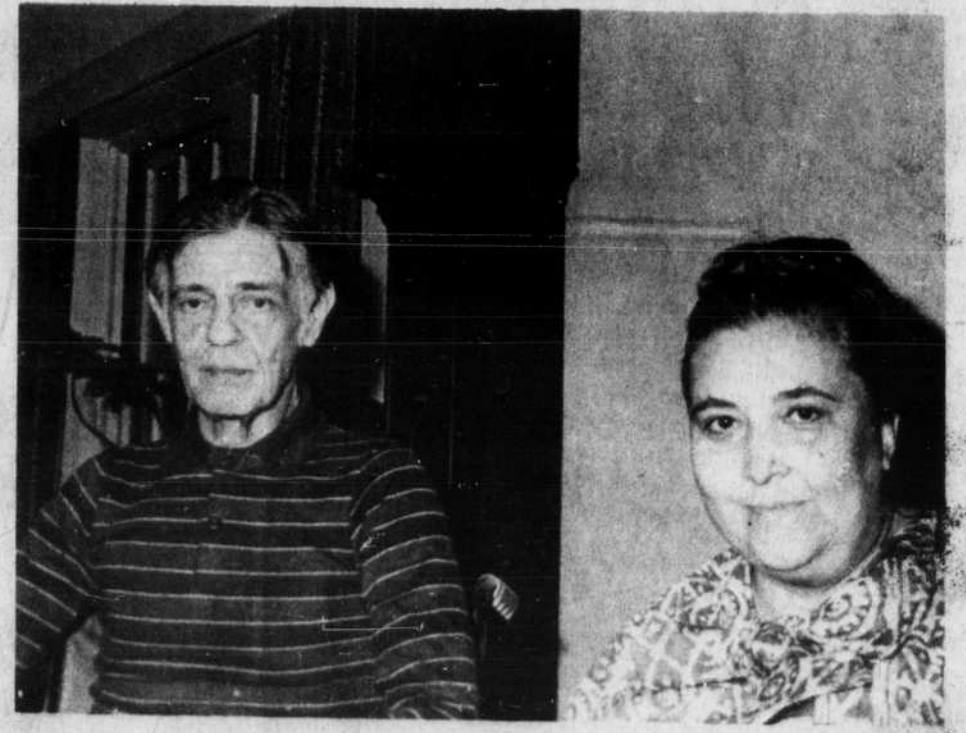
by Dan Ward

Gone are the days of the gleaming roadsters, of tourist-jammed steam trains puffing into the Black Mountain depot, and of the grand hotels sporting tremendous verandas and huge carpeted lobbies. All are gone—except the Monte Vista. Bill and Marilyn Phillips, who in 1955 began operating the hotel established in 1919 by Bill's parents, L.E. and Rosalee Phillips, have worked hard to maintain the elegant atmosphere of the 20s and 30s in the sprawling Monte Vista Hotel. The old-fashioned image is intentional. While for a number of years, the hotel often was second choice for visitors preferring modern motels or a room at one of the conference centers, now reservations come from all over from folks looking for a homey country atmosphere. "Our business has really improved these last few years," Marilyn said. "I think we are getting more people who want old-fashioned country." Most of the Phillipses business is by reservation now, a fact that makes them happy that I-40 will divert most traffic away from the hotel. About 30 persons, most of them retired, live at the hotel full-time or seasonally.

Bill remembers the days when his parents owned the hotel, Camp Alice on top of Mt. Mitchell and rented the Lake Eden Inn where Camp Rockmont is now. The original hotel stood where the Monte Vista parking lot is now. An annex was built in 1926 and the present main building in 1937. Bill's father used to let his

pigs run free in the woods across from the hotel, now replaced by urban expansion. "It was more of a tourist town then than it is now," Marilyn said. "There used to be about 20 cabs then in Black Mountain." The Phillipses raised their food for a number of years on a nearby farm—no small job for a hotel full of visitors. Marilyn is always on the

watch for antiques for the hotel lobby, which would make a museum curator envious. She and Bill keep those they have in almost new condition with occasional reupholstering. They won't part with any of them. "We try to keep the style we've got," Marilyn said, not seeing anything at all wrong in being old-fashioned.



Winddrops on a twig would be beautiful even if there were no water shortage. (Dan Ward)