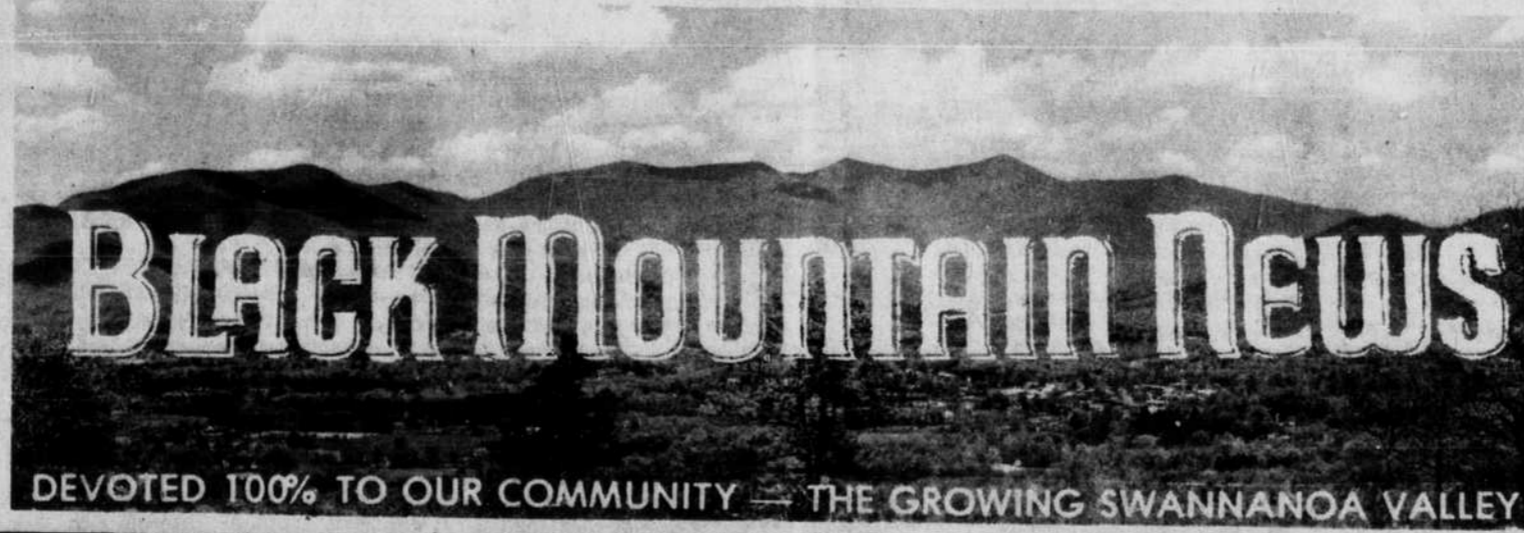


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Hospital packed for hearing

by Dan Ward

More than 500 persons gathered into the 280-seat auditorium at Western North Carolina Hospital October 27 for a public hearing on services provided by the state's specialty hospital.

Dr. John Ralston, medical director of the Alcoholic Rehabilitation Unit, noted that the ARC and Detox units use the hospital's labs, X-ray facilities, services and cooking facilities. He also noted that many alcoholics are heavy smokers and show acute respiratory problems that are treated at the hospital.

Irene Stephenson, coordinator of the XYZ Club and other activities for the elderly, noted that many of the hospital's patients are elderly and unable to drive to the hospital for treatment. "How are we going to transport these people to another location?" she asked.

Ed Weber, representing the Swannanoa Valley Chamber of Commerce, noted that over half the hospital's costs are returned to the state.

Others testified that the hospital provides on-the-job training for area students in the health care fields, provides consulting to clinics in this part of the state, and is needed in the treatment of cancer patients. Buncombe County Sheriff Tom Morrissey, who has a retarded daughter, said that the hospital is needed to provide proper care for the retarded children in the Satellite Unit and that the Detox unit, dependent on the hospital, has kept 2000 drunks out of Buncombe County jails each year. "It's been shown over and over again that centralization of services is devastating," Morrissey said.

Joe Gray, of the American Veterans, noted that 67 percent of the cost of patient care at the hospital is paid for by private insurance companies.

"If you are looking to save state funds, look elsewhere. This center is not funded primarily by state funds," Gray said.

Other speakers included Black Mountain Ald. Tom Sobol, who said, "Whatever the town government of Black Mountain can do, we will do, to keep this hospital open."

Black Mountain Ald. A.F. Tyson said, "We are disturbed at attempts to close this hospital."

Black Mountain Ald. A.F. Tyson said, "We are disturbed at attempts to close this hospital. In fact, we are disturbed every two years, referring to repeated proposals to close it. Tyson also echoed a popular

statement that "one of the brightest days in the history of Western North Carolina was when they appropriated money to build this hospital."

The task force was at the hospital to examine the facilities and hear citizen input into the effectiveness of its treatment. The task force will also examine facilities at the state's other two specialty hospitals in McCaine and Wilson. The task force will provide Secretary of Human Resources Sarah Morrow with their findings.

A slogan used by a number of speakers, "It's along way from Murphy to McCaine," referred to a proposal in the last session of the General Assembly to close the WNC Hospital and the one in Wilson to save the state an estimated \$2.8 million. Specialized health care, according to the Base Budget Committee subcommittee proposal, would be consolidated at the McCaine facility.

Although the task force will not be responsible for making recommendations to the legislature, Davie Black received an ovation for suggesting they recommend raising the cigarette tax from two cents to finance treatment of respiratory diseases.

The hearing was not without its humor. One Swannanoa man, a hospital employee, compared the western part of the state to an udder with a nipple ending in Raleigh, where "we are being sucked dry."

Board, issues on ballot

by Dan Ward

The Buncombe County Board of Elections has announced that the polling place for Black Mountain Precinct 3 has again been changed.

Because legal notices of the polling places have already been published listing the Eagle Nest as the 3rd precinct polling place, Lake Tomahawk the Clubhouse will not be used.

Polling places for the November 8 elections will be: Black Mountain, 2nd precinct - Black Mountain Primary School, Black Mountain 3rd Precinct - Eagles Nest, and Montreat - Assembly Inn for Town Board elections.

Also to be voted on are two referendums - the issuance of Clean Water Bonds and the issuance of highway bonds, whether or not to make county school board elections non-partisan, and five constitutional amendments - the right of a husband to the Homestead exemption, the

right of the husband to equal insurance rights to his wife, gubernatorial succession, the right of municipalities to own public utilities and maintaining a mandatory balanced state budget.

On those issues, voters in Swannanoa 1st Precinct will vote at the Fire Department, Swannanoa 2nd at Swannanoa School and Riceville at the Riceville Fire Department. Black Mountain 1st Precinct will vote at Owen High School and Black Mountain Precinct 4 and Ridgcrest at the Montreat Assembly Inn.

Polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Candidates for mayor in Black Mountain are Margaret Slagle and Tom Sobol. Candidates for alderman in Black Mountain are Ross Taylor, Michael Begley, Mark Hooper, John Klutz, Jean Standley, Charles Wise, Bentley Leonard, Don Hoeffling, Jim Norton, Naomi Bringham, Ruth Brandon and Alfred Tyson. Candidates for councilman

in Montreat are Steve Aceto, Frances Foreman, Andy Andrews, John Abernethy, and Ivan Stafford.

Volunteers make Food Stamp Program work

by Mary Durant

Volunteer helpers with the Black Mountain Food Stamp program met on Friday morning, October 27, at Dr. John Wilson's home for a briefing by Rita Roberts,

Outreach Coordinator of Buncombe County's Food Stamp program. Present were Dorothy Allen, Charlotte Bridgman, Eunice Brunson, Polly Douglas, Ken and Mary Durant, Hugo and Sybil Thompson, and Nancy

Wilson. Meta Hoover was unavoidably absent. Purpose of the meeting was to further our effectiveness as helpers. The Volunteers' job is to prepare forms jointly with applicants, for scrutiny and completion by professional

who in each case must make the final decision as to eligibility, amount of stamps granted, and their cost.

Volunteers received their first briefing on May 27 after the program was removed from City Hall. Shortly after that the Board of United Methodist Church generously offered their facilities. The Rev. Harwood Myers reports, "We have had no problem at all with the Food Stamps. Our church is happy to have its facilities used for such a good purpose."

Skeptics concerned about fraud are invited to visit a stamp session and examine the searching inventory that is taken of income, assets, family size, rent, and medical and other expenses. All of these data must be documented by receipts, canceled checks, etc. With obviously necessary exceptions such as mothers of young children, every able-bodied person 18-65 years of age must register for work.

Authorizations must be renewed every two months.

An article in the News of October 20 painted a bleak picture of North Carolina's elderly poor, stating that only about six percent of those eligible are participating in the Food Stamp program. Mrs. Roberts was glad to be able to report that Buncombe County seems to have been one of the most successful counties in reaching such people.

Our local Stamp sessions take place on the first Friday of each month from 1 to 4 p.m. at the Black Mountain United Methodist Church. The number of people served averages about 35. Applications may be made there or at the County Social Service Department in Asheville, where also questions will be answered by phone. Needy persons who lack transportation or are physically disabled will be visited in their homes if they will make their problems known.

Slagle attends workshop

by Dan Ward

Black Mountain Mayor Slagle was one of seven representatives from North Carolina at a conference on Balanced Growth and Economic Development within the Appalachian region.

The conference, held in Charleston W.Va. October 27 through 29, was sponsored by the Appalachian Regional Commission, which will use the conference findings to make recommendations to state and federal officials.

Mrs. Slagle was appointed to the Task Force on Environment and Natural Resources at the conference through the League of Municipalities.

The mayor, who has reported her impressions to Gov. Jim Hunt, said there were three major topics within her task force that affected North Carolina and Black Mountain in particular.

The most far-ranging was a proposal at the conference to promote a severance tax to consumers on coal to revitalize coal towns. Mrs.

Slagle said she opposed such a tax, since coal companies stood to gain more than the residents. She said revitalization should be funded on a local scale.

Two topics of greater importance to the Swannanoa Valley were discussions on how more money could be made on tourism, and obtaining federal funding to encourage small businesses relating to wood products - especially as low-cost fuel.

Activities included a banquet attended by Vice-President Walter Mondale.

Our Valley part three

Ridgcrest grows from stage stop

by Dan Ward

Ed. Note - This article is third in a sketchy series on the history of the Swannanoa Valley. The main source for this segment is Fading Hi-Lights in Our Swannanoa Valley, by Fred E. Mitchell.

Before Ridgcrest became well-known as a center for those interested in transporting souls to Heaven, it was prominent as a transportation center of a more worldly nature.

In the early 1800s, Ridgcrest, or Swannanoa Gap Station, as it was known,

was a stopover on the stage route from Old Fort to Asheville. The area was noted by travellers for its thick rhododendron groves and a free-flowing mountain spring.

In 1857, Mill Creek Road and Old US 70, the stage route, was covered with a double deck of wood and made into a turnpike. Swannanoa Gap Station became the toll gate for the modern road. Until improvements were made, stagecoaches travelling from Old Fort to the station had larger wheels on one side than on the other, to accommodate the slope of the road. At Ridgcrest, wheels were

changed for the trip back down.

The glory of the modern turnpike was short-lived. In 1879, the rail connection between Old Fort and Asheville was completed in the tunnel just east of the conference center. At the expense of 125 convict lives, the greatest engineering feat in American railroad history made transportation of goods to and from the Swannanoa Valley simple.

In honor of the engineer of the eastbound locomotive at the rail connection, Swannanoa Gap Station became known as Terrell's Station. Later the name was changed to Blue Mont, in recognition of the Blue Mont Inn, built at the approximate site of the Variety Store in Ridgcrest. In 1902, O.L. Stringfield, a member of the N.C. Baptist Assembly, reported to the assembly that he had found

the ideal site for assembly grounds - at Blue Mont.

In order to buy the property, the assembly divided it into 50 lots and sold enough lots to make a down-payment of \$8,500 to the two former owners.

In June, 1902, the first congregation, eight in all, gathered under the sky on log

seats to hear the first sermon at the M.C. Baptist Assembly grounds.

Later, to avoid confusion in telegraph services, assembly leaders changed the name of their new development to Ridgcrest, because Blue Mont had the same abbreviation as neighboring Black Mountain.

Black Mountain Fire Department

The Black Mountain Fire Department answered seven calls last week.

On October 26, they answered two calls on overheated stoves. One truck and 14 men responded to the Floyd Crisp residence on Ruby Avenue. No damage was reported. Two trucks and

18 men responded to a report of an overheated stove at the Jerry Stafford residence on Lytle Cove Road. Minor damage was reported.

On October 28, two trucks and 17 men put out a truck fire on U.S. 70 east and one truck and 17 men put out a brush fire on Beach Street.

On October 30, one truck and 16 men put out leaf fires at two locations on Laurel Avenue. Also that day, one truck and eight men were called to wash down after a wreck on U.S. 70 west at Blue Ridge Road.

The County Ambulance Service made four emergency runs, 16 routine runs and was not needed on one.

Swannanoa Fire

The Swannanoa Volunteer Fire Department will be honored with an Appreciation Day by the Ladies Auxiliary in honor of Volunteer Fire Department Week November 6 through 12, as proclaimed by President Carter.

The Appreciation Day will be November 6 from 2 to 5 p.m. at the fire station. Light

refreshments will be served. On October 31, the Ladies Auxiliary and the Fire Department held a get-together at the fire department.

The department answered one call last week. One truck and 15 men were called to wash down a gas spill at the Mr. Zip store from a tank truck overflow on October 27.

Police Report

accidents and assisted Sheriff's Police in issuing a warrant.

Police reported very little vandalism on Halloween night. They answered a total of 85 calls last week.

The Black Mountain Police captured a runaway from the Juvenile Evaluation Center, issued four traffic citations, arrested two for public drunk, investigated three auto ac-

May Ritchie DesChamps

Doll art "a past time"

by Dan Ward

Times were, according to May Ritchie DesChamps of Swannanoa, that all a little girl had to play with were ten dishes, acorns and a doll that Ma made from what she had around the house.

The dolls Mrs. DesChamps makes from cornhusks now are likely to be playthings for children. In fact, two of them are in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

DesChamps, a

member of the Southern Highlands Craftsman Guild for the past 50 years, makes about 100 dolls each year now for Guild shops in the mountains. At one time, she was making 900 each year for less than a dollar each.

"Now, I don't even do enough for all the Guild shops," she said. She doesn't sell any herself, and shuns publicity because, as she says, "I don't like it when people come in to see the dolls - it disturbs my day."

Mrs. DesChamps made her first cornhusk doll 31 years

ago for her children. Recently, she finished another doll for a grandchild. This one was especially personalized - on its head was a lock of Grandma's hair.

"When I was a child, Mrs. DesChamps, said, "my mother used to make us rag dolls. We would make paper dolls out of the pages of the Sears and Roebuck catalogue."

Although making the dolls may have been something of a living once, now it is mainly a pastime and occasional alternative to house chores.

"I don't know - it's just a

hobby. I do a little bit at a time," she said. She prefers to work on only one part of the doll's anatomy at a time, sitting down and doing a few heads, or a few arms at a time.

"Now I take extra special time on them - cause they sell so high," she said. Accessories include colored edgings on the dresses, crocheted baskets and umbrellas and scarves, and even tiny ladderback chairs with caned seats.

Mrs. DesChamps shares her hobby with six sisters - all who learned it from her. One of them was featured in a magazine in Vermont for her doll-making.

Mrs. DesChamps herself has been the subject of a number of magazine and book articles. She has been in National Geographic and the Avondale Mills trade magazine.

She and her dolls have also been the subjects of articles in three books - The Craftsman in America, Artisans of the Appalachians by Black Mountain photographer Ed Dupuy, and Time-Life's The Border States.

Although she has thousands of dolls behind her ranging from two-inch babies to a 26-inch Southern Belle, Mrs. DesChamps' work hasn't become old hat.

"I learn something new all the time," she said.

See "How to make a cornhusk doll" elsewhere in this issue.

