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## New school eyed by joint committees

by Dan Ward

Voicing a feeling that basic school repairs in the Swannanoa Valley have been neglected by the County Board of Education for years, members of School Advisory Committees in the Owen District agreed September 18 on a plan to gather public support for a number of school improvements, including replacement of the main building at Black Mountain Primary School.

Fred Myers, representing Owen High School's Advisory Committee, was appointed chairman of a committee to look into deficiencies in the 60-year-old building.

"I think the school committee thinks that it's going to take sheer numbers to get what we need, that's how I understand what was said," he said.

"While these palaces were built at Erwin and elsewhere, we've been third rate citizens," he added.

The inspection subcommittee is expected to tour the Primary School, completed in 1919, and take photos to show the Board of Education at its October 17 meeting.

Complaints about the Primary School building range from bricks popping out of the walls to plumbing and heating problems that would cost more to renovate than to build a new facility.

According to Black Mountain Primary School Principal Jerry Green and Swannanoa School Principal Bill Williams, each school's advisory committee tried to hold requests down to the most

basic so as not to overwhelm the school board with long lists of minor requests.

The most urgent need voiced by Max Price, joint committee chairman, for Owen High School was for a larger band room.

Swannanoa School, which will continue to be used as a middle school when a new \$4.1 million building is constructed next year, will need repairs to the sewage system, which now overflows into the play area and runs off into the nearby Swannanoa River, according to Carolyn Davidson. Other immediate needs include roof repairs, remodeling for a middle school program, remodeling of the heating system and plumbing system and replacement of the carpet in the library, and repairs to auditorium seating, she said.

Black Mountain Grammar School's most immediate needs are a new carpet for the library, completion of

recommendations made by a Grand Jury last year to increase fire protection, adequate water pressure, and tiling of the wash rooms, according to Lynn Parrish. As a long-range goal, it was recommended that a new cafeteria be built.

No report was given on needs for Carver School.

Grady Rozzell, Owen's representative to the Board of Education, noted to the joint committees that other schools were given new facilities only after large numbers of concerned citizens turned out at board meetings in Asheville. Committee members echoed a feeling that interested persons from throughout the valley should be encouraged to attend the next meeting of the committees October 16 at Carver School at 7 p.m., and at the presentation of the schools' needs at the Board of Education meeting October 17 at the courthouse in Asheville.



Umbrella weather

Nature's umbrellas were in vogue last week amid heavy rains and cool fall-like weather. (Dan Ward)

## Eight weeks later, grief hangs on

by Dan Ward

Eight weeks after a Black Mountain fire truck destroyed one room of their house and

shifted the rest off its foundation, Mr. and Mrs. J.E. McMahan continue to live in an unheated trailer behind the remains of their home on Old US 70. Sewage from the trailer bubbles up, from a makeshift oil drum septic tank, into the garden that was once their main pastime.

"When the accident first happened, the firemen couldn't do enough for us," said Mrs. McMahan, her voice shaky from shock of the accident that occurred eight weeks ago. "Then they saw everything had been turned over to the lawyer, and now we're neglected. Our stuff is still out there the way it was the day it happened."

The McMahan home, at the corner of Blue Ridge Road and Old US 70 was destroyed when a fire truck driven by a fireman in training reportedly experienced brake failure, swerved to miss a car, and ran into the east end of the small, two-story house on August 1.

Mr. and Mrs. McMahan, an elderly couple, were given a used trailer to live in by Black Mountain firemen shortly after the accident. The couple declined an offer to stay in a motel at town expense because they had animals and the garden to take care of.

Firemen hooked up water, gas, electricity and a makeshift septic system for the couple, and cleaned up the inside and temporarily fixed the leaky roof of the trailer, which the McMahan's son, John, said "looked like a bunch of Gypsies lived in it."

According to John McMahan and Town Manager Mack Kirkpatrick, many of the couple's problems, including lack of heat and a pilot light that keeps going out, stem from negligence on the part of the trailer dealer. "I'm so nervous I can't do nothing," said Mrs. McMahan, who was treated for shock shortly after the accident. Neither she or her husband were injured in the crash. Her son said that the town has

been unresponsive to requests that furniture and a refrigerator still sitting in the yard be covered up against the weather and eyes of passersby who ask the couple to sell the items. Kirkpatrick said he offered to cover the items with plastic, but that the couple would only accept a costly canvas tarp.

"People have been coming by asking to buy the couch and all — it's about to drive them (the elder McMahans) nuts," John McMahan said. He added that he has missed all but about two weeks worth of work in helping his parents, including a short period when they lived at his house and he would drive them back to the house to feed their animals.

The majority of bad feelings toward the town lie in settlement proceedings, McMahan said. He said appraisers set the maximum value of the house and its contents, after devaluation, at \$16,600. He said that the town's best offer so far has been approximately \$17,000. A new house much smaller than the present one would cost a minimum of \$26,500, builders told him, McMahan said.

Under state law, a municipality is not required to pay damages beyond the limit of their liability insurance for acts by employees, \$10,000 in the case of Black Mountain, a factor that puts the McMahans in the position of having to take whatever they are offered.

Bill Eubanks, attorney for the town, said that he and the town board are working on another settlement offer that they will present to the couple as soon as the board agrees on it. He said whatever the board offers will be more than fair as far as settlements go, but that his experience with settlements is that those receiving them never think they are getting enough.

A proposal by Ald. Ruth Brandon at the September 12 meeting of the town board to allow a representative of the News to sit in on a closed

session where the settlement was discussed was opposed by the other four board mem-

bers, who felt the settlement should not be released to the public until it was agreed on.



Carl Stewart, Speaker of the NC House, talks with well-wishers before addressing the Swannanoa Valley Chamber of Commerce on Gov. Jim Hunt's tax rebate plan last week. (Dan Ward)

## Man burned smoking while on respirator

A Marion man received minor burns on his face September 21 when he began smoking a cigarette while receiving oxygen at WNC Hospital.

Jack Ellison, ad-

ministrative director of the hospital, said Glenn Hawkins violated signs and hospital rules warning of the danger of smoking near open oxygen tanks when he began smoking while inhaling oxygen.

The Black Mountain Fire

Department responded to the fire that started in the incident with two trucks, two ambulances and 15 men. Minor damage to the room was reported.

One truck and four men investigated a report of a smell of smoke at Westminster Drive in Montreat September 20.

Also that day, one engine and eight men washed down after a wreck at US 70 and Broadway and one engine and six men responded to a false alarm caused by a malfunction in the alarm system at the Ingles warehouse on US 70.

One engine and six men were called to put out a car fire near the police station on State Street September 22. No damage was reported.

Damage estimated at \$400 was reported from a car fire in the garage at the James Buckner residence on Old US 70 September 23. Two engines and 13 men responded.

The Buncombe County Ambulance made 10 routine emergency calls and one cancelled run last week

## Black Mountain Primary New school, old plan

by Dan Ward

A new building to replace the crumbling Black Mountain Primary School is not a recent idea.

An October 1965 report by the Buncombe County Board of Education outlines plans for a new structure, approximately three times the size of the existing main building, on the site of the school. A notation at the bottom plans notes that

construction on the new facilities was scheduled to begin within a year. Part of the new school, the cafeteria and a lower grades annex, was indeed built within two years.

It was reported that at that time, the superintendent of schools stood on the lawn and told parents and teachers that "within five years (by 1971) there will be a new school here." That plan and those

words came years before need for an Erwin Middle School was voiced.

The exact date and origins of the plans for a new school could not be found by the News by press time, as Brown Griffin, assistant superintendent for planning for Buncombe County Schools, and the person in charge of new building, had left for a meeting in Raleigh before he could do the necessary research.

However, the plans probably came after plans were made to build a new facility for Owen High School, he said. The philosophy of those focusing on a new Black Mountain elementary school facility, was that once the new high school was built, the present facility would be converted to a middle school, de-emphasizing the need for renovation of Black Mountain Grammar and Swannanoa Schools. That left the two elementary schools in dire need of replacement.

Swannanoa School, after valley-wide pressure on the school board over the years, will finally be replaced next year with a new \$4.1 million facility. Plans for a new Owen High School, though far from the "all systems go" stage, seem to be high on the new building priority list of the Board of Education, leaving the 60-year-old Black Mountain Primary School the last in line for replacement in the valley — and far from the immediate concern of the Board of Education.



Black Mountain Primary School's east wall. (Dan Ward)

## Bloodmobile visit to Montreat set

The American Red Cross Bloodmobile is scheduled to visit the Montreat-Anderson College campus on Tuesday, October 10. Students, as well as the Montreat community, may come give blood at this time.

Last March, Montreat-Anderson was asked to supply the Bloodmobile with 100 pints of blood, and 131 pints were

given. This time, Montreat-Anderson is again being asked to contribute 100 pints.

According to a spokesman for the Red Cross, the Bloodmobile is very important because of the blood it brings in. "We supply all the hospitals in 27 counties in Western North Carolina, northeast Georgia, and east Tennessee," she says. "It takes 175 units of blood a day

per hospital to keep them going, so we really count on the Bloodmobile to bring it in."

Sophomore Roger Smith, who is chairman of the committee planning the Blood Drive at the college, says, "This is something that people can do that may save a life. It's something you can do while you're well that might come back to you when you need blood."

## Most new JEC jobs filled

All but four of the 54 cottage parent positions added to the state's training school staff have been filled according to Robert Atkinson, assistant director of Institutional Services for the Department of Human Resources' Division of Youth Services.

Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr. added the needed positions following apparent student involvement in sexual activity

at Stonewall Jackson Training School in Concord, and the death of an employee at Juvenile Evaluation Center in Swannanoa.

The 14 positions allocated to Stonewall Jackson School have been filled plus seven vacancies which already existed.

At Juvenile Evaluation Center, 28 of the 30 allocated positions have been filled according to Don Pagett,

director of the school. "The two remaining positions were filled but the applicants backed out. Pagett noted that 15 of the 28 employed had less than the formerly required two years of college. Pagett said that the new positions give the school more flexibility in operating the cottage life program and provide a possibility for more treatment and security

## Swannanoa VFD fire calls down

The Swannanoa Fire Department made one run last week, the second in two months. Three engines and 12 men responded to a grass fire on US 70 across from Jim Punnix Homes. Reynolds Fire Department assisted in mutual aid. The fire was

apparently caused by sparks from train wheels, according to Fireman Barry Roberts.

Roberts said there have been 11 less fires this year than at the same time last year.

On September 21, five men attended a hazardous materials class at Erwin.