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BLACK MOUNTAIN NEWS

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Schools appeal set, parents contacted

by Dan Ward

The joint school committees of the Owen District approved a plan October 16 to show a presentation and urge immediate renovation or building of Black Mountain Primary School to the Buncombe County Board of Education.

Fred Myers, a chairman of a subcommittee appointed to investigate safety hazards at the school, showed a series of slides showing rotting joists, exposed wiring, warped beams and windows, missing bricks, and places where paint had peeled off of the walls shortly after it was applied.

Those who viewed the slides approved of the Myers' presentation, and the only suggestion was that Myers stress that the school was scheduled to be built in the mid 60's.

"I don't think we should be logophobic (about asking for funding) when we have a building that is dangerous," Myers told the committees.

Attending the meeting were Schools Superintendent Andy Miller and School Board representative from the Owen District Grady Rozzell.

Committee members put the two on the defensive with questions about "frills" in the Reynolds and Erwin school districts.

Miller said that many of the extras in schools there were authorized by earlier boards, and that the money could not be rechanneled once frozen for those schools. Rozzell pointed out that only a handful of persons were present at the reading of the schools budget for this year and that the board is not always aware of immediate problems at Buncombe Schools.

Miller told the committees that the best route to obtaining a new high school or elementary school for the Owen District is to campaign for passage of a local bond issue next year or the year after. Miller said that a county bond issue, with proceeds earmarked before the referendum, may be voted on next fall. The county may choose to hold a bond referendum on the same ballot as a state referendum, more likely to pass, in the spring of 1980, Miller said.

The only other route to obtaining enough money for major improvements or new building is to convince the County Commissioners to re-establish a contingency fund for schools, and then obtain some of that money through the school board. He pointed out that the current total school budget is approximately \$12 million per year, while the cost of a new high school is \$8 to 9 million, and the cost of a new elementary school is \$3.5 million.

Rozzell suggested the committees study the possibility of applying for federal grant money through the Appalachian Regional Commission or asking the school board for money from interest on capital improvement accounts. He suggested the committees ensure that the Owen District is represented in the audience at all school board meetings to remind board members of problems in the Valley's schools.

The committees approved a plan to send a letter home with every Owen District school child asking that all taxpayers attend the Buncombe County School Board meeting October 19 at 7 p.m. on the seventh floor of the County Building in Asheville, when the Owen District presentation will be given. A list of immediate needs in all Swannanoa Valley Schools will be given to the school board at that time, following the slide presentation.

The school committee will meet again November 20 at 7 p.m. at the Owen High School library.



A woodpecker digs for a meal in an aging apple tree during one of the sunny, but crisp, days last week. (Dan Ward)

Montreat water talks shelved, property settlement set

by Dan Ward

The Montreat Town Council at its October 16 meeting honored a request from the Mountain Retreat Association to put off negotiations for the town's water system, and agreed to meet with association executives for a quiet court settlement of right-of-ways deemed to the town.

Due to a current dispute between trustees of the association and the U.S. Presbyterian Church over the right of the trustees to sell property, the association has asked that negotiations for the town to take over the association operated and maintained water system be postponed.

The church and association are awaiting an opinion from the Attorney General's office concerning the sale of two buildings by the association trustees to Montreat-Anderson College. The opinion is expected to have bearing on other real estate transfers by the trustees.

On the suggestion of the town attorney, Phillip Carson, the board agreed to meet with executives of the Mountain Retreat Association and try to

arrange a settlement in judge's chambers of right-of-ways transferred to the town by the association when the town was chartered.

Although the board was hesitant to enter into court action over right-of-ways, Carson suggested that it would be a service to the citizens to settle quick and finally any question of what land was decided, and what was not.

The question of ownership arose when a group of property owners complained before the Board of Adjustments that the Mountain Retreat Association had sold land that was actually part of a street right-of-way deemed to the town.

Ald. A.E. Andrews, in other action, told the council that flood repair work to streets and stream diversion had almost been completed. He noted however, that the board has only recently been advised that it has only until November 9 to complete flood repairs funded by a \$27,000 federal grant. Andrews said that while most work should be completed by then, some may not. The board agreed informally to ask for an extension of the deadline, considering it had not been notified of the time limit earlier.

Andrews also noted that he has received a number of complaints from persons about the water system, including cases where water has

been shut off due to sediment or inadequate supplies.

At the suggestion of Ed Crisp, the board agreed to send out a questionnaire on the water service provided by the Mountain Retreat Association with the December tax bills. Information gathered from the questionnaire would be used in negotiations for the water system.

The council also agreed to ask the Billy Graham Association for a donation toward a \$4000 asphalt compactor for patching streets.

Pete Post, Public Works Superintendent, told the board he had ordered a 1979 Chevrolet Nova from McMurray Chevrolet for the Police Department.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mayor John Abernethy surprised Susan Neville, who acted as town clerk for 10 years, with a plaque of appreciation for the town.

It was also noted at their meeting that the town has no provision for leaf removal, but that the town may be able to have leaves removed at the expense of the individual homeowners.

Ald. Ivan Stafford suggested persons either see that the leaves are used as mulch, or bag them to be picked up as trash. He added that Montreat-Anderson students, for a fee, will clean ditches of homeowners who do not wish to clean their own.

Collins closing -- a change in goals

by Dan Ward

A change in goals for the Collins Department Store chain was the reason given for the closing of the Black Mountain Collins store, according to store manager Jeff Jennings.

Jennings said that although the store was showing a good profit, Collins executives chose to close the store as part of a plan to maintain only large stores at urban shopping centers.

Raymond Collins, company president in Charlotte, said he was busy and could not provide an official explanation for closing the store, which began a going-out-of-business sale October 12.

"The only thing I've found out from the main office is that this store is too small," Jennings said Friday. "They had to go out of their way to buy for this store."

Jennings said that since the Collins store in Williamston burned down this year, Black Mountain's store has been the only smaller store left in the chain. He said buyers would have to buy more expensive items for the other stores, then make a separate purchase of lower-priced items for the store in Black Mountain.

Jennings said that stores such as Black Mountain's were common in the 50s and 60s, but that a change in emphasis has resulted in construction of large new stores, and phasing out of the smaller ones. Jennings said two new Collins stores are under construction now.

Employees at the local store were given notice three weeks

ago that the store was to close, although "this has been in the planning for years now," Jennings said. He said the employees will be given severance pay and that the company is trying to find them new jobs. He will be transferring to a Collins store at Myrtle Beach, S.C., Jennings said.

Jennings said the close-out sale will continue until all merchandise is sold out, perhaps for weeks.

A.F. Tyson, owner of the building now used by Collins, said that no new tenants have been found, but that he and Collins management have been talking to possible leasees.

Hunt to speak

Gov. James B. Hunt, Jr. will make several stops in Western North Carolina next week in support of the candidacy of Lamar Gudger for re-election to the U.S. Congress from the North Carolina 11th District.

After addressing the League of Municipalities at the Inn on

the Plaza on Tuesday, October 24, Gov. Hunt will come to Black Mountain to attend a reception in honor of Congressman Gudger from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Black Mountain Clubhouse.

The public has been invited to attend.

OATS funding renewed

The Buncombe County Council on Aging has received notification of grant awards totaling \$75,471 for two transportation programs under Title III, Older Americans Act. Formal

notification has been received from the North Carolina Division on Aging through Land-Of-Sky Regional Council. The two grants under

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Bizarre chase ends in Old Fort

by Dan Ward
and Sandi McInnis

Two police were injured and three vehicle's damaged in a high speed chase that took Black Mountain Police and two sheriff's departments across two counties early October 16.

Before a series of incidents that began at 1:30 a.m. came to a close in Old Fort, Black Mountain Officer Randy Halford and Buncombe County Deputy Rex Gregg were treated and released from Memorial Mission Hospital.

Events began Monday morning when Halford and Officer Burt Stone saw a four-wheel drive truck run a red light at State Street and Montreat Road. The truck proceeded to weave across the center line as it traveled west on US 70, police reported.

The truck failed to yield to a blue light and siren when the police pursued, and in fact hit the side of the police car when it attempted to pass. The officers finally managed to pull ahead of the truck and stop it on Old US 70, police reported. As the officers walked back to the stopped truck, it backed up, and sped toward Swannanoa. The police ran back to their car and chased the truck to the Swannanoa Mr. Zip, around the gas pumps there, and back on US 70 toward Black Mountain.

With assistance from Gregg, the truck was again stopped near Burger World, boxed in by the county and Black Mountain police cars. As Gregg got out of his car, Halford attempted to get in the truck from the passenger side, police reported. At that moment, the driver backed into the county car, injuring both Gregg and Halford, then pulled forward, knocking the Black Mountain Police car out of its way.

Black Mountain Det. Don Ramsey and Assistant Chief Jim Wiseman, responding to a call for assistance, joined Stone in chasing the truck east



Black Mountain Police car damaged during a chase (Charlie Taylor)

toward Old Fort on US 70, police reported. McDowell County Sheriff's Police, responding for a call for help, pulled a tractor-trailer across the I-40 at Parker Padgett Road as a roadblock.

Apparently learning this over a CB radio, the driver of the truck got off at the exit before the roadblock and drove toward Old Fort, with Black Mountain Police in pursuit.

As luck would have it, the truck was stopped by a train at a crossing, where Black Mountain Police persuaded the driver to give up, police reported.

The driver, Eric Todd Foster, 16 of Marion, was charged with running a red light, failing to yield to a blue light, driving without a license, reckless driving, hit and run, possession of marijuana, damage to real property, and two counts of assault with a deadly weapon (the truck).

Buncombe County Police

filed the same charges, plus assault with a deadly weapon with intent to do serious injury.

The truck was not Foster's, police reported.

Our Valley

Water pollution ends clear streams

by Bill Penfound
and June Hodge

Early agriculture was characterized by the production of food crops, mainly beans, corn and potatoes. Over one-fourth of the area consists of stony, rough land of virtually no agricultural use. However, a limited acreage of alluvial and terrace soil is included which is intensively used for crops and pasture. On hilly areas many fields were eroded beyond the possibility of further cultivation. As another result of soil erosion, the sediments from these fields often polluted and

shoaled the nearby streams. Alleviation of soil erosion has included a change to row crops, contour cropping or the development of pastures. Contour farming has not been utilized to any extent in The Valley, but the development of pastures on hilly land has been employed with considerable success.

"Before our Valley was industrialized, the clear, clean waters of the Swannanoa were ideal for swimming on hot summer days" (Reed, 1967). However, Buncombe County, with several chemical plants in the area, is the largest producer of chemicals in

North Carolina. The products comprise "agricultural chemicals, drugs, plastic materials, synthetic resins and fibers, toilet preparations... industrial chemicals, paints and varnishes and gum and wood chemicals" (Lonsdale, 1967:135). As early as 1939, the Asheville Citizen reported that fish were dying in the Swannanoa River just above its junction with the French Broad, killed by the effluent of a manufacturing plant. Unfortunately, these fish kills have occurred many times since 1939. In agriculture, the run-off from fields with

abundant fertilizer, from feedlots, from barns with livestock, causes streams to become covered with algal blooms, which reduce the oxygen content of the water, which is then of little value for aquatic life. Until 1972 the effluent from the pig barns of Warren Wilson College was allowed to pour into the Swannanoa River by way of a ditch. In 1972, however, a holding pond was constructed for the pig effluent. This material is then pumped out periodically and used as a fertilizer for farm crops. In

(cont. on page 10)

Personality clash results in firemen quitting

by Dan Ward

A personality rift between factions of the Swannanoa Fire Department resulted in a handful of the department's most experienced firefighters quitting after the last meeting of the all-volunteer department's Board of Directors October 12.

From non-attributed sources and an anonymous caller, the News has learned that a dispute beginning with an order by former chief Ken Crawford, that the station be kept closed except during fire calls, began a series of disputes that led to the resignation of Dwight Barnhill, Max Coffey, Doyce Settle, Barbara Settle and Ronnie Settle from the

department Thursday.

Other incidents, including disciplinary action against a fireman and procedure at a fire, divided the force further. The latest incident, action by the board to amend the by-laws to allow acting chief Jim Adams to vote as a member of the board—a right reserved for the chief—apparently spurred the resignations.

The board is now taking applications for a new chief, according to Adams, who said he preferred not to comment on the dispute because he has his own opinions of why the firefighters quit. Barbara Settle, who is also a member of the board, said she is still too upset over events to comment.