



## Merchants protest privilege tax hike

Black Mountain merchants came before Town Board Tuesday morning to protest increases in privilege taxes, levied at the May Board meeting.

Merchants reported increases from \$2.50 to \$50, from \$40 to \$100, \$25 to \$50 and \$29.50 to \$84. Some reported calling the City of Asheville to learn that privilege taxes for similar businesses would be lower there.

Some expressed concern that terms describing businesses were unclear and perhaps unfair. An example given was "garage" and "repair shop," one requiring a higher license fee than the other. "Which is which?" asked a merchant.

Merchants reported inequities in the bills they received, citing the example of one barber with two chairs being billed at a \$1 increase and another at a

\$3 increase.

The injustice of the fact that a privilege license from a manufacturer employing one is the same as for a manufacturer employing 200 workers was also questioned.

Summarizing the group feeling, a small-businessman said, "Just let it (the tax) apply to everybody equally--five percent, or eight percent or 10 percent (increase)."

Although privilege license fees have not risen in 15 years, aldermen admitted some of the increases seemed too steep. They will reconsider the May Board decision at the June Town Board meeting.

Meanwhile, they ask anyone having received a bill for a privilege tax to wait until after the June 8 meeting to make any payment.

## Russia holds out hope for cure

When Gary Davis started school and had a routine eye exam, doctors found that he had retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a rare genetic eye disease. They told his parents their son would eventually, inevitably go blind.

Gary lived with that knowledge for 21 years, grew up knowing that by the time he was 18 or 20 he would no longer be able to see. For RP, there was no cure.

"You can accept it and live with it. Or you can stomp the floor and say 'Why me God,'" Davis said. "After a particular point you just accept it."

The progress of his disease was slower than in some. The first symptom to appear, night blindness, limited his night time activities until he recently purchased a \$2,700 Night Vision Aid, made by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company.

"It looks like half a binocular," he said, and gives him about a 90 degree field of vision. The device takes light, transforms it to electrical energy and reproduces it on a screen.

For Davis, night without the device is total blackness; with it he can see a little better than the average person, he says.

The next step in the relentless disease is a gradual narrowing of the field of vision . . . narrower and narrower until blackness envelops all.

That would be the next step for Gary Davis, except that a few months ago he heard that Russia had developed a cure for the disease, called the Helmholtz treatment, and that some Americans were being accepted for treatment. Success ranged from arrest of the disease to actual improvement in vision.

In October, Davis wrote the State Department inquiring about the Helmholtz Institute in Moscow. In December he applied for treatment, sending them all his medical records from birth to age 28.

The he sat back to wait while Russian doctors determined from his records whether or not the disease had progressed too far for their treatment to be effective.

In April, Davis received a letter in Russian. Fortunately, a State Department letter accompanied it, in English.

"Our Embassy in Moscow has been informed that you have been accepted for treatment at the Helmholtz Institute any time in July, 1981."

When Davis read the news, it began to dawn on him that he was not going to be blind. "At first I couldn't believe it," he said. "For 21 years you've had to live with this. It took a few days to believe it. Once it sank in, (I thought) well, my prayers have been answered!"

Davis will leave Black Mountain July 12 for his first three weeks of treatment in Moscow. He will return every six to nine months for a total of four trips.

At the institute, he will receive two injections of genetic materials and enzymes at 10:30 a.m. each day, one in the hip and one in his eye. The treatment will be repeated in the afternoon.

Between outpatient treatments, he was told to expect to have an elevated temperature and to feel lethargic. He will stay in a Moscow hotel.

The first trip to Russia will cost Davis, a health care technician at the Alcoholic Rehabilitation Center who will lose his job in June because of staff cutbacks, \$1800-2500. Subsequent trips will cost even more as prices of travel continue to rise.

Davis asked several agencies for financial help, but for various reasons has received none. "Some only help if

you are blind, not to keep you from going blind," he said. Others just don't have the funds.

Fellow workers at the ARC have established a Gary Davis Fund at the Northwestern Bank in Black Mountain, hoping that the community will help.

The State Department gave Davis some advice about life in Russia. "As I understand it, things don't go as fast as they do here. You have to have patience and persistence."

Along with patience and persistence, he is taking along gifts for the doctors and nurses, and items such as candy and gum to give away as tips.

And he is learning the Russian phrases for "Hello," "Thank you," and "Where's the restroom?" Since he isn't sure how well or ill he will feel, he is leaving sightseeing plans until he gets there.

"It's a 'wait-and-see' adventure," he smiled. "I want to see everything I can--the Kremlin, museums, ballets."

Davis will keep a journal of his experience for some health organizations in the South, because very little is known about the disease here and nothing is known about its cure. "I'm hoping with my going, I can help someone else," he said.

## Weather review

May 19--high 68, low 56 degrees; .40 inches precipitation.

May 20--high 50, low 45 degrees; .70 inches precipitation.

May 21--high 73, low 43 degrees; .04 inches precipitation.

May 22--high 76, low 36 degrees.

May 23--high 80, low 39 degrees.

May 24--high 83, low 43 degrees.

May 25--high 81, low 47 degrees.

Weather courtesy of WFGW Radio



Clarence Frye grew this enormous Peace Rose, seven inches in diameter. The yellow petals are delicately lined with rose-pink.



Cliff Foster: the early bird gets the strawberry.

## You-pick-'em strawberries are family business in the Valley

According to one source, the word strawberry has been around since 1,000 A.D., but it has only been in the last 10 years that pick-your-own strawberry fields have made fresh berries available to those in Buncombe County without their own beds.

According to Agricultural Extension Agent Bobby Peek, about 60 acres of strawberries are available to pickers in Buncombe County this spring, with an average price of \$3 a gallon.

One strawberry grower is Cliff Foster on New Salem Road, Swannanoa. Like most of the strawberry farms in Buncombe County, Red Gate Farm is family-run--"Just mama and I," smiles Foster, who retired here after a career

in engineering in Florida. He never tires of saying how beautiful the Valley is.

"The picking is the easy part," Foster said, surveying the lush green of his three-year old field. The plants must be kept weed free and wet at all times, he said. Although robins and cardinals sneak in every chance they get, ignoring plastic owls intended to deter hungry birds, Foster said they are not really a problem in his field.

A couple of weeks ago when a late frost hit, Foster's plants were blossoming. Foster sat up at the pump controlling the irrigation system in his field for four and a half hours until he was certain the field was safe.

Foster has other pick-your-own vegetables throughout the seasons including blueberries, grapes and sweet corn.

Other growers in the Valley registered with the Extension Office are Fred Baker, Bee Tree Road, 686-3949, and Wells Strawberries off U.S. 70 east of Swannanoa, 683-2034. Foster's telephone number is 298-8544.

Strawberries will be available through the end of June, according to the Extension Office. It is wise, however, to come early in the morning. Many pickers start at 6:30 a.m. and when the ripe berries are gone, the fields close.

## Award assembly held at Owen

The Owen High School Awards Assembly was held Thursday, May 21 in the auditorium. Guest speaker was Mr. Gurney Chambers from Western Carolina University.

Community awards were given by several clubs. Donna Lewis received the Black Mountain Women's Club Scholarship. Shandrai Boyd received the Delta Sigma Theta Scholarship.

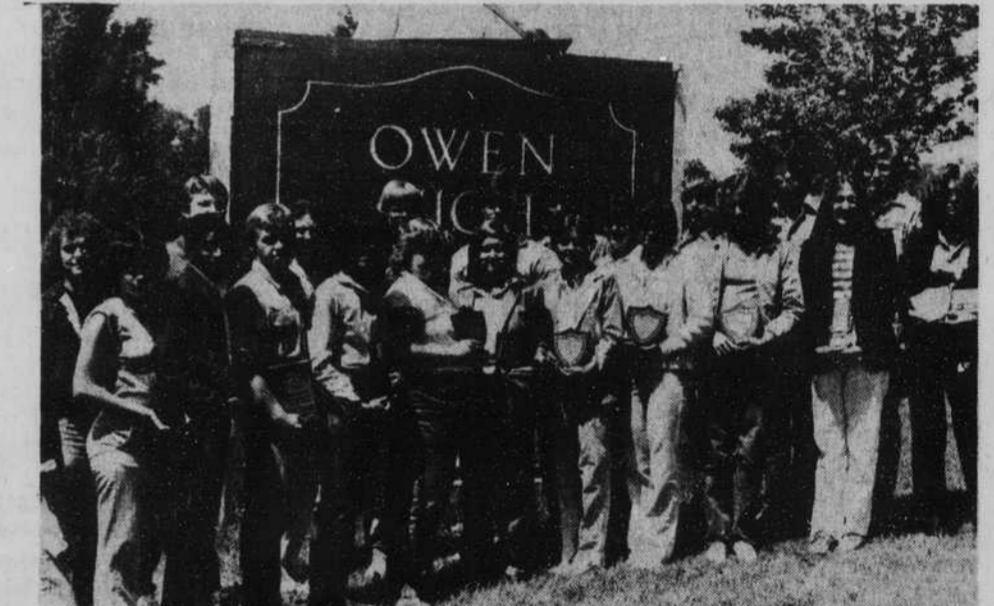
The Optimist Club Outstanding Senior Award went to Mike Longmire.

Lisa Ohler and Nathan Thielman received Woodmen of the World Awards for Outstanding Proficiency in American History.

Tim Wilson was selected for Outstanding Contribution by the Student Council.

Steven Clay Jones was named Bus Driver of the Year.

Certificates and plaques were given in each subject area for student achievement.



Students awarded plaques in subject areas were: English, Lisa Alison Ohler; mathematics, Donna Lynn Lewis; social studies, Lisa Alison Ohler; biology, Liz Scoville; physical science, Tim Wilson; Spanish, Connie Jayne Lewis; French, Pandora Lytle; aerospace, Ray Bryant; business, Linda Denise Bartlett; distributive education, Patty Kirchner; home economics, Nan Barker; forestry, Mike Blankenship; horticulture, Bobby Dodd; drafting, Tony Brantley; industrial arts, Keith Harris; wood technology, John Williams; art, Lisa Ledbetter; drama, Kathleen Melton and Suzanne Gortney; chorus, Nat Woodruff; band, Jeff Murphy; health occupations, Janet Allen; girls' physical education, Pandora Lytle; boys' physical education, Scott Newell; advanced physical education, Greg Norton.

## Trailer fire cause unknown

The Black Mountain Fire Department received a call at 3:23 p.m. Saturday, May 23 for a trailer fire on Cragmont Road. A grease fire on the stove caused a small amount of damage to the kitchen cabinets in the trailer.

At approximately 1 a.m. the following morning, May 24, firemen were called back to the same trailer.

A fire of undetermined cause completely gutted the trailer, even burning through the roof in some places, firemen said. No one was home at the time of the fire.

The fire is under investigation by the State Bureau of Investigation.



Photo by Charles Taylor.