



Ginseng hunt yields 10 pounds

by Cynthia Reimer

There are those who believe the days of digging roots for "cash money" have gone from the mountains. But Clarence Davis, Daniel Derreberry and Toss Derreberry know otherwise.

Last week, one day's digging netted the trio 10 pounds four ounces of ginseng root. At \$135 a pound dried, the roots will bring them a profit of about \$475 for their day's work.

Ginseng is a root used medicinally by the Chinese. Dried, it is thought to restore lost appetite and cure digestive afflictions. It is also in some places considered an aphrodisiac.

The root sometimes resembles the figure of a man, with head, body and

legs. It is found in the mountains of Eastern Asia, Korea and Japan, and was once abundant in the mountains of Western North Carolina. Because the herb was so profitable, it was dug here until it became scarce.

Davis and the Derreberys have been digging ginseng since 1963 when it netted only \$18 a pound, and they still find as much ginseng as when they started. The reason, they say, is they always plant seed back in the places they dig the ginseng from.

Asked where they found last week's record haul, Toss smiled. "Let's just say somewhere in Buncombe County," he said.

Town council

Town lacks funds to meet obligations

by Scott Dedman

Black Mountain Town Council voted Monday night to ask its creditors to delay billing, saying that for the first time in recent memory the town cannot pay its debts. Acting unanimously on a recommendation by Mayor Tom Sobol, the council directed Town Manager Vinson Miller and the mayor to approach the town's major suppliers, including the Black Mountain Lumber Company, Black Mountain Auto Parts and companies which supply chemicals for the local water supply, and ask them to delay billing 90 days.

Mayor Sobol said if local suppliers cooperate until property taxes are collected in December and January, Black Mountain will have the money to meet all other expenses, including employee salaries and benefits, utility bills, a "bare minimum" of gasoline and sanitation costs. His financial summary estimated these expenses at \$130,000 through December, with \$140,000 in revenues anticipated for that time.

Little was said about the reasons for the current financial difficulties at Monday night's meeting, the last scheduled before the November 3rd Town Council election. However, Mayor Sobol emphasized that Black Mountain overspent its 1980-81 budget "in excess of \$75,000" and that "if the current rate of spending is not cut back, we will be in the same shape on the 1981-82 budget."

Compounding the monetary mess, according to Black Mountain accountant Midge Blakeslee, is the absence of a full auditor's report for 1980-81 which was due by September 30 according to the auditor's contracts, she stressed that the Local Government Commission in Raleigh required the town's Financial Information Report to be submitted by October 1. Reached at his Asheville office Tuesday, town auditor Don Williams said that there had been an apparent "lack of communication" between himself and the town, and that he had supplied auditor's figures to the monthly financial report last week, giving the town all the information needed to know where it stands. He explained further that he had lost several staff members recently while installing a new computer system, had been sick for a few days at the same time, and would have the full report in the hands of council members later this week. "I do value the town of Black Mountain as a client," he said, "and I feel that this lack of communication has been unfortunate."

In other council action, to ease the financial strain A.F. Tyson moved that Black Mountain change its policy for collection of overdue water bills, saying that "no matter how unpopular" the move might be, "we will have to make our policy more like that of the Carolina Power and Light Company." Council voted unanimously to cut off a customer's water 45 days after initial billing if full payment is not received, with an overdue notice sent out 15 days after billing and cut-off 30 days later. It

was noted during discussion that at least 300 water meters are giving faulty readings and that the town's only meter reader has additional responsibilities as a dog warden. Mr. Miller recommended and Council directed, that the employee be made a full-time meter reader and turn over the baiting of dog traps to the police and other departments during the colder months, when a warden's services would be needed less frequently.

In another unanimous vote Council ordered the closing of a 130-foot section of Mt. Mitchell Avenue, a dirt and gravel road which runs between the Southern Railway tracks and the properties of Mr. Zeke Morris and Ms. Evelyn Jones. The action was taken at the request of Mr. Morris and Ms. Jones.

Mr. William Carter asked the council to refund taxes which he said had been billed to him by mistake in 1974, his home being outside the city limits, and which his wife had paid by mistake. After extensive discussion about setting

a precedent of paying interest on mispaid taxes, Council agreed to follow the example set by Buncombe County and to pay Mr. Carter whatever interest the county would pay in a similar situation. On Tuesday Mr. R.D. Eskridge, tax collector for Buncombe County and the City of Asheville, stated that no interest would be paid according to Buncombe County policy and that there was no provision in the law for paying interest on mispaid or overpaid taxes. According to town officials, Tuesday afternoon Mr. Carter was offered and refused a check for the exact amount overpaid and said he would consult an attorney.

The only council action to create dissension among members was a proposed resolution to allow Ms. Annette Fox McMahan and her family to move her new house trailer back to the site of her old one "for the purpose of alleviating undue hardship", even though the property is zoned to prohibit new house trailers from being placed. Kathy Wacaster, Community Develop-

ment Administrator for the town, stated that when her office recommended Ms. McMahan remove her old trailer from the lot, there was no updated copy of Black Mountain zoning regulations available, and that to her knowledge none exists. Alderman Margaret Slagle stated her opposition to the resolution, saying other residents had been refused permission to place house trailers since 1970, and that town laws are too easily amended for one person. She emphasized in an interview after the meeting that she hoped Ms. McMahan would have a nice home on the property and that she opposed the resolution on principle. The vote was 3-1 for the resolution, with Alderman Ruth Brandon absent.

Several council members were asked after the meeting if Black Mountain had ever before been unable to meet its debts. Both Mayor Sobol and Margaret Slagle agreed that to their knowledge as long-time council members, the town has never before been forced to ask suppliers for billing delays.

McDonald's to erect sign; search for alternative fails

by Cynthia Reimer

Efforts to locate billboards as an alternative to a 100-foot McDonald's sign reached a dead end here recently when the group of searchers found all land between here and McDowell County on I-40 is protected by the Federal Highway Beautification Act. The act prohibits billboards on any land except commercial property with an existing business on it.

"McDonald's had offered us an impossible compromise," said Bob Warren, spokesman for the group protesting the sign. "They are forcing us to organize a boycott of McDonald's."

Warren said the group asked McDonald's to try a 50-foot sign for a length of time to see if necessary business would be drawn, or to move the sign "across the street." McDonald's refused, Warren said, and plans to erect the 100-foot sign.

Concern has been expressed that the sign will be visible from the Blue Ridge Parkway. Warren said the Sierra Club has expressed interest and could organize a national boycott of the hamburger chain if the sign detracts from the beauty of the Parkway.

"There's no guarantee this one will be visible from the Parkway," stated Doug Stafford, who works for an Asheville advertising firm representing McDonald's in this area. The sign is 15 feet across and because McDonald's is

located 40 feet below the road grade, the sign will extend 60 feet into the air instead of 100. The Parkway is more than 10 miles from the 15-foot sign, Stafford estimated.

McDonald's, Stafford said, believes "one small sign on a single post, opposed to two large billboards, is going to be less ugly, more attractive." He said the decision was "economic as well as esthetic," because "extensive research has shown they need to draw

business off the Interstate. If successful, McDonald's will pay an estimated \$1-2,000 in taxes to the town of Black Mountain as well as providing 60-70 new jobs for the community.

Warren's group plans to place signs along I-40 asking diners to pass up McDonald's and eat elsewhere. They also plan to distribute brochures printed with a parody of the McDonald's sign.

Powell Bill provides \$56,546 for roads

State Transportation Secretary W.R. "Bill" Roberson Jr. announced today that checks totaling more than \$31.3 million have been mailed to 461 municipalities in North Carolina for local street construction and maintenance. The monies make up the fiscal year 1982 allocation of state street aid (Powell Bill) funds.

The municipality of Black Mountain will receive an allocation of \$56,546.68 in Powell Bill funds. This allocation is based on the community's population of 4,093 and its 29.11 miles of local streets.

"Next year, however," Roberson said, "municipalities can expect an increase in Powell Bill funds thanks to the 1981 General Assembly's support

and passage of Governor Jim Hunt's 'Good Roads' program. Part of the program enacted was the increase of the state's gasoline tax by three cents. Of this increase, three-eighths of a cent was designated for the Powell Bill allocations.

"The 'Good Roads' program assures cities and towns of receiving one and three-eighths cents of the net state motor fuel tax or at least \$10 million more than the \$31.3 available this year," Roberson said.

Powell Bill funds are distributed on a legislative formula based 75 percent on population and 25 percent on non-state system local street mileage.

Don't worry about Social Security, Hendon says

by Cynthia Reimer

"We're not going to let you down, I guarantee it," and "I don't want you-all to worry about your Social Security," was the message 11th District Representative Bill Hendon brought to about 100 members of the American Association of Retired People (AARP) Friday morning.

There were no surprises in the freshman Congressman's remarks as he reassured the group. "In my opinion the best thing we can do for Social Security is to have a strong economy," he said.

In support of President Reagan's economic policies, Hendon said, "We have made a historic change in the course of America. For the first time the government has reined itself in. For the first time the government is less. It had to be done."

Cutting taxes, Hendon believes, will revive the incentive to work. When people are working, they are paying Social Security taxes and that is how the faltering Social Security system will be made healthy again, Hendon said. "Cut back on taxes, cut back on government

spending and cut back on frivolous government regulations; that's the groundwork to save the Social Security system," he stated.

Hendon said he favors pooling of funds within the Social Security system and borrowing from healthy funds, such as Medicaid, to bail out the retirement benefit fund.

Discussing other recent Reagan economic measures, Hendon called the Food Stamp program "fraught with corruption and abuse."

On the controversial school lunch program, Hendon said, a family of four with an income of \$15,450 is eligible for subsidized school lunches. "It's not as awful, folks, as you see on the evening news," Hendon said.

On block grants, Hendon said, "You're getting less money but you're getting less red tape, less government regulations, less money but no strings attached."

After Hendon's remarks, he answered questions from the audience read by members of a panel: Fred Lumb, Lois Cook and Ed Torrance.



Rep. Bill Hendon

Weather review

- Oct. 6--high 79, low 47 degrees.
- Oct. 7--high 67, low 60 degrees.
- Oct. 8--high 70, low 35 degrees.
- Oct. 9--high 59, low 34 degrees; trace precipitation.
- Oct. 10--high 56, low 56; .07 inches precipitation.
- Oct. 11--high 60, low 47 degrees.
- Oct. 12--high 52, low 46 degrees.

Weather information courtesy of WFGW Radio, Black Mountain.

Man injured on trail bike

Steve Thorpe, owner of Steve's Body Shop on South Daugherty Street, was injured Sunday in a trail bike accident on Bald Mountain near Hendersonville. Thorpe suffered head injuries. He was taken to Pardee Hospital in Hendersonville and transferred to Memorial Mission in Asheville. At press time, he remained in a coma and in critical condition.

Thorpe was not wearing a helmet at the time of the accident.



A painting of North Carolina governors which has hung in City Hall for years and years fell off the wall last week. When it fell, it came apart, revealing two original pastel drawings underneath. They had been used as padding behind the painting, Town Clerk Vinson Miller said. So far, no one has been able to identify the couple in the drawings, or the artist.