

THICK SMOKE BOILS from the Capt. Jim as the Calabash-based charter boat burns to the water line and later sinks. This was the view from the Sea Hawk II just after it and other fishing boats rescued the 61 passengers and

five crew members who jumped into the Atlantic Ocean as they abandoned ship shortly before 9 a.m. Saturday.

PHOTO BY ED TRACHAL

## Ash Man Charged In Murder Cases

BY RAHN ADAMS

Three months after his release from prison on a murder conviction, a Brunswick County man has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder, in connection with the shooting deaths last week of two Wilmington men.

Raeferd Clayton Piver, 42, of Route 1, Ash, faces murder charges in both Brunswick and New Hanover counties. The charges stem from the Oct. 6 slayings of Nick H. Patelos, 31, outside a Wilmington bar, and Michael Edward Baker, 33, at Grissetown.

Brunswick County Sheriff's Capt. Phil Perry said last week no other suspects are being sought, although both cases remain under investigation by the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department, Wilmington Police and the SBI.

Piver initially was taken into custody last Tuesday morning by Brunswick County officers on a concealed weapons charge. Murder charges were officially filed late that night, Perry said.

Piver also is charged with possession of a firearm by a felon, according to the Brunswick County Clerk of Court's office.

The suspect made his first court appearance on the Brunswick County charges last Wednesday. District Court Judge D. Jack Hooks Jr. scheduled a probable cause hearing for Oct. 26 in Bolivia. Piver will be represented by Charlotte attorneys Rex Gore and Michael Ramos.

Piver made a first appearance last Thursday in New Hanover County District Court on the murder charge there. Judge Jacqueline Morris-Goodson set a probable cause hearing for Oct. 20 in Wilmington, and appointed Wilmington attorney Richard Miller to represent Piver in the New Hanover case.

The defendant was being held in the Brunswick County Jail without bond.

According to Wilmington Police

Capt. Jimmy Williams, the first shooting last week occurred just after midnight Oct. 6 in the parking lot of Diana's Lounge (formerly Friendly's Bar and Lounge) on Market Street in Wilmington.

Williams said the shooting followed an apparent argument between Piver and Patelos, who had been playing pool inside the bar. Patelos was believed not to be carrying a weapon at the time of the shooting, he said.

Patelos was dead of multiple gunshot wounds by the time emergency personnel arrived on the scene, Williams said.

Authorities have not released possible motives in the murders.

According to Wilmington Police Sgt. J. L. Yost, authorities last week received conflicting information from two sources as to whether or not Piver and Patelos actually had been involved in an argument prior to the Wilmington shooting. However, investigators are assuming an argument occurred, although it "was not so flagrant that everybody (in the bar) noticed it," Yost said.

Yost also said police had no documented evidence last week that the first shooting was drug-related, even though police were "looking at all aspects" in their continuing investigation.

Williams said a white female and two white males reportedly left the shooting scene in a blue and white 1976 Ford Econoline van owned by Baker, the second victim.

The woman, who Williams did not identify, was questioned by police last week. No charges have been against her, although her involvement remains under investigation, Williams said.

According to Perry, Baker's body was found Oct. 6 around 5:40 a.m. by a newspaper carrier in a service station driveway near the intersection of

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## Disaster Avoided As 'Capt. Jim' Fire Forces 61 Into Atlantic

BY SUSAN USHER

It was a beautiful morning to fish and the black sea bass and grouper were only about three miles away. With rods and reels distributed and some hooks baited, passengers and crew of the Calabash-based charter boat Capt. Jim were waiting to begin casting Saturday morning when they heard a sudden loud "pop."

It was about 8:45 a.m. Within only minutes Captain James T. (Jimmy) Stevens and four crew members were passing out life vests; their 56 passengers forced to jump into the Atlantic Ocean as they abandoned the burning boat.

Eight nearby fishing boats came quickly to their rescue; most were in the water no more than 30 minutes. All were accounted for and safe by 11:05 a.m., with only several minor injuries.

Back at the Capt. Jim Marina, the passengers were met by more than 50 area rescue and fire volunteers and equipment from the Calabash, Waccamaw and Shallotte rescue squads and Calabash and Sunset Beach fire departments. Calabash Rescue opened its squad building for showers and a local restaurant, Captain Nance's offered free coffee.

Eleven persons were examined at the Brunswick Hospital in Supply, said spokesman Pete Barnette, with one admitted for observation of possible pneumonia because he had

taken salt water in his lungs. Injuries were minor, he said, mostly bumps and bruises where passengers were pulled aboard rescue boats.

Two people were treated and released from Grand Strand Memorial in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Cecil Logan praised the work of the emergency volunteers as "well, well done," a sentiment echoed by passengers.

He also praised the charter boat captains.

"I can't say enough for the fishing boats," he said. "If it had not been for their quick action, I'm afraid we would have lost some people."

As Captain Stevens was reunited with his wife, Juanita, at the Calabash docks, he said, "We got everybody; that's what I'm proudest of."

First thing back at the office he peeled off his wet "Capt. Jim" sweat-shirt, rifled through a nearby rack and donned a fresh one, spoke to his wife, employees and several reporters. Then he began refunding to passengers the \$17 each they had paid for the trip.

The Capt. Jim, loaded to about half its 116-passenger capacity, had left the dock at 8 a.m. and was to have returned at noon.

Instead, passengers and crew watched from choppy, 71-degree water and from rescue vessels as the 70-foot mahogany Harkers Island-built

vessel went up in flames, thick, black smoke from its diesel fuel boiling from the engine room. Within two hours it had burned to the water line, in another two hours it had sunk.

"I hate it about the boat," said an emotional Gina Stocks, one of the four crew members and operator of the panteen on the Capt. Jim for six years. "I put in 14 to 15 hours a day with it. It's a part of me."

She jumped overboard without a life vest; a fellow crew member and a passenger helped keep her afloat.

When the boat stopped suddenly about five miles east of Little River Inlet, some passengers thought they'd arrived at their destination and at least one started fishing.

Capt. Stevens was in the wheelhouse when his radio and electronic navigational equipment suddenly went dead. "That's when I knew something was wrong," he recalled.

He went to the engine room and cut the electricity. Returning to the wheelhouse, he cut a wire that appeared to have shorted out beneath the radio. Crew members warned him that black smoke was pouring from the engine room; he and a crew member returned to it with fire extinguishers, he said, "But we couldn't stay because the smoke was so thick."

Passenger Everette Morefield of East Bend was on board with his son,

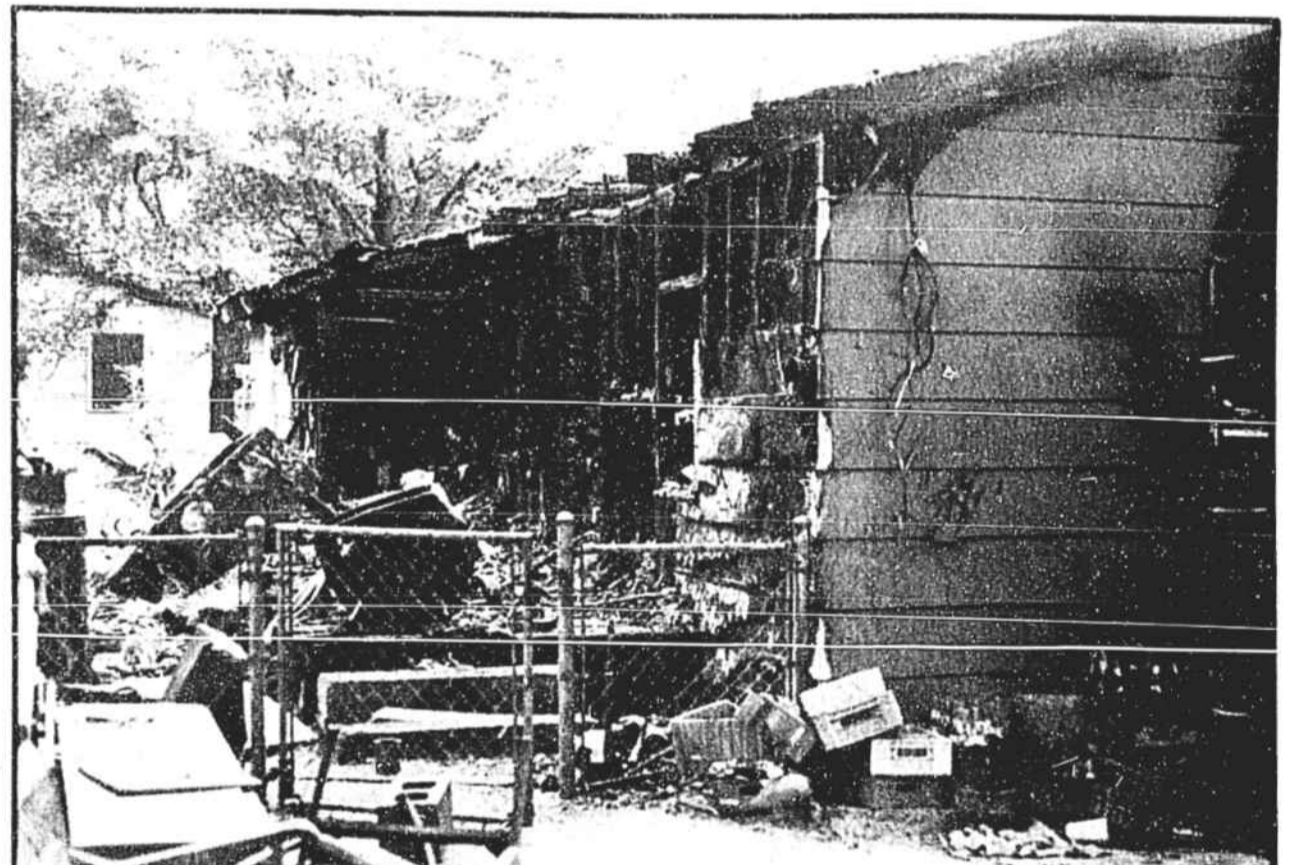
Jonathan, 9, the youngest passenger.

Though scared, both jumped without hesitation. Afterwards they stood on the dock, wet, cold, shaken, huddled like other passengers in blankets and towels, sharing their experiences.

"We saw a bunch of smoke and they started handing out life vests," Morefield recalled. "We hadn't got to fish yet."

"It happened pretty fast," recalled

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STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

INVESTIGATORS believe Saturday night's fire in which Joe and Pearl Faircloth were critically burned

was ignited by a kerosene heater in the rear portion of the couple's frame house at Sunset Harbor.

## Fire Victims Still Critical

An elderly Sunset Harbor couple remained in critical condition Tuesday, three days after their home was destroyed in a fire believed started by a kerosene heater.

Joe Faircloth, 70, and his wife, Pearl Faircloth, 69, were being treated Tuesday in the Burn Center at N.C. Memorial Hospital in Chapel Hill—taken there by air ambulances Saturday night from The Brunswick Hospital in Supply.

"We had to get them both out of here fast if they were to survive," said Public Information Officer Pete Barnette of The Brunswick Hospital.

Barnette said both victims suffered first- and second-degree burns over 80 percent of their bodies.

East Care and Life Flight helicopters from Greenville and Durham were used to transport the couple to Chapel Hill Saturday night.

According to Sunset Harbor-Zion Hill Fire Chief Clifford Schaefer, two neighbors pulled the Faircloths from the burning house before firemen arrived on the scene Saturday shortly after the 6:45 p.m. call.

Schaefer said that when firemen arrived the vic-

tims were lying in an open area across from the house, which is located beside Faircloths' Grocery near the waterfront off Sunset Harbor Road. The couple has operated the local store for more than 40 years.

Coastline Volunteer Rescue Squad transported the Faircloths to The Brunswick Hospital, Schaefer said.

Schaefer and Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan said Monday that investigators believe the fire was caused by a kerosene heater malfunction.

Firefighters found the five-room frame house fully involved in flames, Schaefer said. Sunset Harbor-Zion Hill VFD was on the scene until around 10:30 p.m. Saturday.

Supply and Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Departments provided mutual aid.

Schaefer said Sunset Harbor-Zion Hill volunteer Anthony Murray was treated at The Brunswick Hospital for smoke inhalation and a twisted ankle and was released.

Logan estimated damages to the house at \$25,000. Four of five rooms in the house were destroyed, he said.

### CANAL LOTS TARGETED

## County Sanitarians Reviewing Holden Septic Tank Applications More Closely

BY SUSAN USHER

Owners of property at Holden Beach, particularly canal lots, are finding it more difficult these days to obtain septic tank permits from the Brunswick County Health Department.

After reviewing preliminary findings of a wastewater treatment study undertaken by McKim and Creed Engineers of Wilmington at the town's request, the Brunswick County Health Department has adopted a new approach in reviewing permit applications from the island.

"We are looking a little more closely at soil characteristics of Holden Beach, primarily in the area of the finger canals," said John Crowder, environmental health supervisor. "The test well results gave us some idea of what we need to look at."

The department plans to hold a public meeting at Holden Beach within the next several weeks to discuss the permit situation, with

N.C. Division of Health Services personnel present.

In contrast to reports circulating at Holden Beach, Crowder emphasized the health department is "not closing the canals to development," though more permits have been denied in recent months than in the past.

A newsletter dated Oct. 5 and distributed by one of the island's largest property management and real estate firms advised readers that as of that week, "the Brunswick County Health Department and/or Town of Holden Beach will announce that no more septic permits will be given on any canal lots on Holden Beach without an engineer's report and approval."

"This means if you own a vacant lot and you don't have a septic permit that is valid, you have a major problem. It will be almost impossible to get a permit."

Town Administrator T.C. Birmingham said the town has "nothing to

do" with issuance of septic tank permits, that being the responsibility of the health department.

He said he understood a number of applications for septic permits for canal lots had been turned down recently and that health officials planned to hold a public meeting on the subject.

"People are upset because we're not as liberal with options as in the past," said Crowder. "We want to get some outside help."

Crowder said state health officials and possibly other specialists will be asked to "take a look" at the lots in question and meet with residents. Pending confirmations, details of the meeting haven't been announced.

The preliminary findings of the study, he noted, indicated some fecal coliform bacteria contamination, though it could not ascertain the source. "The study was inconclusive, but it gives the town a starting

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