

North Scorpions Travel West Friday For Trojan Homecoming

Half-time festivities add to the excitement, Page 8-B.



Weekend Festival's Time To Celebrate The Oyster

Your guide to the festivities is inside!

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Oyster Season Opens On Sour Note

BY DOUG RUTTER

The first day of oyster season, usually a reason to celebrate in the communities which border the rivers of Brunswick County, was not a day for celebration this year.

Besides the fact that the Lockwood Folly River, a major source of oysters in the county, remained closed due to pollution, those gathering oysters in Shallotte River found the shellfish to be small and scarce as they walked the beds during Saturday evening's low tide.

Shirley Hewett of Wilmington, who like many others working the Shallotte River opening day was just looking for enough for a good meal, said the oysters were harder to come by than they used to be. "It's been five or six years since I've been and it will probably be another five before I come back," she said, as she carried off a bucket half full with oysters.



Hewett

Added David Gray of Shallotte, "There's not too many of them out here. They're scattered."

Gray, who works as a welder during the week, was picking oysters side by side with Darren Hewett of Wilmington. They were both looking for enough to feed themselves but were having a hard time filling their baskets.

"It's got where it's hard to find anything in this river anymore," said Gray. After picking up another

cluster of oyster shells and tapping them with his metal pipe, he added, "If you get looking around at all the people that's out here you can see why, I reckon."

Oyster flats in Shallotte River, which saw relatively little action Saturday morning at sunrise when the season officially opened, were packed that evening when the tide was lowest just after 6 p.m. The morning low tide occurred at 5:30 and the beds were almost covered when the sun peaked over the horizon at about 7:15 a.m.

Roger Gore of Ash said he drove by the river early Saturday morning and didn't see too many collecting oysters. Those that were out, he added, had to stay pretty close to their boats since the tide was rising.

"There's a lot of them in here but they're small," he said of the oysters he found. "It doesn't seem they've grown in the last year or two."

Gore, who was gathering his first shellfish of the season with Donnie Milligan of Waccamaw and his son, Donnie Milligan II, added that the oysters were hard to find since they were covered with a lot of old shells. "I wouldn't work this hard for a bushel of oysters and then turn around and sell them."

The elder Milligan speculated that the "red tide," which infested local shellfish last season when about 200 miles of the state's coastline was closed to shellfishing, may have had an effect on the growth of the oysters.

"They don't look too great," he said. "Last year I came down here a couple of times and got a bushel pret-



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

DONNIE MILLIGAN II of Waccamaw breaks shells away from an oyster Saturday evening during the first day of oyster season as his father (background) slowly fills his bucket in Shallotte River. Most shellfishermen working opening day said the oysters were small and scarce compared to previous years.

ty easily. But it's rough this year." Added Milligan, "The ones I'm worried about are the people who make their living doing this."

At least some who make a living harvesting oysters are having a rough time with the young season. Carson Varnam, who owns an oyster house in Varnamtown, said Tuesday he had only seven or eight bushels to sell opening day, the worst one in his (See OYSTER, Page 2-A)

Local Oyster Shucker Claims National Women's Championship

BY DOUG RUTTER

State oyster shucking champion Cathy Carlisle came about as close as anyone can come to winning a second national shucking title Sunday without winning it.

It all came down to 11 ticks of the clock at the St. Mary's County Seafood Festival in Leonardtown, Md.

After capturing the national women's championship with relative ease, something she has done two of the past three years, the 25-year-old Boone's Neck resident faced off against the men's winner for the national championship and came up just 11 seconds short.

Archie Miller of Venice, Fla., runner-up in the men's division last year, was the winner of the 1988 national contest. He shucked and arranged his tray of 24 oysters in 2:01 minutes. After penalty time was added for cut oysters and oysters not fully separated from their shell, he posted an adjusted time of 2:58.

Carlisle had 55 penalty seconds added to her time of 2:14 for an adjusted time of 3:09 minutes.

She won the national championship in 1986 and placed third in the women's division last year.

"I did better than I thought I would. It was pretty close," Mrs. Carlisle said after returning to work Tuesday morning at Lloyd's Oyster House at Shallotte Point.

Tom Burke, administrator of the St. Mary's festival, said it looked like Carlisle had a chance to repeat her championship, "but Archie Miller was extremely fast and neat."



BEACON FILE PHOTO

CATHY CARLISLE, pictured here at the 1986 National Oyster Shucking Contest, won her second national women's title Sunday and finished runner-up in the national championship.

"It was extremely competitive. It was exciting," added Burke, adding that approximately 25,000 people attended the festival. He said grandstands overflowed during the shucking contest, which included preliminary heats Saturday and the finals Sunday.

In the women's championship final, Mrs. Carlisle shucked her tray of oysters in an adjusted time of 3:02. That included 35 penalty seconds for various infractions but was still 22 seconds faster than the defending national women's champion, Deborah

Pratt of Urbana, Va., who finished second this year.

"There was a lot more competition this year than there was last year," added Mrs. Carlisle. There were nine women competing this year, she explained, while there have been only five or six in past years.

In her preliminary heat Saturday, Carlisle posted an adjusted time of 3:36 which included 1:15 in penalties.

Although her time was second fastest in the preliminaries, it was good enough to put her in the women's final for the third straight year. The women's final on Sunday was contested by a field of six shuckers including the defending women's champion and Sarah Hammond, the 1987 Virginia Oyster Shucking Champion, who posted the fastest time during the preliminary rounds.

For her victory, Carlisle received \$300 in cash, an automatic bye into the women's final at next year's contest and maybe another shot at the national championship, added Burke.

Tara Futch, also of Boone's Neck, entered the contest for the second year in a row but failed to qualify for the women's final this time. In her preliminary heat, she posted a time of 4:31 which included 1:15 in penalty time. She finished fifth in the women's competition last year.

Carlisle, who will go for her third consecutive state oyster shucking championship this Saturday afternoon during the N.C. Oyster Festival, said, "I got some practicing to do but I'm ready."

Meet Next Week Will Focus On Lockwood Folly River

Lockwood Folly River, once the county's prime shellfishing area but now closed to harvest since August, will be the focus of a meeting scheduled next Wednesday, Oct. 26, for state officials and concerned local residents.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the public assembly building at the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia. It was initiated by a request from Save Our Shellfish (SOS), a local group of concerned citizens formed to protect the river and its natural resources.

Bob Jamieson, Wilmington regional supervisor of the N.C.

Department of Natural Resources and Community Development, will chair the meeting, at which a broad range of issues is expected to be discussed.

Among other things, officials are expected to present the latest information on the status of the river and to hear concerns of citizens who attend.

State agencies invited include the NCRD divisions of Environmental Management, Marine Fisheries, Coastal Management, and the Land Quality section of the Division of Land Resources. Also invited is Shellfish Sanitation, a section of the

Division of Health Services in the Department of Human Resources.

County commissioners and local officials they choose to invite will attend. Also invited are representatives of Channel Side Corp., a development firm that had applied for permits to build a 50-slip marina on the river as an amenity for a 500-acre golf course and residential development. A Channel Side director and partner, Mason Anderson, has since said the permit request may be amended. Instead of a marina, the firm decided to consider seeking approval for dry boat storage only, both to be a "good

neighbor" to the nearby Varnamtown community and the state and for economic reasons.

No Change Yet

However, as of Tuesday, neither the Wilmington nor Raleigh office of the N.C. Division of Coastal Management had received any modification. The original application is still in the "pending" file, awaiting additional information before its final consideration.

If such an amendment is submitted, said Jim Hertstine, the division's Wilmington regional supervisor, the new information would be circulated for comment. It would go not to all 14

agencies that commented on the original applications, but only to those affected. These at minimum would include the divisions of Marine Fisheries, Coastal Management and Land Management, as well as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

For the past three weeks, he noted, the Channel Side application has been handled mainly by the Coastal Management office in Raleigh, not Wilmington.

Asking For Details

Several weeks ago Brunswick County Commissioner Chris Chappell wrote the Division of Shellfish Sanitation seeking more information

on why the river was closed. Chappell, who is one of three commissioners seeking re-election next month, is general manager for Channel Side's Lockwood Folly development.

He said the marina has not been built yet and could not have caused the closing, but that he was taking some criticism because of dual role with the county and the development firm. "I'm trying to find out as much as I can," he said.

Chappell said wherever the pollution is coming from, he wants to see the situation corrected, but added (See MEETING, Page 2-A)

N.C. Festival By The Sea Will Offer Weekend Of Fun

Activities and prizes galore await both young and old visitors at this year's N.C. Festival By-The-Sea at Holden Beach, scheduled for next weekend, Oct. 28-30.

The festival will get underway Friday night with the annual Halloween Carnival at Tri-Beach Volunteer Fire Department. A costume contest, haunted house and plenty of children's games will highlight the carnival, which begins at 6:30 p.m.

Saturday's festivities begin with three early morning runs. A one-mile run will begin at 8 a.m. and will be followed by 5K and 10K runs at 8:30 a.m. All races will start at the firehouse.

A new twist for the festival, a surfing contest, will also be held Saturday beginning at 8:30 a.m. It will take place on the strand across from the regional beach access facility under the high-rise bridge.

The festival parade, which once again will start at Sea Trace subdivision, travel along the mainland causeway and end at the base of the bridge, will begin at 11 a.m.

Following the parade, a horseshoe pitching tournament featuring both singles and doubles competition will get underway at Ocean View Pavilion. Also at 1 p.m., card games will begin at the Lockwood Folly Community Building on Stanbury Road.

Later in the afternoon, a long-driving contest will be held at Holden Beach Driving Range and a sand sculpture contest will take place on the strand in front of Campground By The Sea near the island's west end.

A street dance, sponsored by WDZD radio, will be held Saturday night from 7:30 until 11:30 at the foot of the old bridge.

The annual arts and crafts show will be held both Saturday and Sunday from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the regional beach access facility. Plenty of food booths will be set up and entertainment will also be provided throughout the weekend.

Look for more information on the N.C. Festival By-The-Sea in a special supplement to be included in next week's issue of The Brunswick Beacon.

Reward Offered In Local Murder Case

BY RAHN ADAMS

Some "extra incentive" that investigators hope will help them solve a Shallotte area man's murder came last week in the form of a reward offered by the state.

The Governor's Office announced last Wednesday that it will pay up to \$5,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of Darwin Kingsley "King" Freeman's murderer.

The 74-year-old Freeman's body was found on Sunday, Sept. 25, around 4 a.m., at Anchor Lumber Company on U.S. 17 south of Shallotte. He had been bound hand and foot, and shot once in the head.

Brunswick County Sheriff's Det. Lindsay Walton said Friday that authorities are "following leads" but have "nothing concrete" in the investigation.

The reward offer, which was requested by the sheriff's department, doesn't mean lawmen have drawn a blank in the murder probe, "it just means any extra incentive helps," Walton said.

Freeman, who was owner and manager of Anchor Lumber, lived in an efficiency apartment located at the rear of the firm's office building. His body was discovered by firefighters who had been called to

put out a small fire that lawmen believe was set to destroy evidence. A newspaper carrier had spotted the blaze around 3:30 a.m.

Authorities said the victim, whose hands and feet had been tied behind him, was found on the floor in a doorway between the office and living area. The body was not burned, because fire damage was confined to the living area. The SBI said a "petroleum-based accelerant" was used to set the fire.

An autopsy indicated that Freeman died of a single .22-caliber gunshot wound to the left side of his head about 30 minutes before the fire was reported.

"The only possible motive we've still got is robbery at this time," Walton said Friday. However, without revealing what was missing from the office building, the detective noted that "very little" apparently was stolen.

According to Walton, Freeman was last seen alive by his employees on Sept. 24 around 5 p.m. when Anchor Lumber closed for the weekend.

Walton said anyone having information concerning Freeman's murder should contact him or SBI Special Agent Kelly Moser at the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department at 253-4321 or 1-800-672-6379.

Winnabow Slayings Puzzle Authorities

BY RAHN ADAMS

Investigators had no suspects Tuesday in the shooting deaths of three Winnabow area residents whose bodies were found Friday inside their arson-damaged home.

Brunswick County Sheriff John C. Davis identified the victims as Marion E. "Cowboy" Meetze, 48; the man's wife, Ginger R. Meetze, 32;

and her daughter from a previous marriage, Michelle D. Arnold, 10.

Their home was located on N.C. 87 in the Winnabow community, about four miles from U.S. 17 toward Maco, Davis said.

"We're following up what leads we have at this time," Davis told the Beacon. "We have some leads, but no suspects." The SBI also is involved in

the murder and arson investigation.

Davis said all three deaths apparently were homicides, since no evidence of a murder-suicide has been found.

He added that lawmen have "no idea" about a possible motive for the murders. "It doesn't appear that robbery was a motive," he said.

Authorities were notified of the

deaths Friday around 4:30 p.m., after the bodies were found by some of Meetze's co-workers who checked on him because he had been absent from work at the Wilmington B.F. Goodrich plant, Davis said.

The sheriff noted that the Meetzes moved to Brunswick County from Greenville County, S.C., in March. (See WINNABOW, Page 2-A)