

On The 'Wish List'

This spot under the high rise bridge to Ocean Isle Beach would become a boating access area if county residents who spoke up last week had their druthers. The last of three public hearings will be held Tuesday. Details are on Page 9-C.



In Prep Spotlight

The spotlight's focused on West Brunswick High School athletes this week with the start of the 1989-90 basketball season and an awards night to wrap up volleyball, football and tennis action. For complete coverage of local high school sports, turn to Pages 8B-10B.



Pier On Way Back

Dee Hammon of Coleman Dockworks Inc. nails a shingle to the top of a piling at the Ocean Isle Beach Fishing Pier, which workers began restoring to its pre-Hugo form last week. Work awaits the crew at other piers as well. The story's on Page 8-A.

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LUDLUM BOWS OUT

Dameron Announces Run For County Commission

BY RAHN ADAMS

Holden Beach Democrat Allan Dameron this week became the first candidate to formally announce a run for the District 2 seat on the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners—one of two commission seats that will be up for grabs in next year's election.

The District 2 seat is currently held by Holden Beach area resident Benny Ludlum, who Monday confirmed that he does not intend to seek re-election. "My mind is made up definitely," Ludlum told the *Beacon*. "I'm not going to run."

Ludlum, a Democrat, has served two non-consecutive terms on the county board. He indicated Monday that his decision not to run for a third term resulted from division on the board of commissioners during the past year. "I am just happy to get out of it now," he said.

For the first time since the mid-1970s, the five-member board this year has had a Republican majority. However, the board has not been divided along party lines. The controlling coalition since budget time in the spring has consisted of Republicans Frankie Rabon and Gene Pinkerton and Democrat Grace Beasley, whose District 5 seat also is up for election in 1990.

The filing period for candidates seeking nomination in the May 8 primary elections opens at noon Jan. 1 and closes at noon Feb. 5. Since the Brunswick County Board of Elections office will be closed New Year's Day, the first opportunity for local candidates to file will be when the office reopens at 8:30 a.m. Jan. 2.

Other strictly local offices up for election next year in Brunswick County are the District 2 and 5 Board of Education seats now held by Democrats Dorothy Worth of Shallotte and James Clemmons of Leland, respectively; sheriff; and clerk of court. Both Sheriff John C. Davis and Clerk of Court Diana Morgan have indicated they will file for re-election.

Dameron, 41, is employed in customer relations at Alan Holden Realty, Holden Beach. A 1976 graduate of Guilford College and former N.C. Department of Corrections employee, he is vice chairman of the Holden Beach Board of Adjustment and leader of the town's emergency team.

In recent years, he also has served as president and director of the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce, chairman of the 1987 N.C. Oyster Festival, director of the South Brunswick Board of Realtors, vice president of the Holden Beach Merchants Association and member of the Brunswick County Travel Package board.

Earlier this year, Dameron was recognized by the Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center as the organization's administrator/coordinator volunteer award winner for his work with the chamber.

In a letter mailed this week to local Democratic Party precinct leaders, Dameron stated, "The most noble profession is that of serving the people of one's community and nation. I can and will do this using my knowledge and skills while applying these skills fairly and honestly."

He is married to the former Elizabeth Ridgeway of the Seaside community. Mrs. Dameron currently serves as co-chairperson of the Brunswick County Democratic Women's publicity committee.



DAMERON



LUDLUM

Ocean Isle Man Charged With Bank Robbery

BY DOUG RUTTER

A local man facing federal charges remained behind bars Tuesday afternoon following his arrest last Friday in connection with the robbery of the Ocean Isle Beach branch of Southern National Bank.

The Ocean Isle Beach Police Department and Brunswick County Sheriff's Department arrested Joseph Lee Penland, 55, of Ocean Aire Estates, Ocean Isle Beach, Friday about two hours after the Southern National Bank branch was robbed.

Penland spent the weekend in Brunswick County Jail on \$50,000 bond. FBI Special Agent Paul Cox said the suspect was formally charged with federal bank robbery Monday morning and transferred to New Hanover County Jail. Due to the strong evidence against him, Cox said Penland is considered a "flight risk" and is being held without bond. A probable cause hearing had been set for Thursday morning.

Ocean Isle Beach Police Chief Curt Pritchard said a man wearing gloves and a ski-type mask entered the Southern National Bank branch around 12:15 p.m. last Friday. The man handed a brown paper bag to one of the tellers and demanded money.

The robber did not show a gun or other weapon, but Pritchard said the man "made a gesture like he had a weapon." The chief said three female employees were the only people in the bank at the time of the robbery.

After receiving the bag of money from the teller, the robber apparently looked into the sack and said there wasn't enough.

Pritchard said bank employees watched the man drive away alone in a white Ford Escort and immediately called the Ocean Isle Beach Police Department.

"We were there in about a minute," said Pritchard. After arriving at the bank, the chief said he and town policeman Jimmy Todd secured the crime scene and reported the robbery to the FBI and the sheriff's department.

At about 2 p.m., Pritchard said officer Jimmy Todd and Sgt. Doug Todd of the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department spotted the vehicle described by the bank tellers on Four Mile Road near Ocean Isle Beach.

In separate cars, the two local lawmen followed the Ford Escort to the United Carolina Bank branch on the Ocean Isle causeway.

In the meantime, policeman Jimmy Todd had been informed by a dispatcher that the license plate on the vehicle was stolen. Pritchard said the two law officers blocked the Escort in the UCB parking until he arrived.

Once at the scene, Pritchard said he approached the suspect and informed him that

the license plate on his vehicle was stolen. Also, he informed him of the bank robbery investigation.

The chief said Penland refused to go voluntarily to the Southern National Bank for possible identification by tellers. He was arrested in the UCB parking lot for possession of stolen property in connection with the auto tags.

After frisking the man and finding approximately \$3,000 in a coat pocket and a pocket knife, Pritchard said the man was handcuffed and taken down the road to the Southern National Bank branch.

The chief said FBI agents were on the scene at that time and the suspect was handed over to them since bank robbery is a federal offense.

Based on talks with bank employees, Pritchard said the robber was courteous while committing the crime, telling the three women to remain calm during the holdup and apologizing for his actions before he left the bank. Nobody was injured during the incident.

The branch bank, located on the mainland causeway at Ocean Isle, has been open for about one year and had not been robbed before last week. The bank closed for the remainder of the day following the robbery.

Southern National Bank Vice President and City Executive Don Warren declined to comment on the incident last Friday.

Chief Pritchard said lawmen recovered the majority of the money that was stolen, but he would not disclose the amount taken or recovered.

Pritchard commended town police officer Jimmy Todd—who responded despite being off duty the day of the robbery—and Sgt. Doug Todd for their involvement in the arrest.

"The cooperation that the Ocean Isle Beach Police Department received from the sheriff's department was extremely good," the chief said. "The sheriff himself even responded."

In response to an earlier newspaper account of the robbery, Ocean Isle Beach Mayor Betty Williamson contacted *The Brunswick Beacon* Monday to clarify the facts of the case.

"The Ocean Isle Beach Police Department deserves some credit for making the arrest," she said, referring to an article in the *Wilmington Star-News* that said sheriff's deputies arrested the man. "I want the local people to know our officers did exactly what they should have done."

Last week's bank robbery is the fourth to occur in the South Brunswick Islands area since June.

The Security Savings & Loan branch in Calabash was robbed twice in a four-week period earlier this year. The branch was robbed June 20 and again on July 18.



ATTORNEY HARRY HEILIG (left) covers the face of robbery suspect Joseph Lee Penland of Ocean Isle Beach as the man is taken away in handcuffs from the Southern National Bank branch last Friday.

About seven weeks later, an armed man robbed the United Carolina Bank branch in Calabash, which gets its only law enforcement protection from the county sheriff's department.

In July, a federal grand jury in Wilmington indicted a man in connection with the June armed robbery. As of Tuesday, the FBI has not made any arrests in connection with the other two robberies in Calabash. Based on descriptions, however, authorities believe the same man committed both crimes.

Robinson Found Innocent Of Sex Charges

BY RAHN ADAMS

A Supply area man who was accused of molesting an 11-year-old friend of his step-daughter was found innocent of the charges last week in Brunswick County Superior Court.

Following a two-day trial in Bolivia, a Superior Court jury last Thursday acquitted James W. Robinson Jr., 38, of Oak Road, Supply, of charges of first-degree sexual offense and taking indecent liberties with a child. He had faced a mandatory life prison sentence on the sexual offense charge alone.

The nine-woman, three-man jury deliberated for one hour before re-

turning unanimous not-guilty verdicts.

Robinson, brother of Brunswick County Register of Deeds Robert Robinson, was represented by retired Southport attorney Ray Walton. Assistant District Attorney Thomas Hicks prosecuted the case. Resident Superior Court Judge Giles R. Clark presided.

James Robinson was indicted in July 1988 on the sex charges which stemmed from an incident that allegedly occurred April 30, 1988, at the defendant's residence. He was accused of fondling a Shallotte girl who was spending the night with the defendant's step-daughter and

two other girls.

The state presented its case last Wednesday, which coincidentally was the alleged victim's 13th birthday. The prosecution's evidence consisted only of testimony from the girl and Brunswick County Sheriff's Det. Nancy Simpson, who had investigated the case. An SBI agent also appeared last Thursday to rebut part of Robinson's testimony.

Defense witnesses included Robinson and his wife, Beatrice Robinson, as well as the three girls who were in bed with the alleged victim at the time of the incident in question.

According to testimony, Robinson entered the girls' upstairs bed-

room to quieten them around 2 a.m. When one of the children complained that the water bed on which they were lying was cold, Robinson knelt beside the bed next to the alleged victim and adjusted the water heater thermostat under the bed.

The Shallotte girl testified that Robinson then put his hand under the covers and fondled her. In court, Robinson admitted touching the water bed mattress, but denied putting his hand under the covers and touching the girl. Robinson said he had burned his finger with a blow torch prior to the incident and that the cool mattress "felt good on my finger."

(See Robinson, Page 2-A)

Supreme Court Will Review Holden Beach West Lawsuit

The N.C. Supreme Court has agreed to review a Brunswick County lawsuit involving public access to the western end of Holden Beach through Holden Beach West subdivision.

Durham attorney James Maxwell, who represents the plaintiffs in the suit, told the *Beacon* that the high court entered an order last Thursday in Raleigh to grant a discretionary review of the case. He speculated that the court will hear oral arguments sometime this spring.

Maxwell's clients—members of a group called Concerned Citizens of Brunswick County Taxpayers Association—and the N.C. Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources petitioned for the review in September, after the N.C. Court of Appeals affirmed a Brunswick County Superior Court ruling in favor of the defendant, Holden Beach Enterprises.

The lawsuit, initially filed in 1985, has hinged on the question of

(See COURT, Page 2-A)

Second Brunswick Man Named State Transportation Chief

BY SUSAN USHER

When state Secretary of Transportation James Harrington retires Friday, another Brunswick County man will take his place.

Southport native Thomas (Tommy) Harrelson was appointed to the post last Wednesday by Gov. James Martin. He will be sworn in by Judge Robert Orr in a 4 p.m. ceremony Friday in the old Senate chamber of the Capitol building. Friends are invited, he said. Harrelson, a Republican, has served as the transportation department's deputy secretary, overseeing daily operations of the Division of Highways since April 1987.

As secretary, Harrelson said his immediate goal is to see Harrington's vision made a reality—a completion of a four-lane strategic corridor or intrastate system that will put most state residents within 10 miles of a four-lane highway; and then, shortly after the turn of the century, the completed paving of the state's secondary roads. Through bipartisan efforts of the Martin administration and the legislature the package and its funding,



HARRELSON

the Highway Trust Fund, are in place, ready to be carried out.

"Everything I've learned I've learned at his feet," said Harrelson in a telephone interview from Raleigh.

The 48-year-old Harrelson formerly owned and operated Harrelson's Food Store and Harrelson's Appliances in Southport. He still has a residence in Southport along with commercial interests and family.

While he said Brunswick County has already received improved treatment under the Martin administration that it received under previous administrations, Harrelson said better things are still to come—but because of better funding for state road needs overall, "not because I'm here. I have to be careful to be fair, not to favor my home county...but it's not going to be forgotten either. I think Brunswick County has been recognized as the fast-growing county it is and will continue to be."

However, he noted, "The whole state has had a backlog of needs and the southeast has historically been left out, but that's turning around. Because of the increased funds available to all counties, Brunswick and other counties should see much better service."

As for two highway-related concerns now on

Brunswick County minds, Harrelson said he thinks both will be resolved satisfactorily.

Like Harrington before him, he doesn't want to see the Department of Transportation's landscaping fund—personal license tag sales profits—"raided" to help finance visitors' centers or oversized rest areas like the one to be built along the Shallotte bypass this spring.

The department has worked it out so that before any such visitors' centers are built in the future, contracts will be signed guaranteeing that no state funds will be used to operate them. "If we don't get takers under that arrangement, they won't be built," he said. "They would just be too big of a drain on state revenues if we were to take them over. And if tourism in the area isn't such that the local area can support a center, they don't need it. It would be a waste of money to build it."

Harrelson said that once plans for the routing of the proposed Northern Outer Loop—a four-lane highway that would link U.S. 17 to I-40 north of Wilmington—go to public hearing, that he is certain a satisfactory route will be settled on.

The latest route broached for the highway would cut through the hearts of two Brunswick County municipali-

ties, Leland and Navassa, unlike a previous route now included in the Brunswick County Thoroughfare Plan.

"Now that the loop will actually be built, we'll have to make sure the route is a good one," said Harrelson.

Harrelson has been in the transportation department 2-1/2 years, but has previous experience with state government.

He served in the state legislature for two terms, from 1970-1974, and withdrew from his race for a third term. He served as chairman of the state's Environmental Management Commission for approximately one year, stepping down in early 1986 to campaign for the 7th Congressional District seat held by Rep. Charles G. Rose III.

Earlier, Harrelson also was employed by Cardinal Health Systems agency for five years.

Harrington, a resident of Bald Head Island, had served as secretary since 1985.

Harrelson said the secretary's post was not a job he had sought, but that he'd been asked by several persons if he were interested. "It's the kind of thing where you wait until they ask," he said. "I had a great position and was happy. If they had chosen someone else I would have been pleased and worked with that person."