

No New Taxpayers Crack County's Top 10 List

BY RAHN ADAMS
With only a couple of changes in ranking, Brunswick County's "Top 10 Taxpayers List" for 1989 includes no new additions, according to the county Tax Administration office.

Once again, Carolina Power & Light Co., with its Brunswick Nuclear Project near Southport, accounts for approximately one-fifth of the county's total \$4.16 billion tax base, which increased from \$4.01 billion in 1988.

The deadline for paying 1989 property taxes is Friday. Tax Collector Nancy Moore said that, as usual, only about \$6.8 million of the county's total \$24.8 tax levy was paid prior to the Christmas holidays.

As a result, the tax office expected its normal rush of last-minute taxpayers this week. A change from

previous years is that the tax department has installed a "drop slot" in the office lobby, in hopes of cutting down long lines and speeding up tax collections for individuals who drop off their payments in person.

The county mailed 88,360 property tax statements in late July. Taxpayers who don't meet the Jan. 5 payment deadline will owe an extra two percent in interest for the month of January and three-quarters of a percent for each additional month that their payment is late. The names of delinquent taxpayers generally are published in local newspapers in April.

1989 property taxes are a bit more "taxing" than they were last year. In July, commissioners raised the county's tax rate to 59.5 cents per \$100 of property value, from a 54-cent tax rate in 1988.

At \$794.3 million, CP&L's 1989 valuation dropped by about \$9 million from its 1988 level. Still, the company's \$5.04 million tax bill increased by approximately \$348,000, due to the county's 5 1/2-cent tax rate hike.

Released last week by Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson, the 1989 Top 10 list also includes, in order, the N.C. Eastern Municipal Power Agency, a consortium of municipalities which owns part of the Brunswick Nuclear Plant's production capacity; E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., a manufacturer of polyester fiber; Pfizer Inc., a citric acid producer; Cogentrix, a cogeneration plant that sells processed steam to Pfizer and uses surplus steam to make electricity for sale to CP&L; Ocean Isle Beach developer Odell Williamson; Bald Head

Island development company Bald Head Limited; local power cooperative Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation (BEMC); and the county's two largest timber products companies, Federal Paper Board Co., and International Paper Co.

The 10 largest taxpayers account for approximately 35 percent of the county's tax base and almost 37 percent of the county's projected tax revenue. Their values total almost \$1.46 billion, while their tax bills total more than \$9.12 million.

The current Top 10 list includes two notable changes from 1988. Odell Williamson jumped up a notch to the sixth spot, changing places with Bald Head Limited. Also, BEMC rose from 10th place to eighth place, passing Federal Paper and International Paper.

PROPERTY OWNER	VALUATION	TAX AMT.
Carolina Power & Light Co.	\$794,339,019	\$5,042,660.93
N.C. Eastern Municipal Power Agency	228,961,165	1,453,903.40
E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co.	218,790,083	1,301,800.99
Pfizer Inc.	52,965,061	336,328.15
Cogentrix	36,667,400	232,837.99
Odell Williamson	27,016,250	160,747.44
Bald Head Limited	24,253,292	154,009.00
Brunswick Electric Membership Corp.	25,408,154	152,210.07
Federal Paper Board Co.	24,526,568	146,542.14
International Paper Co.	24,279,144	144,460.92

SOURCE: BRUNSWICK COUNTY TAX ADMINISTRATION

The 1989 valuations of four Top 10 taxpayers—Du Pont, Pfizer, Williamson and BEMC — increased from their 1988 levels, while the other six decreased in value.

Du Pont had the largest individual increase, from \$213 million in 1988 to \$218 million in 1989. Next to CP&L, Cogentrix showed the second largest single drop, from \$43.7 million in 1988 to \$36.6 million in 1989.

However, due to the county tax increase, nine of the 10 taxpayers are paying larger tax bills for 1989. Only Cogentrix's taxes dropped, from \$255.9 million in 1988 to \$232.8 million in 1989.

Boyd Williamson told the *Beacon* Friday that CP&L and Cogentrix's drops in value apparently reflect "normal depreciation." He added that the decreases were not significant enough to be causes for alarm.

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COUNTY TAX ADMINISTRATOR Boyd Williamson (right) and Assistant Administrator Ronnie Young last Thursday unload approximately 60,000 envelopes that were mailed with personal property tax abstracts to county property owners beginning last week.

Brunswick Mails Tax Season's Greetings To Property Owners

BY RAHN ADAMS
The Brunswick County Tax Department is making a list this month that will be checked at least twice in the coming year, to make sure county taxpayers have listed all their "toys"—or rather, all their personal property such as cars, boats or farm equipment.

According to county Tax Administrator Boyd Williamson, all property owners who listed personal property in Brunswick County should receive abstracts on that property by the end of this week. The tax department began mailing approximately 30,000 abstracts last week.

A change this year is that taxpayers are expected to list only non-household personal property and not real estate during the January listing period. In late 1988, county commissioners instituted a permanent real estate listing system for the county.

As a result, individuals who own land here will not receive an abstract for their real estate, Williamson said. Those property owners will be billed automatically for their

land when tax statements are mailed out later in the year.

"It's a labor-saving device and a cost-saving device," Williamson explained. He noted that the county prepared and mailed more than 90,000 abstracts last year at a cost of at least \$35,000. That expense should be cut by two-thirds this year, he speculated.

Due to the permanent real estate listing system, the usual 10-percent late listing penalty is not added to real estate. Non-household personal property—which must be declared every year—remains subject to the penalty, if the property is not listed with the tax office by Jan. 31.

Williamson also reminded that for the second year, his office will enforce a special \$100 fine on motor vehicles that are not listed this month. Brunswick County did not enforce the penalty in 1988—the first year it was available. The fine was approved by the N.C. General Assembly three years ago.

The tax administrator said last year's enforcement of the car penalty resulted in the discovery of an

additional \$9 million worth of personal property in the county. Some \$12.8 million in personal property was "discovered"—found after the listing period—in 1989, compared to \$3.8 million in 1988. He said the difference amounted to about \$50,000 in taxes and penalties.

Property owners may list their taxes this month either by mail or in person at the tax office in the Brunswick County Government Center in Bolivia during regular office hours.

List takers also will be available from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Jan. 30 and 31, at the Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department, Tri-Beach VFD, Waccamaw Community Building, Southport VFD and Leland Sanitary District office.

The current tax rate is 59.5 cents per \$100 of property valuation. Brunswick County's tax base last year amounted to \$4.16 billion.

Property owners who have questions about listing their taxes can call the Brunswick County Tax Office at 253-4341 or toll-free 1-800-527-9001.

FBI Speculates That Would-Be Bank Robbers Fled Toward N.C.

BY RAHN ADAMS
About 10 local and state lawmen assisted South Carolina authorities Tuesday morning in searching for two armed men who tried to rob the Little River, S.C., branch of Southern National Bank. No arrests were reported as of late Tuesday.

The attempted robbery was a familiar event for Brunswick County lawmen, who had been called to five financial institution robberies in the South Brunswick Islands since June 1989. Suspects have been arrested in only two of the hold-ups.

Four of those robberies—the latest one Dec. 15—occurred in Calabash, which is located just across the state line from Little River. The robber remains at large, according to Agent Larry Bruns of the FBI office in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

"At this point, we don't have anything to indicate that they are (related)," said Bruns of a possible relationship between Tuesday's incident and any of the Calabash robberies. "The M.O. (method of operation) was quite a bit different."

Of the four unsolved area hold-ups, Tuesday's incident was the first one to involve more than one suspect, Bruns said. Also, the pair

broke into the building through a front window before the bank opened and waited for employees to arrive.

A female bank employee, who authorities would not identify, was injured in the attempted robbery. Bruns said the woman suffered a small cut to the forehead when she was struck by one of the masked suspects—both of whom were armed with small handguns.

Brunswick County Sheriff John C. Davis said the woman was taken to an area hospital and apparently was released from care. She returned to the bank Tuesday before local officers left, Davis added.

Three bank employees were inside the building when the suspects fled. The pair left before the bank opened at 9 a.m., after they were unable to open the bank vault. Bruns said the robbers probably were scared off by the anticipated arrival of other employees and customers.

The sheriff indicated that members of his department, the N.C. Highway Patrol and the SBI assisted in a search of the area between the bank, located on the east end of Little River on U.S. 17, and Calabash on N.C. 179—the direction in

which the two would-be robbers fled.

"All of it was in South Carolina," Davis said of the manhunt. "I put people in Calabash, to assist the South Carolina authorities."

Sgt. J.W. Brooks of the Wilmington Highway Patrol office said Trooper J. V. Dove used the Highway Patrol's new tracking dog in the search Tuesday morning. Brooks said the dog picked up a scent and followed it through a wooded area toward N.C. 179 for about one-half mile.

The suspects were described as white men, both between 5 feet, 10 inches and 5 feet, 11 inches tall, and both weighing between 180 and 200 pounds. One wore a dark shirt and blue jeans; the other wore a dark jacket and blue jeans. Both wore ski masks during the attempted robbery.

Brun also noted that one of the suspects carried a walkie-talkie—a possible indication that the robbers were in contact with someone in a vehicle outside the bank, he added.

He said authorities theorized Tuesday that the robbers fled toward North Carolina, since areas around U.S. 17 in Brunswick County are less densely populated than those around U.S. 17 south of Little River.

Nine Candidates File For County Primaries

Even though turnout was heavy Tuesday on the first day of political filings in Brunswick County, only one primary race was guaranteed in the six county offices that are up for grabs this year. Filing closes at noon Feb. 5.

According to Brunswick County Elections Supervisor Lynda Britt, nine candidates—six Democrats and three Republicans—filed for May 8 primary elections for sheriff, clerk of court, and the District 2 and 5 seats on both the school board and county commission.

In the sheriff's race, candidates to file Tuesday included Democratic incumbent John C. Davis, 61, of Bolivia, who has been sheriff since 1983; and Republican David L. Gause, 60, of Shallotte. Gause, a Shallotte alderman, was an unsuccessful Democratic candidate for sheriff in 1986, losing to Davis.

Incumbent Democrat Diana Morgan, 37, of Long Beach, was the only candidate to file Tuesday for clerk of court—a post she has held since the resignation of former Clerk of Court Greg Bellamy in August 1987. Ms. Morgan was elected to a special two-year term in 1988.

District 2 county commission candidates Tuesday were Democrats Joseph Stevenson, 41, of Route 3, Supply, employed by DuPont; and Allan Dameron, 43, of Holden Beach, employed by Alan Holden Realty. They will vie for the commission seat currently held by Democrat Benny Ludlum of the Holden Beach area. Ludlum announced last month that he does not intend to seek re-election.

Incumbent District 5 Commissioner Grace Beasley quietened any

speculation about her intentions by filing for re-election Tuesday on the Democratic ticket. The Route 3, Leland resident is running for her second term. On the Republican side, Federal Paper Board employee Donald Shaw, 49, of Route 1, Leland, entered the District 5 commission race.

Candidates filed for only one of the two school board seats Tuesday. Shallotte lawyer W. James Payne, 29, of Brierwood Estates, and local daycare center operator and former public schoolteacher Polly G. Russ, 39, also of Brierwood Estates, signed up to run for the District 2 seat now held by Democrat Dot Worth of Shallotte. Payne is a Republican; Ms. Russ is a Democrat.

There were no candidates Tuesday for the District 5 school board seat now held by Democrat James Clemmons of Leland.

Lawmen Apprehend Cedar Grove Teens After Foot Chase Near Holden Beach

Two Cedar Grove teen-agers were arrested on shoplifting and weapons charges Monday after they led local lawmen on an hour-long foot chase in the Holden Beach area.

Brunswick County Sheriff's Sgt. Ronald Hewett identified the suspects as Terry L. Davis, 16, and Wellington Grissett, 19. Both were charged with shoplifting and going armed to the terror of the people. Davis also was charged with misdemeanor marijuana possession and intimidating a state's witness. The intimidation charge stemmed from a separate incident last week.

According to Hewett, Delores Robinson of Holden Beach

CRIME REPORT
Seafood Market on Holden Beach Road called the sheriff's department Monday at 2:56 p.m., and said she suspected that two young men were shoplifting inside the store. Hewett added that as he talked to Ms. Robinson, he heard a "confrontation" between her and the suspects.

Holden Beach Patrolman Robert Cook was the first lawmen to arrive on scene, Hewett said. He added that Cook advised authorities that the two suspects were armed and that they had fled the store into a wooded area off Stanbury Road.

Hewett indicated that the suspects were not armed inside the store and that they apparently had hid weapons outside before entering the business. "They went back outside, grabbed their weapons and ran," Hewett noted.

He said Highway Patrol Trooper J.V. Dove was dispatched to the crime scene with the Highway Patrol's new dog, "Marcus Augustus Caesar," and quickly tracked the suspects down in the woods about 600 yards behind Ocean View Church on Stanbury Road. Surrounded by officers, Davis and Grissett "dropped their weapons and came out" without incident, Hewett said.

Officers seized a sawed-off, .22-caliber, semi-automatic rifle that Davis was believed to have been carrying. Hewett said the rifle was "fully loaded, its safety off, (a bullet) in the chamber, and ready to go," when it was found. A small amount of marijuana also was confiscated from Davis.

Lawmen also searched Monday evening and Tuesday morning for a handgun that Grissett was believed to have been carrying, but did not locate it, Hewett said.

Other officers involved in the manhunt included Holden Beach Patrolman Mike Hamilton, Deputy James Stanley, Troopers B.D. Barnhardt and Danny Harvell, and

Highway Patrol Sgt. J.W. Brooks. "I was very, very pleased at the quick response," Hewett said of the various agencies' cooperative efforts Monday. "It was a job well done, and it was a professional job."

Davis was released Monday from the Brunswick County Jail after posting a \$4,000 secured bond. Grissett remained in custody Tuesday under a \$2,000 secured bond.

Hewett said the intimidation charge against Davis stemmed from an occurrence last week in which Davis allegedly waved the sawed-off rifle as Cedar Grove resident Phil Bryant—a Brunswick County jailor—drove past Davis in the Ce-

dar Grove area. Davis earlier had been charged with breaking into Bryant's home and was awaiting trial, Hewett added.

Robbery Reported
Two suspects were being sought Tuesday in connection with an armed robbery and car theft Sunday outside a Leland church, Hewett said.

According to a report on file at the sheriff's department, Signe Lossen Blanton of Leland told officers that she was unlocking the back door of Woodburn Presbyterian Church on Village Road Sunday just before 9 a.m., when a black man approached her (See **LAWMEN**, Page 2-A)