



DESPITE THE EARLY MORNING CHILL, more than 300 people gathered on the strand near the Sunset Beach Fishing Pier Sunday to celebrate Christ's resurrection. It was the first beach service offered by the recently-established Calabash Presbyterian Church. The worshipers huddled in layers of spring clothing, beach towels and blankets.

STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

## Merchants Give Easter Weekend Mixed Reviews

BY DOUG RUTTER

The 1991 Easter holiday weekend received mixed reviews from local businessmen, some of whom speculated that cool weather and cloudy skies kept some visitors away from the coast.

Several local real estate companies reported that most or all of the available beach cottages and units in the South Brunswick Islands were rented for the week.

A heavy rainstorm greeted visitors who arrived Friday night. High temperatures stayed in the 50s and low 60s Saturday and Sunday, before sunshine broke through and a warming trend started Monday.

Despite the unseasonable start to the holiday week, hundreds of homeowners and even more visitors found their way to the southeastern North Carolina coast for the first big beach weekend of the year.

Mary Barnes of Lexington, S.C., who is visiting Sunset Beach with her family for the week, said Sunday that the cool weather made no difference to her. "It was just nice to get away," she said.

But there were conflicting reports about what

the influx of visitors meant to local businesses. Some merchants said they were pleased with weekend business, and others said it was down from past years.

Ouida Hewett of the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce said she didn't hear any negative comments about the Easter weekend from merchants or visitors.

"Everybody I've talked to has been real pleased with the weekend," she said Tuesday. "They've all said that business has been good."

Mrs. Hewett said several restaurant owners in Calabash told her the cool weather kept some people away Saturday, but business picked up Easter Sunday and Monday.

Several store managers, however, said business was slower than they had hoped for and expected. They said unfavorable weather forecasts probably kept some people away.

"I had a decent weekend but it wasn't great," said Millie Pensmith, who manages the Cackle Shell gift shop at Holden Beach. "I think the weather left a lot to be desired."

Jim Buie, a manager at Hill's food store in Shalotte, called the holiday weekend "pitiful."

"It was not what we expected it to be. We're hoping it's because of the weather," he said. "We were prepared for a big one so we've got a lot of back stock. It just didn't happen."

Police departments at the suddenly-crowded beach communities reported no criminal activity.

"It's been very mild," Ocean Isle Beach Police Chief Curt Pritchard said Tuesday. "It's been quiet as far as crime is concerned."

As usual, hundreds of motorists headed for the South Brunswick Island beaches ran into a traffic jam on the north side of Shalotte on Good Friday.

Southbound traffic on U.S. 17 slowed to a crawl several miles north of town. The bypass-related detour from the main highway to Red Bug Road funneled more traffic than usual onto Holden Beach Road.

Marine Pfc. Jacob Gillens, who was on his way from Camp Lejeune to South Carolina Friday afternoon, was among those stuck in the lineup.

Waiting in bumper-to-bumper traffic, Gillens (See WEEKEND, Page 2-A)

## Ash Teen Sought In Brother's Death

BY TERRY POPE

Harold Allen Graham, of Route 1, Ash, spent his 18th birthday Sunday in the woods near his home, hiding from local law officers who want to charge him with the murder of his brother.

As of Tuesday morning, Graham had not been found after a two-day search of a large wooded area along the Waccamaw River in southern Brunswick County and license checks on local roadways.

He is accused of shooting his brother, Lacy Franklin Graham, 28, twice in the head with a .32-caliber pistol Saturday around 3:20 p.m.

The victim died at New Hanover Regional Medical Center in Wilmington around 2 p.m. Sunday.

Brunswick County court records show Graham was charged with another shooting last fall.

He was indicted by a Brunswick County grand jury Feb. 18 on a charge of assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury. In that incident, Graham is accused of shooting Wade Bliss Ashley, a student at Shalotte Middle School, in the right leg with a .22-caliber rifle on Oct. 8, 1990.

In Brunswick County District Court Dec. 5, 1990, Graham waived his right to a probable cause hearing, sending the case to Superior Court. The case is still pending and

a trial date had not been set, said Lisa Aycock, courtroom clerk.

The Graham brothers lived in the same house along Ash-Little River Road (S.R. 1300). A Brunswick County sheriff's detective, Lt. Donnell Marlow, said a motive for the shooting has not been determined.

A warrant has been issued for Graham's arrest on murder charges. It lists two witnesses to the shooting. "We will charge him with murder," Marlow said. "It'll be up to the courts to decide if it's first-degree or second-degree."

Graham was found lying on the shoulder of the road about 60 feet from a driveway to his house, according to Deputy Robert Hoagland, who was the first officer on the scene.

Graham was transported to the Brunswick Hospital in Supply by the Calabash Volunteer Rescue Squad and later transferred to New Hanover Regional Medical Center.

According to Hoagland's report, an altercation was reported between Graham, his brother and another witness. It is believed Graham fired one shot into the air and two at his brother, hitting him twice in the head, the report states.

Marlow said a police bulletin lists Graham as armed and dangerous.

"If anyone in the Ash area sees him, they should contact the sheriff's department," Marlow said.

## County Will Garnish Wages To Collect Property Taxes

BY TERRY POPE

Some Brunswick County property owners are still holding out on paying taxes, but if they don't pay up soon their paychecks could shrink.

Commissioners voted 4-1 Monday to take advantage of a state law that allows counties to garnish wages of residents who refuse to pay their taxes.

"I think it's time to collect," said District 5 Commissioner Donald Shaw.

Commissioners hope to collect the estimated \$4,154,000 that is still owed the county in unpaid ad valorem taxes over the past 10 years.

Chairman Kelly Holden made his motion near the end of the commissioners' meeting Monday. District 4 Commissioner Frankie Rabon voted against it, saying he was concerned about residents on fixed or low incomes.

As required by law, the county will advertise the names of people who still owe 1990 property taxes in local newspapers this month.

County Manager David Clegg said approximately \$2 million is still owed the county in 1990 taxes. The collection rate is close to 92 percent, he said. A rate below 96 percent can hurt the county's bond rating.

"I think we should utilize whatever means is possible to get that money," said Holden.

By state statute, counties can garnish the wage of taxpayers as long as the sum does not exceed 10 percent of any single paycheck, Clegg said. The collection method would work similar to one used to collect

child support payments.

Clegg said the county cannot garnish Social Security or retirement checks since that money is not considered earned wages.

"My motion is for wages and salaries, whether that person works for GE (General Electric), Brunswick County, the board of education or whatever," said Holden. Prime (See WAGES, Page 2-A)

## State Sets Public Hearing On Town Creek Crematorium

BY TERRY POPE

Town Creek residents angry about a pet crematorium planned for their community will have a chance to voice their concerns at a state public hearing later this month.

The N.C. Division of Environmental Management (DEM) will hold a public hearing Tuesday, April 23, at 7 p.m., on an air quality control permit filed by Ron Currie, who wants to build a pet crematorium on Town Creek Road about two miles west of U.S. 17.

The hearing will be held in the Public Assembly Building at the government complex in Bolivia, said County Manager David Clegg, who was notified of the hearing last Thursday.

Currie, who plans to operate Southeastern Pet Cremation at the Town Creek site, said Monday that he will attend the hearing in Bolivia. "The public hearing will clarify a lot of things that came out wrong from the beginning," Currie said.

The New Hanover County animal control supervisor said he was

wrongly portrayed by local media as trying to mislead residents in the Town Creek community about the proposed crematorium.

Town Creek residents packed Brunswick County Commissioners' chambers March 4 to protest Currie's plan to build the crematorium in a residential neighborhood. They told commissioners their concerns about possible damage to air and water quality should an incinerator be built there.

Just days after the meeting Clegg revoked a county building permit issued earlier to Currie. The permit stated the building was to be a residential workshop rather than a commercial business.

As of last week, Currie had not applied for another building permit at the Brunswick County Building Inspections Department. Currie said Monday that his attorney is now in charge of that matter.

Commissioner Gene Pinkerton, at the March 4 meeting, asked that all board members attend a state

public hearing if one was scheduled.

Southeastern Pet Cremation would cremate cats and dogs and burn carcasses from research laboratories, slaughterhouses, animal pounds and similar sources. Veterinarians and pet owners who would like to have their pet cremated would also use the facility.

The permit would allow a maximum of 75 pounds of waste per hour or 78 tons yearly to be burned by natural gas.

A preliminary review of Currie's air quality permit has determined it can be approved and a DEM air permit issued if certain conditions are met, according to DEM's public hearing notice dated April 1.

DEM Director George Everett has determined, the notice said, that it is in the public interest that a meeting be held to receive public comments on whether to issue or deny an air permit for Southeastern Pet Cremation.

The crematorium air quality permit will be explained at the hearing

and Currie will be allowed to speak. County residents can also sign up to speak. If their comments will last more than three minutes, they are also to provide written copies.

Those not wishing to speak may submit written statements or data for the agency's consideration. To be considered as part of the hearing record, the material must be turned in before the close of the hearing.

Copies of the draft air permit, an application by Southeastern Pet Cremation and other materials used by DEM to evaluate the permit are on file for public inspection at the Leland Branch Library beside the old Leland School Park on Village Road during regular business hours.

For a fee, copies may also be obtained from the N.C. Division of Environmental Management, P.O. Box 27687, Raleigh, N.C. 27611-7687.

The proposed crematorium also sparked discussion about a need for countywide zoning. Chairman Kelly Holden said zoning laws could keep crematoriums out of a residential area.

## New Business Announcements Offer Economy Shot In Arm

BY SUSAN USHER

The Shalotte area economy got a shot in the arm this week with announcement of plans for a Wal-Mart discount department store, a 20-lane bowling alley and a medical services center to locate here.

Both Aldermen Jody Simmons and Wilton Harrelson said the new businesses should help draw more people to the town's business district as well as adding jobs to the local economy and increasing the town's property tax base.

Simmons said the Wal-Mart store should encourage county residents to shop in Shalotte rather than going outside the county. The bowling center should also keep in the county bowlers like himself who now travel to lanes in Horry County, S.C., he said last week.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. plans to begin construction this month of a store on a 15-acre site at the intersection of U.S. 17 and Holden Beach Road. Previously owned by Henry Carter, the tract presently is the site of Pinewood Manor Homes. Simmons, of Village Pines Properties, was the broker for the transaction.

The work is expected to be completed by early 1992.

Wal-Mart expects the store, its first in Brunswick County, to create approximately 180

jobs for nearby residents.

While some local businessmen have expressed concern about the effect of the Shalotte bypass on downtown business, Harrelson said he hasn't shared that doubt.

"It doesn't surprise me that the bypass is not going to scare people off," said Harrelson. He said he thinks that routing through traffic around the town will actually improve access for local shoppers. Also, he said, most people traveling to local beaches will still be traveling through town.

Wal-Mart's decision to locate in town, he said, should be beneficial to the store and to the community as a whole.

"It will hurt some individual businesses. The business pie can't be cut but into so many pieces," he continued.

"But you have to be optimistic. I think it will eventually help draw more people to Shalotte and there will probably be some spin-off businesses. Hopefully, established businesses will benefit too."

Wal-Mart spokesman Kristen Stehben said last Thursday that the square footage of the store had not been decided at that time. Plans call for a garden center, pharmacy and snack bar in addition to the chain's usual varied line of merchandise.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., founded by Sam Walton,

is based in Bentonville, Ark. The company owns about 1,600 discount department stores in 35 states, including approximately 50 in North Carolina. It also owns 176 Sam's Club stores and four superstores.

For the year that ended Jan. 31, the annual report shows sales of \$32 billion and profits of \$1.29 billion.

Bowling Center

A groundbreaking ceremony is planned Monday, April 8, at Village Pines office complex on N.C. 179 for the Brunswick County Bowling Center.

Construction is expected to be completed in time for an August opening, said General Manager Wayne "Barney" Barnhill, who is working from an office at Village Pines until the center opens. The project will also include the Spare Time Restaurant and Lounge and a snack bar, he said, along with a nursery and game room for use by bowlers' children.

The center is owned by the Williams Group of North Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Barnhill, formerly director of bowling operations at North Myrtle Beach Bowling Center, is a certified bowling instructor and coach.

(See NEW BUSINESS, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTOS BY SUSAN USHER

WAL-MART plans to build a discount department store at U.S. 17 and Holden Beach Road.