

Holden Police Say Weekend Arrests 'Clear Up' Break-Ins On Oceanfront

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach Police believe they have solved 17 breaking and entering cases with the arrest of two men Friday night and two others Saturday.

"Saturday night we really hit the jackpot," Chief Robert Cook said. "This clears up everything we've had all year as far as breaking and entering."

Saturday night officers arrested Theodore Roosevelt Lewis and Jeffrey Lee Johnson, two 21-year-olds from Loris, S.C., after noticing a suspicious vehicle parked at a vacant home, said Cook.

Lewis was charged with 14 counts of breaking and entering and one count of possession of burglary tools. Johnson was charged with three counts of breaking and

entering.

Both suspects remained in Brunswick County Jail Monday. Cook said Lewis' bond was set at \$75,000 and Johnson's was set at \$25,000.

Cook said Lewis confessed to breaking into homes at 693, 686, 653, 665, 619, 697, 691 (twice), 769A, 769B, 773, 413 and 423 Ocean Blvd. West and 313 Hillside Drive between late July and December.

The chief said Lewis allegedly stole more than \$20,000 in household merchandise during the 14 break-ins and described him as a member of a "ring" that has been operating in the area. Cook said he expects additional arrests.

Both Lewis and Johnson were charged in connection

with break-ins at 619, 653 and 665 Ocean Blvd. West. Cook said both suspects told police it was Johnson's first time breaking into homes at Holden Beach.

Police confiscated Lewis' 1989 Nissan Saturday and were still searching the strand Monday for a 9mm pistol that was reportedly thrown on the beach prior to the arrest.

Cook said most of the items taken from the beach homes were televisions, video cassette recorders, clock-radios and other household appliances.

The police chief said most of the stolen goods were sold to individuals in South Carolina.

"We're hoping to recover most of it," he said.

In an unrelated matter Friday night, police arrested

Brian Alexander Watson and Cheyenne Jan Brooks. Cook said both are 19-year-old college students from Fayetteville.

Each was charged with three counts of breaking and entering and one count of possession of burglary tools. They allegedly broke into cottages at 479, 483 and 491 Ocean Blvd. West.

Each suspect was released from Brunswick County Jail Saturday under a \$4,000 secured bond.

Cook said an alarm that sounded at one of the houses led police to the suspects.

One of the teens was found on the beach and the other was apprehended when he returned to a Charlotte Street house where the two men were staying.

Family's Stolen Gifts Recovered By Officers

BY TERRY POPE

A Leland family's Christmas wasn't so blue after all. Their Christmas presents were recovered from a stolen car stopped by the N.C. Highway Patrol Friday morning.

Warrants have been issued against a Wilmington man who is accused of breaking into the Leland home from which the gifts and several appliances were taken just a few hours earlier.

Most of the presents and goods stolen from the Old Forest subdivision home were recovered by law officers and returned to the family.

The suspect had apparently stolen a car from Wilmington last Monday, Dec. 16, according to Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Gary Shay, who filed a warrant against the 25-year-old suspect Monday morning. The suspect's name has been withheld pending an arrest in the case.

State Trooper T.W. Caulder stopped the 1989 Buick on Chappell Loop Road near Leland Friday morning, but the driver managed to flee the scene, with the keys to the car, reported Deputy Steve Mason.

When notified Friday, the owner of the car, also a Wilmington resident, hired a locksmith to open the trunk, Shay said. The car had been impounded and taken to Guyton's Wrecker Service in Leland.

Officers were surprised by what they found inside—two video recorders and 10 Christmas presents taken during the break-in, he said. However, several of the Christmas presents are still missing.

The items recovered were valued at \$1,850, said Mason, who investigated the break-in.

He reported extensive damage to a door and door frame frame at the house, where the suspect had apparently kicked a front door open, causing \$300 in damage.

The car was abandoned near a sand pit on Chappell Loop Road, several miles from where the break-in occurred, reported Deputy Pete Moore.

Planning Board Not Sure On Turnarounds

BY TERRY POPE

Some Brunswick County Planning Board members are having second thoughts about requiring turnarounds on lots that connect to busy roads.

Holden Beach area developer Benny Ludlum told the board last week that the controversial requirement isn't a part of the Brunswick County Subdivision Ordinance. He also accused the board of selecting which developers must adhere to the rule.

The board agreed to discuss the issue further at its Jan. 22 meeting.



LUDLUM

Last month, the board approved a subdivision between Shallotte Point and Ocean Isle Beach, Ludlum said, without the requirement that developers provide turnarounds on lots to prevent cars from backing onto the highway.

"To me, you're making me do something that's not a law," said Ludlum. "That's why I went to the commissioners."

Ludlum approached Brunswick County Commissioners Dec. 2 during their public comments forum and asked that the turnaround requirement on his Lakeside Subdivision along Oxpen Road (S.R. 1140) near Holden Beach be lifted. Saying that all land should be treated fairly, commissioners voted 4-1 to lift the re-

quirement that was placed on Ludlum's plat in July 1986.

However, commissioners called a special meeting Dec. 10 where they voted 3-0 to reverse that decision, saying the matter should have been appealed first to the planning board. The vote didn't affect Ludlum's subdivision, for prior to the reversal he had already filed and recorded a plat at the Brunswick County Register of Deeds' office without the turnaround provision.

The N.C. Department of Transportation encourages the platting of service roads and/or turnarounds on subdivision lots that front on streets to help reduce the possibility of traffic accidents.

However, Planning Director John Harvey said DOT officials will not and have not enforced the policy since 1986.

Two of the 12 subdivisions approved by the planning board last week did contain the turnaround provision.

Board member Alfonza Roach, who is Ludlum's business partner on the Lakeside project, questioned why the board should put special requirements on a plat when there is no way to enforcement them.

"What's the use of filling this map full and having no control over it?" Roach asked. "If we can control it, that's fine."

The fallout from recent commissioners' action prompted Harvey to ask DOT officials for a printout of posted speed limits along Brunswick County's public highways. He also studied the county's latest thoroughfare plan to see if there was a logical

way to require the turnarounds on major thoroughfares and not on streets less traveled.

Harvey told the board that three commissioners had indicated the turnaround provision was "going further than the subdivision ordinance" should require. Turnarounds have been placed on lots as early as 1981, he noted.

DOT records show that one of every two county roads has a 55 mph speed limit, said Harvey.

"Now that I know that, I'm not sure what the official application is," he noted.

Chairman Michael Schaub said the board may have to continue its case by case examination of individual plats to determine when situations could be dangerous to motorists.

"We don't want to put a restriction on a lot just for the joy of putting restrictions on a lot," Schaub said. "I think we do have to have some point of reference in making this decision."

District 2 Commissioner Jerry Jones, who serves on the planning board, told members that he had made a mistake when he voted to lift the restriction at the Dec. 2 meeting.

"I assure you the next time it will come back to the planning board," said Jones.

However, he questioned why the Lakeside project needed turnarounds in 1986, when it was a dirt street. Planners have to consider future traffic problems along those streets, he noted.

"At least it brings it to the public's attention," said John Barbee, of the planning board. "I don't see any-

thing wrong with putting it on the map. We should serve as a go-between for the public. I think that's our job. That's what we're here for."

Earlier in the meeting, Roach asked board members if they had heard comments made at the Nov. 21 meeting about a turnaround provision for a subdivision on N.C. 87 near Maco. The restriction had been recorded in the minutes, but Roach did not remember it being discussed.

The board agreed to listen to a tape of that part of the meeting in question, where Harvey's voice was heard indicating the developer's agreement to the turnarounds. Roach gave up his argument and voted with the board to approve the minutes.

As far as adding the statement to the plats, Roach noted, "I don't see what we're going to get out of it."

Harvey said the board must look five, 10 or 15 years down the road when making the decision to require turnarounds.

"In some instances, I think it's an issue of genuine concern," said John Thompson, board member. "In other cases, it may not be important."

Ludlum said he didn't think any towns required turnarounds. He told the planning board that he carried his argument to commissioners because he felt he was not being treated fairly.

"Mr. Harvey was so strong on that in 1986," said Ludlum.

At that time, Ludlum said he agreed to widen the lots fronting Oxpen Road from 50 feet to 75 feet. A plat showing that change was filed in December 1986.

Best Oyster Harvest In Years

(Continued From Page 1-A)

Richard Carpenter, district manager of the Wilmington Marine Fisheries office said the situations differ in the upper and lower coastal areas.

"It's two completely different things," he said. "In Brunswick, we haven't had the same problem as up north with overharvesting."

Varnam said that he'd read reports that Hogarth was considering closing down oyster harvests for as long as three years, possibly before the current season was scheduled to end in March.

Varnam admitted having fears that such action would bring hardship on oyster dealers.

"I hope he don't. It wouldn't be

right to close down Brunswick when we've got more than enough," he said. "It's further up the coast that's got the problems."

Ernie Galloway, an oyster harvester in Varnamtown, added, "You've got to work a river to make it good. We've had enough closures, and there's no problem down here."

Hogarth said the comments reported earlier referred to possible closings in the Pamlico area.

After Christmas, Hogarth said that he might consider closing down the area to mechanical dredging only, but that he believes hand-harvesting is permissible there.

"Closure won't help the disease anyway; it's best to go ahead and harvest," he said. "It's nothing we have a real answer to, we'll just keep hoping that a good freeze comes and kills the disease."

In the past, closing waters to harvest activity has helped replenish supplies of healthy oysters.

The season opened Oct. 15 this year and will run through March.

Both Varnam and Galloway recalled a time "a few years back, around 1987," when MFJ infection wiped out most of Brunswick County's oyster supply, but that harvests have been good since then.

Varnam reports that enforcement of cull laws has helped greatly. "The cull laws are working real good, and enforcement has helped. I think that's working just fine," he said.

Cull laws mandate that an oyster must be at least three inches long in order to be harvested.

Carpenter said that the actual count of how many bushels Brunswick County brought in during the 1991-92 season will be available "by the time the season's over."

MAIN LINE CUSTOMERS FACE FEE

New Water Charge Policy Begins Feb. 16.

BY TERRY POPE

Homeowners who tap onto the county's main water lines after Feb. 16 will pay a \$450 service charge plus a \$400 tap-on fee, the same average cost charged to a Special Assessment District (SAD) customer.

Brunswick County Commissioners, who approved the policy by a 4-1 vote last week, said the charge is a fair way of making sure all residents pay something to get county water.

In the past, residents who live along the main lines have paid only a tap-on fee when hooking onto the system.

By law, counties cannot assess residents for main distribution lines that are a part of a capital improvements project and financed through revenue bonds. However, residents who live in designated SADs must pay both an assessment and tap-on fee.

SADs are areas where water lines are routed into neighborhoods off of adjacent distribution lines. At public hearings, SAD residents have consistently told commissioners that the system was unfair.

For residents who live along the main lines, there is no mandatory tap-on. The new point of service charge applies only to those persons who decide to tap onto the system.

District 4 Commissioner Frankie Rabon voted against the plan, saying the county was "backing up on the people" with a policy years after the main lines have been installed.

"It makes a big difference to someone like myself who doesn't have the money," said Rabon.

He argued with District 3 Commissioner Gene Pinkerton over whether the policy was needed.

"If you're arguing with me, Mr. Rabon," said Pinkerton, "I think it should have been done nine years ago."

Persons who live along the main lines can apply at the Brunswick County Water Department to tap on before Feb. 16 and save the \$450 point of service charge.

The Brunswick County Utility Operations Board recommended the \$450 charge for residential customers. According to figures compiled by the Water Department staff, the average assessment per parcel in the county's 13 SADs is \$452.

"That's not bad at all," said District 2 Commissioner Jerry Jones, who added that he was surprised the figure was that low. "That's not what we hear at the public hearings."

The service charge will increase

"This is what we need to do today to make the system fair to everybody."

—Gene Pinkerton
District 3 Commissioner

for commercial water users, ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, depending on the size of tap needed. All customers will also pay a \$25 meter deposit.

Brunswick County has installed \$1.9 million in water lines in the 13 SADs, serving 4,520 parcels. Commissioners wanted the policy before new lines are routed to Seaside and the Shallotte Point communities in Phase III and III-A of the county's capital improvements project next year.

"I would say that this is close to being fair to everybody," added Pinkerton. "This is what we need to do today to make the system fair to everybody."

The UOB had recommended an immediate effective date of Dec. 17; however, commissioners decided a transition period was needed for residents.

In other business last week, the board:

- Voted unanimously against constructing SAD 19, which would have routed water lines to neighborhoods in the Town Creek and Winnabow communities. Residents there opposed the plan, saying they did not like the assessment method and cost of the mostly rural project.
- Accepted a low bid of \$67,960 from Johnson Brothers of Pittsburg to paint water towers at Shallotte and Calabash.
- Set a public hearing for 6 p.m. Jan. 6, in the commissioners' chambers on an ambulance franchise ordinance. Eleven units have applied to provide a medical transport service in Brunswick County.
- Authorized County Manager David Clegg to spend up to \$10,000 to purchase an easement for the Ocean Isle Transfer Station trash disposal site from the heirs of Lizzie Bland. Clegg said the county should own the roadway before making improvements to it.
- Delayed a vote on a single bid for an articulated trencher for the Water Department. Prime Equipment Co. of Wilmington bid \$29,958 but commissioners, who had budgeted \$35,000, said they want a cost comparison since just one bid was submitted.

■Authorized Clegg to work with Public Utilities Director Jerry Webb and County Engineer Robert Tucker to hire an engineering firm to design the Special Assessment District for the Shallotte Point community.

■Appointed Jack Scarborough and Shirley Waggoner Eisenman to the Shallotte Planning Board and Board of Adjustment to represent the

town's new extraterritorial jurisdiction.

- Appointed Pinkerton, Tucker and Bill Dunn of Boiling Spring Lakes to the Cape Fear Council of Government's Solid Waste Advisory Committee.
- Appointed Commissioner Donald Shaw to the Cape Fear Council of Government's Water Quality Task Force.
- Accepted the resignation of Dr. Bill Phillips from the Brunswick County Health Board, but delayed filling the vacancy.
- Adopted a resolution congratulating the West Brunswick High School football team for its 1991 success and competition in the 2-A State Championship game in Chapel Hill Dec. 14. Hill on Saturday.

Mild, Calm Weather Expected

Meteorologist Jackson Canady predicts more mild, calm weather for the holiday week, with temperatures to remain "somewhat above average," and rainfall to stay near normal.

He said the outlook calls for lows in the low 40s, and daytime highs in the low 60s.

"It should be a nice reprieve from the depths of winter," he said.

For the period Dec. 17-22, Canady reported that the maximum high

temperature of 70 degrees was recorded Dec. 21, and the minimum low temperature of 18 degrees was recorded on Dec. 20.

The average daytime temperature was 58 degrees, and the evening average was 28 degrees, for a daily average temperature of 43 degrees.

Canady said that reading is 4 degrees below normal for this time of year.

He said that he recorded no rainfall at his Shallotte Point home during the past week.

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