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U.S. Marshals Seize Local Marina Allegedly Bought With Drug Cash

BY DOUG RUTTER

The U.S. Marshal's Service has taken ownership of a local marina that was reportedly purchased with proceeds from a drug trafficking operation.

Taylor's Landing Marina, located on the waterway at Holden Beach, was forfeited to the federal government earlier this month, according to court records.

The marina owner, Donnie Ray Beaver of Holden Beach, declined to comment on the matter. He referred questions to his attorney, Evan Ross of Charlotte.

"We're still in negotiations with the U.S. government about the marina," Ross said Tuesday. "It would be inappropriate for me to comment about any aspect of that at this time."

U.S. District Court Judge W. Earl Britt ordered forfeiture of the marina property in a court order filed March 4 in the state's eastern district court in Wilmington.

As part of the court order, the United States will pay United Carolina Bank \$50,151, the amount of unpaid principal on the property as of July 12, 1991, plus interest.

The court order was issued in response to a civil complaint filed June 19, 1991, by Assistant U.S. Attorney G. Norman Acker III in the Wilmington district court.

Acker said last week that money and property connected with the sale of drugs and other illegal activities can be forfeited to the United States and used to benefit law enforcement.

The marina, which covers almost an acre of waterfront property, is valued at between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

Beaver was indicted in December 1990 in U.S. District Court in the state's middle district for trafficking in excess of 1,000 kilograms of marijuana, according to court records.

Maxie Glen Reedy, a special agent with the Internal Revenue Service's criminal investigation division, stated in an affidavit that Beaver was a "major trafficker" in Cabarrus County for four years starting in 1987.

Reedy was involved in an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force investigation conducted through a grand jury in Greensboro. The investigation was expanded in October 1990 to include Beaver and others.

The IRS special agent stated that Beaver, and former partner Grover Michael Poplin, made numerous trips to El Paso, Texas, to purchase illegal drugs.

The marijuana was transported to Cabarrus County, where Beaver and Poplin used a residence at Bailey's Lake to distribute the drugs. The affidavit said Beaver also kept marijuana in his garage at his residence in Kannapolis.

According to the affidavit, Beaver was arrested in April 1990 in El Paso in a reverse sting operation by the West Texas Multi-County Task Force and charged with illegal investment.

At the time of the arrest, Reedy said Beaver was attempting to purchase 340 pounds of marijuana from an undercover officer. He was reportedly carrying \$174,000 in a red gym bag and \$10,203 on his person.

Beaver was convicted of illegal investment in El Paso County in October 1990 and sentenced to five years probation, according to the affidavit.

Reedy further stated that Beaver and his wife, Sarah, purchased the marina property on Jan. 17, 1990.

Alan and Diane Holden of Holden Beach sold the property to the Beavers for \$114,900. The Holdens were in no way implicated in the investigation.

Beaver reportedly bought the property with \$1,000 in currency and a counter check for \$113,900 which he purchased at the NCNB branch at Holden Beach.

Reedy said Beaver bought the check with currency that he carried into the bank in a paper bag.

The IRS special agent concluded that Beaver purchased numerous assets, including the marina, "with proceeds from his narcotics trafficking activities in an effort to conceal those very activities so that he could continue to operate his lucrative but illegal enterprise."

Reedy stated that Beaver violated federal law twice by concealing the proceeds of his drug trafficking business with the purchase of the bank check and using the proceeds to purchase the marina.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

FEDERAL MARSHALS seized Taylor's Landing Marina at Holden Beach, alleging that the owner, Donnie Ray Beaver, bought the property with proceeds from a drug trafficking operation. The service posted "No Trespassing" stickers on the windows last week.

Shallotte Board Resumes Debate Over Post Office

BY DOUG RUTTER

Shallotte officials resumed their public debate with the postal service Tuesday night, unleashing a second attack on plans to move operations from the downtown office to the South Brunswick branch in May.

"When those people came in to the post office they came in to shop with our merchants," Mayor Sarah Tripp said. "Our merchants are worried."

Discussion of plans to move most mail-handling operations and employees from the Main Street office to the new South Brunswick branch on N.C. 904 at Seaside was similar to the one held six weeks ago.

At that Feb. 4 meeting, aldermen passed their concerns along to Ronald Reeves, superintendent of postal operations at the Shallotte Post Office.

Danny Moles, director of field operations with the postal service in Fayetteville, took the brunt of the questioning and criticism this week.

Moles said the only difference in town once the move is completed will be the lack of a daily traffic jam at the

post office. "Shallotte will not suffer one ounce," he said.

The Shallotte postmaster and carriers for all 10 area routes will be working out of the new office. Window and box service aren't expected to change in Shallotte.

Mayor Tripp said the town's biggest beef is that local officials weren't informed of the post office's plans until the new branch was built.

"We feel like the post office is part of the town," she said. "Nobody was consulted. It was like it was a big secret."

However, Moles said postal service officials had corresponded since 1986 with former mayor Jerry Jones regarding the Shallotte Post Office.

Moles said Jones, now a county commissioner, wrote letters seeking help with the traffic problem at the post office. He also mentioned the possibility of relocating the office.

Alderman Wilton Harrelson, who has been on the (See SHALLOTTE, Page 2-A)

Costly Bone Marrow Transplant Said Local Woman's Only Hope

BY SUSAN USHER

Chris Caudill wants to see her sons, Jesse, 4, and Eric, 10, grow up.

That sounds like a simple enough ambition for a 36-year-old woman, but for Chris the goal dangles on a slender thread of hope—a bone marrow transplant that her doctors at Duke University Hospital want to try, a last resort.

When doctors reviewed the limited options available, Chris said she was overwhelmed at first with a sense of hopelessness, a feeling that she was surely going to die.

After crying steadily for three days, she came to a decision—to grasp at any possibility of life.

"They said they couldn't promise me anything, but they said it's my only chance. I've had radiation; I've had chemotherapy. What else is left?"

It was only then that Chris learned her insurance would cover the chemotherapy, but not the transplant itself.

"It's hard when you pay insurance for 18 years and they come up and say we can't pay for that," she said in an interview last week.

The procedure will cost an estimated \$170,000, of which about \$145,000 will go toward hospital charges and about \$27,500 toward professional fees and outpatient care costs. A deposit of \$116,000, in certified check or money order, is due on admission and the balance when she completes the treatment.

With the outcome uncertain, why take the gamble?

For life. "I like being alive," she said. "And I'd like to see my children grown. You can't help them if you're not here."

Her church, Dixon Chapel United Methodist at Varnamtown, is spearheading efforts to raise the money, and quickly. It will take two to three months for Chris to complete four cycles of chemotherapy to shrink the tumors as much as possible in advance. Then it will be time for her to enter the hospital.

"She's got to have some time for her children," said Marlene Varnam, who is co-chairing the drive with Louellen Norris. "If we don't do anything else we'll buy some time for her."

"We're calling on friends and about everybody we know."

Observers and Chris herself say the drive has become a unifying element in the community, taking people's minds off less serious troubles as they reach out to Chris and her family.

"It seems to be pulling people together," said Chris.

A gospel sing and car wash Saturday are the first in a series of fund-raising events planned. Proceeds from all the efforts will be channeled through the church by way of a special account set up at a local bank.

"So far, everybody we've talked to has offered to help in some way," said Mrs. Varnam, but more help is needed if the goal is to be met.

Chris, the daughter of Harry Leguin and Ester Varnam and a graduate of Shallotte High School, is employed at the U.S. Army's Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point near Southport. Her husband, Jimmy, is a carpenter.

Even by selling their home on Stanley Road in Supply and other belongings, she said, there's no way they could come up with the money.

While insurance will pay for the chemotherapy treatments, her insurer, Blue Cross & Blue Shield, will not pay for the transplant procedure itself because it is considered an experimental course of treatment for her type of cancer.

The company does provide coverage for bone marrow transplants to treat certain cancers, but not a cancer such as hers, which began in her breast three years ago. After her diagnosis in 1989, Chris underwent a mastectomy and related therapy.

Now, she says, "It has jumped right back out at me."

The malignancy reappeared as a cancer of the bone in the area beneath her collarbone and in her left shoulder and upper arm. Tumors have visibly distended her arm. With the growths pressing against nerves, she lives in constant pain and is unable to lift her left arm much above waist level.

The cancer is growing rapidly and has not responded well to other treatments.

"I think that's why they're trying to get me in (for the transplant) as fast as I can," she said.

Since making the decision to go for the transplant, Chris has undergone an extensive battery of tests and scans to ensure that she is a suitable candidate, including a biopsy to make certain the cancer had not invaded the marrow of her bones.

After three years of various treatments, she said, "That was the most painful thing I've ever been through."

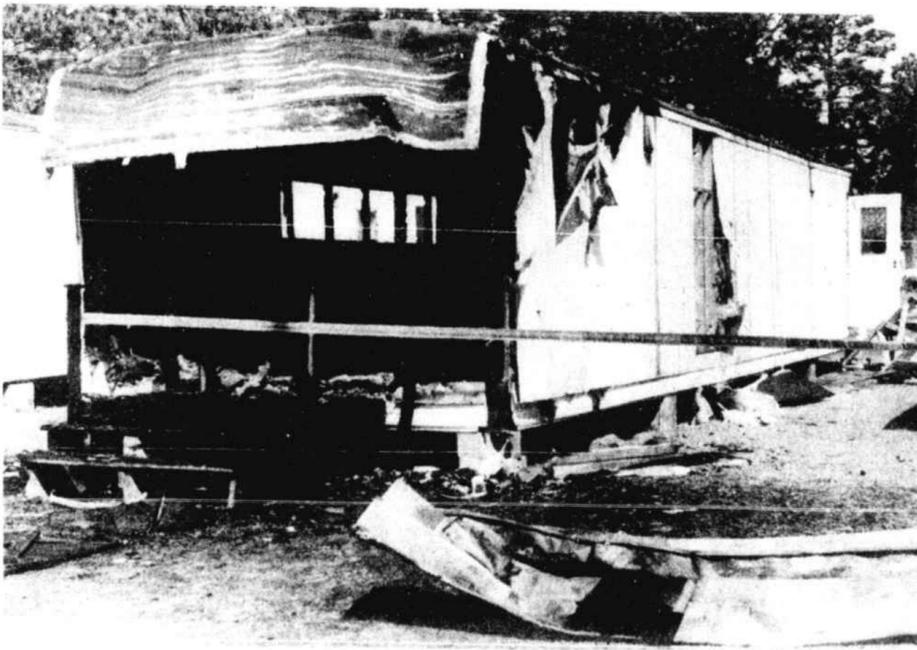
With the hope offered by the transplant, though, she's not complaining.

Her doctors plan an "autologous" transplant, which means Chris's own bone marrow will be used.

The procedures leading up to the transplant are risky, with odds high that she might not survive.

Chris entered Duke last Thursday to begin the first of four cycles of high-dosage chemotherapy. She will re-

(See TRANSPLANT, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY TERRY POPE

DAMAGE WAS ESTIMATED at \$25,000 to the North Brunswick High School mobile classroom housing an in-school suspension program. A 16-year-old boy has been charged with arson in connection with the Saturday fire.

Officers Charge North Student With Setting Fire To Building

BY TERRY POPE

A North Brunswick High School student was charged Monday with setting a fire that destroyed a mobile classroom building on the Leland campus early Saturday morning.

Blake Kennedy Hobbs, 16, of Leland, was charged with felonious burning of a school building, said Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan.

Logan and detectives with the Brunswick County Sheriff's Department filed the charges following an investigation. They had suspected arson from the beginning, said Logan.

The mobile classroom that burned housed the school's In School Suspension (ISS) program, where students who are disciplined spend their school day isolated from other students.

While there, they do independent work on classroom assignments and are not allowed to associate with their friends or classmates.

Hobbs was released from the Brunswick County Jail Tuesday af-

ternoon under \$3,000 bond.

The fire was reported around 1:30 a.m. Saturday. Firefighters from Leland Volunteer Fire Department battled the blaze and kept it from spreading to other adjacent mobile classrooms and the main school building.

Damage was estimated at \$25,000, said Logan, who would not comment on a possible motive or source for the fire.

"I'm not at liberty to say at this point," said Logan. "We're still investigating."

Felonious burning of a school building is a class E felony, punishable by up to 30 years in jail. The charge also carries a minimum term of nine years in prison and a fine, or both.

Hobbs is being charged as an adult in the case.

There were no injuries in the fire, Logan said.

Brunswick County off-duty deputies began patrols on the campus during school hours last week, in re-

sponse to parents who asked the Brunswick County Board of Education for help in making the campus safe from crime.

Fire At West

The fire at North wasn't the only school fire reported in Brunswick County last week.

Students stuffed paper towels into a heater vent inside a boy's bathroom at West Brunswick High School last Wednesday, March 11, causing a fire that was quickly extinguished, said Logan.

School officials called the Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department just after 3 p.m., but had the fire under control before firefighters arrived.

Damage was estimated at \$500 to the bathroom, located on the west side of the main school building, said Logan.

School authorities are investigating that case, said Logan, in an effort to find out who is responsible.

"The bathroom was pretty smoked up," said Logan.

There were no injuries.