

# Chamber Defendants Seek Dismissal Of Fired Executive's Lawsuit

BY SUSAN USHER

In answers filed in Brunswick County Superior Court, the South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce and two of its leaders are denying claims made against them by a former chamber employee and seeking their dismissal as "frivolous" and "irrelevant, immaterial, impertinent or scandalous."

On Sept. 8, Hollis B. "Holly" Richards filed a complaint against the chamber, President Terry Barbee and a past president, Annette Odom, saying she was fired in April from her post of executive vice president last April "on account of her sex."

The defendants say that Richards had no employment agreement and could be dismissed at will.

The answer filed Oct. 29 by Barbee and Odom's attorney, Michael R. Greeson Jr., contends her complaint failed to state a claim upon which relief can be granted and that she was terminated for cause, "because of her unwillingness or inability to perform the tasks assigned to her and for her wilful misconduct as a chamber executive."

Odom and Barbee are asking the court to enter sanctions against Richards for filing the complaint for "improper" purposes.

The chamber's answer, filed Nov. 9 by attorney Robert J. Lawing, seeks dismissal on the grounds that Richards failed to exhaust administrative remedies and to seek relief on a timely basis through the Equal

Employment Opportunities Commission before filing her complaint, and that the court lacks jurisdiction over her claims.

Further, it states that "any actions taken by any Board members, employees or alleged agents...which would form the basis of any claim for relief alleged..." were taken by said persons outside the scope of the employment or agency..." and that the chamber is not liable for any such actions.

The chamber response alleges that Richards "engaged in excessive drinking during times she was supposed to be working" at the 1991 Oyster Festival and that she "failed to perform her job duties adequately in certain respects, and that defendants Odom and Barbee

spoke with her."

Following a performance review by the board Richards' probationary period was extended, the chamber indicates. Then, after certain meetings were held in February, Richards was offered an opportunity to resign. Following additional meetings and conferences she was terminated in April.

Odom and Barbee's answer further asks that Richards' complaint be stricken in its entirety and "appropriate sanctions" entered because the complaint is neither "well grounded in fact" nor "warranted by existing law..." and that it is interposed "for an improper purpose."

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## Armed Robbery Is Believed To Be Evans Murder Motive

BY ERIC CARLSON

After investigating numerous leads and theories about why Ronald Everett Evans was murdered last month, authorities now believe he may have been killed because he recognized one of the two men who allegedly tried to steal his car.

Bradley Tyrone King, 17, of Route 1, Shallotte, and William Earl Hill, 18, of Hale Swamp (formerly Blueberry Farm) Road were charged with first-degree murder and kidnapping following their arrests three weeks ago. On Monday, a Brunswick County Grand Jury handed down indictments against the two men on those charges.

The grand jury also agreed to indict Hill and King on charges of armed robbery for allegedly threatening Evans with a 9mm semi-automatic pistol while in the process of stealing his 1986 Honda Accord.

District Attorney Rex Gore Tuesday confirmed that the new charge indicates that robbery may have been the motive for the killing.

"We've chased a lot of rabbits from rumors heard in the community. But when it came time to indict, based on what the evidence shows, it's possible that robbery was the motive," Gore said.

The new charge also means that if Hill and King are convicted of all three charges, both defendants could face the death penalty even if the evidence fails to establish which of the two pulled the trigger, Gore said.

Investigators say both men have admitted their involvement in the murder, but each points to the other as the one who shot Evans.

But by law, a person convicted of committing a felony that results in the death of the victim can also be guilty of murder no matter who did the killing.

"If all the facts point to a murder in the course of an armed robbery, the question of who pulled the trigger is not as much of a factor," Gore said.

Evans, 20, was reported missing when he failed to return to his home in Ash after driving to Shallotte to get dinner at a fast-food restaurant. His car was found the next day in a wooded area near the Brick Landing golf course. The food was still in the car.

Five days later, a horseback rider found Evans' body beside a dirt road off N.C. 130, north of Shallotte. He had been shot once in the leg and once in the back.

Some had speculated that Evans was killed over drugs or after an altercation with another person over his girlfriend. But neither scenario could be supported by information received during the dozens of interviews conducted in the case, police say.

Brunswick County Sheriff John Davis said there has been no evidence to suggest Evans was involved with illegal drug use or trafficking.

Authorities now believe Evans bought dinner

at the Burger King in Shallotte and drove to the Coastal Plaza shopping center on U.S. 17, where his girlfriend worked at the Revco drug store.

Evans had recently purchased the car with money he received in an insurance settlement following an automobile accident. The car still bore its 30-day temporary license tags.

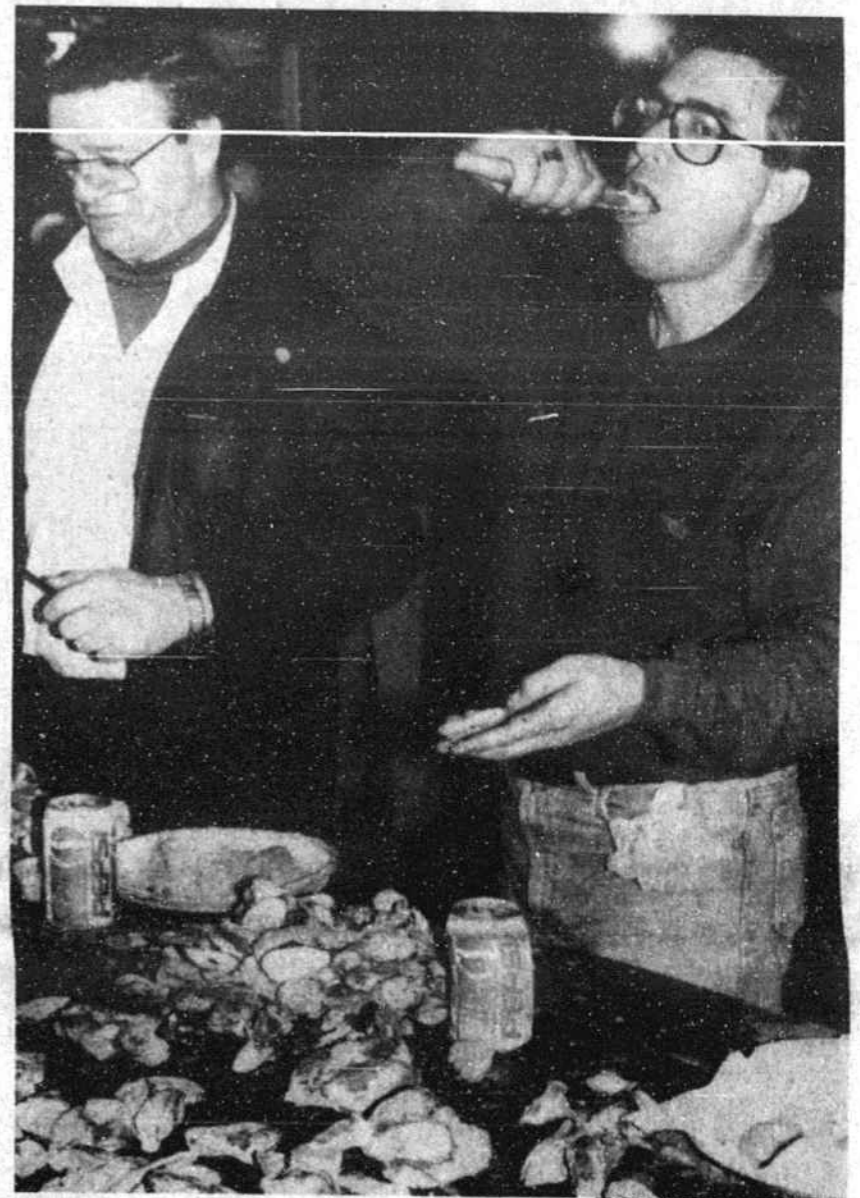
Somewhere along the way, Hill and King allegedly got into the car with Evans. One of the two men is believed to have pointed the gun at him and demanded the keys so they could drive the car to Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Police believe Evans recognized one of the two men and was shot a short time later in an effort to cover up the robbery.

Gore said he could not comment on the specifics of the investigation. He said he hopes the trial can be held sometime next spring. He added that "the time frame is out of our hands" while defense attorneys prepare their cases.

As in all cases where a defendant cannot afford to hire an attorney in a death-penalty case, two court-appointed lawyers will represent each man. Attorneys James Payne and William Fairley will defend Hill. So far only one lawyer, Michael Ramos, has been appointed to represent King.

King and Hill are being held without bond in the Brunswick County Jail. They are not expected to make any court appearances in the Evans case until trial, Gore said.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

### Sluurp!

Phil Cheers of Shallotte (right) slurps down another oyster at the Dixon Chapel United Methodist Church oyster roast Saturday in Varnamtown. Cheers and Ken Spencer of Lumberton were among more than 600 people who enjoyed roasted oysters, pickles and cornbread. The story and more photos are on Page 6-A.

## Shellfish Waters Are Lost To Bacterial Pollution

BY DOUG RUTTER

Brunswick County shellfishermen have lost another 150 acres of oyster and clam waters to bacterial pollution.

On Friday, state officials shut down shellfish harvesting in the Gause Landing and Sunset Beach areas due to high levels of fecal coliform bacteria. The proclamation issued by Marine Fisheries Director William Hogarth cited a recent sanitary survey of the Calabash area as prompting the action.

Fishermen can no longer gather oysters or clams in most of Still Creek and Gause Landing Creek. The portion of Jinks Creek that had been open to shellfishing also was closed, along with waters within 100 feet of Pelican Pointe Marina. The closure also includes waters in the Ocean Isle Beach area and in the Calabash area from a point on Sunset Beach to the South Carolina state line.

Bob Benton, head of the state's shellfish sanitation program, said the local waters were closed because of high pollution levels documented over

a period of two years.

Federal guidelines require the state to test for bacteria at least five times a year and re-evaluate all shellfish waters every two years, he said. "For this period of time those areas didn't meet the bacterial standards, so we had no alternative but to close them," said Benton.

Rich Carpenter, district manager with the N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, said the areas closed had been "used quite a bit for oystering and clamming."

Benton said last week's shellfish closure is more serious than "temporary" closings common in Brunswick County after a heavy rainfall.

He said the state will continue to sample the Sunset Beach area as it samples other waters that have been closed to shellfishing for 20 years. "We may be able, at some time, to get some of these areas open on a temporary basis," Benton said.

State officials believe the most likely sources of bacterial pollution in local waters are septic tanks and stormwater runoff.

Benton predicts more waters will be closed to shellfishing as the county's population grows and more land is developed.

"As things develop, as land use patterns change, this is the trend we will see," Benton said. "The more activity you have in a drainage area, the more septic tanks you have, the more people you have, the more pollution you'll have."

Benton said controlling bacterial pollution is difficult because all farming, development and forestry activity in a drainage basin has an impact on the water quality.

"We're not just talking about people who live along the shoreline," Benton said. "We're talking about all of the people who live in a drainage area. Everything adds just a little bit."

The towns of Sunset Beach and Calabash are putting together a joint application for funding for a regional sewer system. Sunset Beach is also looking at ways to better control stormwater runoff.

## Florida Storm Claims Local Boat, Spares Missionary Family

BY ERIC CARLSON

Two weeks after sailing south from Holden Beach last month, the newly-restored antique sailing yacht *Lamplighter* was destroyed in a violent storm off Florida, leaving a missionary preacher, his wife and three children homeless but not without hope.

A passing shrimp boat rescued the Goodrum family from their nearly-sunken 43-foot motorsailer after it

"Oh no, I thought. It's the jetty! I just said, 'Lord, we're in your hands.'"

—David Goodrum

smashed onto the one of two mile-long rock jetties lining the entrance to the St. Marys River near Fernandina Beach, Fla., Oct. 23.

Shaken and wet, but otherwise unharmed, David and Debbie Goodrum and their children, Heather, 4, Justin, 9, and Jeremy, 12, are staying on another boat at the Amelia Island Yacht Basin in Fernandina Beach.

About a month before their departure, the Goodrums were the subject of a feature story in the Labor Day issue of *Island Living*. In a telephone interview from Florida Tuesday, David Goodrum described their journey south and its harrowing climax.

After more than a year of restoration and preparation while docked at Holden Beach, the Goodrums headed south down the Intracoastal Waterway Oct. 9. As the Lighthouse Missionary Outreach, they had

loaded the boat with clothing and Bibles to help aid Haitian refugees in the southern Bahama islands.

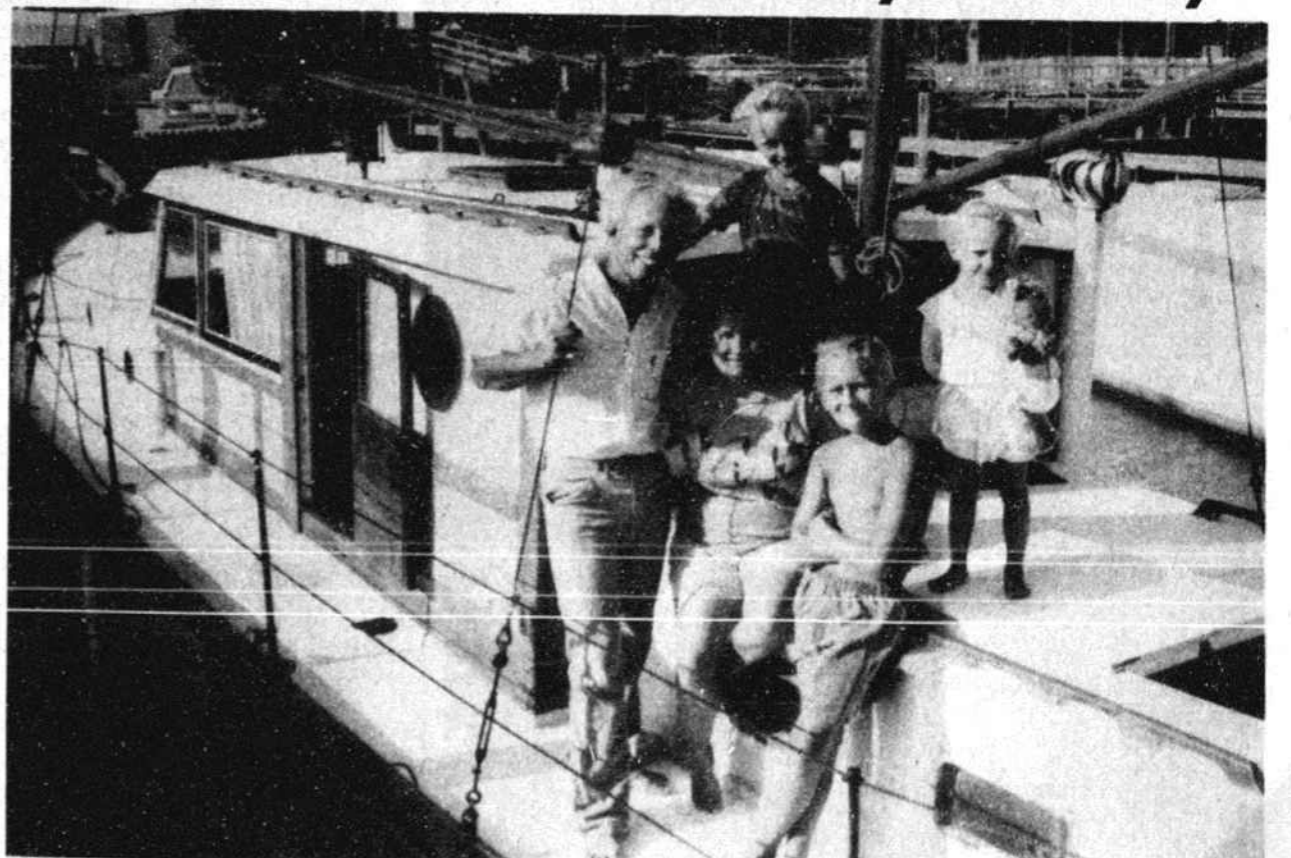
Goodrum said they spent the first week or so getting the feel of the *Lamplighter* as they made their way through South Carolina. Faced with slow going through the winding channels of Georgia, they decided to venture into the ocean, where they could save several days by sailing straight to St. Augustine, Fla.

With beautiful weather and a favorable northeast wind behind them, Goodrum took the *Lamplighter* out Sapolo Sound Inlet at about 3:15 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 22, and steered south under full sail.

Contrary to weather forecasts that called for moderate winds and seas of three to four feet, Goodrum said that the weather began to deteriorate as darkness fell. By late that night the wind speed had risen to more than 25 knots with seas of more than seven feet.

By 5 a.m. the weather had grown worse and the family was seasick and exhausted, Goodrum said. Despite making repeated corrections to stay on course for St. Augustine, the *Lamplighter* kept being pushed closer and closer to shore on a direct

(See SHIPWRECKED, Page 2-A)



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

THE GOODRUMS pose aboard *Lamplighter* in Holden Beach last summer before their departure for the Bahamas. The family recently survived a harrowing shipwreck on the coast of Florida that destroyed their antique motorsailer. Shown are (from left) Dave, Debbie, Justin, Jeremy and Heather.

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