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Probable cause found in Winfall murder case

Barnes case to go before grand jury on June 5

By GINGER LIVINGSTON
The Daily Advance

Judge Grafton Beamon ruled last Wednesday that there was probable cause to send a murder case to trial if the grand jury indicts the man charged with the capital offense on June 5.

Christopher Lee Barnes, 20, of Rocky Mount, is accused of

beating to death his uncle, Harold Copeland, 77, in Copeland's Winfall home on March 21. Barnes was taken into custody three days later in Nash County.

SBI Special Agent Dwight L. Ransome said during testimony at the probable cause hearing that Barnes told law enforcement officers at the time of his arrest that he had ingested crack hours before the crime.

Barnes sat with his head bowed during the proceedings and appeared to cover his ears with his fists. After Beamon's ruling, he went to his parents, who sat behind his attorney, Samuel B. Dixon, during the

proceedings and tightly hugged his father.

After Barnes' arrest in Nash County for passing bad checks, Perquimans County Sheriff David Lane, Chief Deputy Dean Cartwright and Ransome interviewed him about the crime.

"We told him we wanted to talk about the investigation," Ransome said. "We didn't say homicide investigation. He didn't show any emotions until we told him his grandad - his uncle - was dead. Then he cried 10 or 15 seconds."

Ransome testified Barnes told law officers he left Coastal Plains Rehabilitation Center on March 20 after a 14-to-15-

day stay. He told his mother he wanted to stay with Copeland, whom he called "Pa-Pa."

When he arrived in Winfall, Barnes and Copeland went for pizza in Edenton, Ransome said. Barnes then left to visit friends in Elizabeth City. On the way, he found a piece of crack cocaine in the car, Ransome said. Barnes returned to Copeland's house.

Barnes told the officers he prayed for strength to resist the drug but ended up chewing and swallowing the crack, Ransome said. He said he would not sleep until early morning and then slept a few hours, Ransome said.

"He remembered waking up

Tuesday morning and went to the kitchen and Mr. Copeland said 'hello' and asked if he wanted breakfast," Ransome said. "After not being able to find any butter (he said) it happened." The "it" was the attack on Copeland.

Assistant District Attorney Nancy Lamb asked if Barnes said why the telephone lines in the house had been cut. "He told us he cut the telephone lines because he thought he knew what he was going to do," Ransome said.

Barnes took Copeland's truck and approximately \$450 in cash before returning to Rocky Mount, Ransome said. Barnes told officers he wanted

the money to buy crack, Ransome said.

On the way from Perquimans County to Rocky Mount, Barnes allegedly stopped at the home of a Hertford teenager and threatened her with physical harm. Hertford Police charged Barnes with communicating threats and assault on a female in that case.

First-degree murder is a death penalty offense. "I'm required by law to pursue it as a capital case when there are statutory aggravating factors," Lamb said.

Barnes is being held without bond in Albemarle District Jail.

Manager presents proposed county budget

3 cents ad valorem tax increase recommended

By SUSAN R. HARRIS
Editor

County Manager Paul Gregory presented his 1995-96 budget proposal to Perquimans County Commissioners in special session Friday.

The \$6.1 million budget would require property taxes to rise from 78 cents per \$100 valuation to 81 cents, although the budget is actually \$50,000 less than last year's budget. Gregory said in his budget message that cutbacks in state and federal spending and frozen state revenues to the counties which replaced inventories tax and intangibles tax mean county residents will have to pay a higher percentage of the budget.

Approximately \$3.36 million of the county's budget comes from ad valorem taxes. Other taxes, investment earnings, rents and state grants make up the majority of the rest.

Gregory recommended that most departmental budgets rise only slightly next fiscal year.

The manager also recommended a cut of \$277,848 from the schools' request, the largest cut made in the requests. The school board requested \$639,998. Gregory recommended funding \$362,150, plus the \$136,363 the county pays each year for debt retirement on the school bonds used for renovation. The entire amount cut came from the capital outlay line item.

Gregory also recommended a \$38,000 cut from the social service request, a \$60,000 in dispatch, and a \$21,874 cut in the register of deeds office.

The county has set a public hearing to allow residents to air their views on the budget on June 15.

Until that time, the budget proposal is on file in the county manager's office. Taxpayers interested in reviewing the document may make an appointment with the manager's office.

The new budget will become effective in July.

CELEBRATING WITH ART



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

Colorful artwork adorns the walls in the fine arts department at Perquimans Middle School. The work celebrates Very Special Arts coordinated by Brenda Hollowell.

Justice Department defends Cole

Criminal, not Cole, to blame for murder, spokesman says

By MARTHA WAGGONER
Associated Press Writer

RALEIGH- U.S. Attorney Janice Cole is not to blame for the murder of a Nash County woman who died during a carjacking, the U.S. Justice Department says. Her killer is.

"A horrible crime occurred," Carl Stern, spokesman for the U.S. Justice Department, said in a letter defending Cole's refusal to prosecute a man on federal carjacking charges. "For that, we normally blame the criminal. To suggest that it happened because the United States attorney failed to act in a previous case is an unwarranted character-smear and a reckless distortion of the facts."

Stern's defense came as U.S. Sen. Lauch Faircloth last week asked U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno to investigate Cole's refusal to file the charges.

When asked if action Jodie Elizabeth Plew's death could have been avoided if Cole had filed charges, a Faircloth spokesman said: "Obviously, if he (the suspect) had been incarcerated, he would not have been free to commit any more crimes, including the murder of Mrs. Plew."

The political volleying involves two carjacking cases earlier this year.

In one case, Laura Novak was driven around for nine hours in the trunk of her car until her boyfriend saw her car and rescued her. She was unharmed.

Three weeks later, Mrs. Plew, 34, was taken from a grocery store parking lot in Nash County and killed.

Raleigh police had wanted a defendant in the first case, Robert McCrimmon, 17, to face federal prosecution under the 2-year-old federal statute

aimed at deterring carjackings. McCrimmon, who was identified from a videotape taken when he used the victim's bank card, had refused to turn in his partner.

Police thought the threat of federal charges might change his mind. But Cole's office refused because the federal carjacking statute requires establishing that a suspect intended to cause death or serious bodily harm, Stern said in a telephone interview Thursday.

Police released Dexter Harris for lack of evidence. He later was charged with the murder of Plew but not with federal charges of carjacking.

Preyer said Novak's ordeal falls within the federal statute.

"If the Department of Justice thinks that someone being trapped in their trunk for nine hours and almost suffocating to death does not constitute violent crime or threat of death, I don't know what does," Preyer said.

The federal statute does not make a federal crime of all carjackings, Stern said.

Faircloth asked Attorney General Janet Reno on Thursday to instruct the Department of Justice's Office of Professional Responsibility to investigate Cole.

"My constituents want violent criminals vigorously prosecuted," Faircloth wrote Reno. "If the investigation determines that U.S. Attorney Janice Cole has been negligent or derelict of duty as a law enforcement officer, then I would expect her swift removal." Stern said the department had not received the letter Thursday.

Faircloth also asked Sen. Orrin Hatch, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, to convene a hearing to investigate Cole's actions. He also asked to participate in the hearing and to question Cole.

A spokeswoman for the Judiciary Committee said she was not aware of the letter.

Inside

Pirates to go to third round of state play-offs
Page 6

Livestock awards announced
Page 8

Band students earn honors
Page 10

Obituaries.....Page 3

Veterans plan big Flag Day

Local veterans will be joined by their colleagues from across the state, as well as military dignitaries, when Perquimans County celebrates Flag Day on June 14.

Part of the 50th Anniversary of World War II Commemorative Community Program honoring all World War II veterans, the celebration will include a long-overdue dedication of Memorial Field at Perquimans High School, a parade and concerts by military bands.

Billboards declaring the event were sponsored by Smith's Jewelry, Woodard's Pharmacy, Swindell Funeral Home and the Veterans of Underage Military Service.

The observance is being coordinated by the North

Carolina Chapter of Veterans of Underage Military Service. County resident Jack Hoffer, who was 14 when he enlisted, is the State Commander of the organization. Through this group, the 82nd Airborne Division Chorus and the U.S. Marine Corps Band have been obtained to entertain.

A United States Flag Honor Guard, many of whom will be local veterans, will advance the colors onto the baseball field at the high school at 2:30 p.m. to the strains of the Marine Corps band. After nearly 50 years, the baseball field that has served Perquimans High School and the county will be dedicated to those it was constructed to honor: those who fought for freedom.

Outside

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
High: 80s Low: 60s PARTLY CLOUDY	High: 80s Low: 60s PARTLY CLOUDY	High: 80s Low: 60s CHANCE OF RAIN