

Higgins honored

Page 2

State budget woes

Page 4

Lady Pirates 2nd in tourney

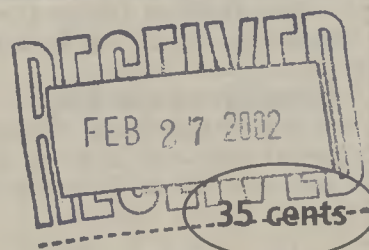
Page 8

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# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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## Boosters: Facilities needed

### Athletic facilities not safe, in good repair

ANNA GOODWIN  
MCCARTHY

Correspondent

Track athletes know they have a good chance of winning if they jump over all the hurdles. However, the hurdles that all Perquimans County athletes face are not that easy to overcome.

The condition of the School System's athletic

facilities was the topic of a presentation by Perquimans County Athletic Booster President Kim Perry and Coach Harrell Thach at the Perquimans County Board of Education meeting Monday night.

Listeners winced as pictures were displayed of worn-out equipment, overflowing toilets, nonfunctioning bacteria filled showers and rusted lockers.

"Warping of floors is a major problem," said Thach.

Thach said he was concerned for the students' safety, and that the floors in the gymnasium needed to

be repaired.

Perry said they "desperately need" facilities for the track team.

Track is the only sport without a home facility, said Thach.

Athletes practice jumping over hurdles in the street, said Thach. When track team members arrive at meets they have to become accustomed to the tracks very quickly, because they are not familiar with the lanes.

"We work hard with what we got," said Thach.

Perry and Thach listed the multitude of achievements won by Perquimans County athletes in recent years.

Thach said athletes would probably excel to even greater levels of competition if they had adequate facilities.

The average GPA, attendance and graduation rates of athletes are higher than non-athletes, said Perry.

Perry said many of the student athletes have suggested the need for adequate facilities and equipment.

They want their families to be able to see them play, said Perry.

The Perquimans County Board of Education took the presentation under recommendation, and no action was taken during the meeting.



A costumed student enjoys a nutritious breakfast at school to prepare for a successful morning.

## Firefighters recall day of crash

### Billowing smoke, flames met firemen at scene

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Fourth and final installment in a series

A big fire.

That's what two firefighters on the scene of the jet crash at the high school bus garage remember about the incident.

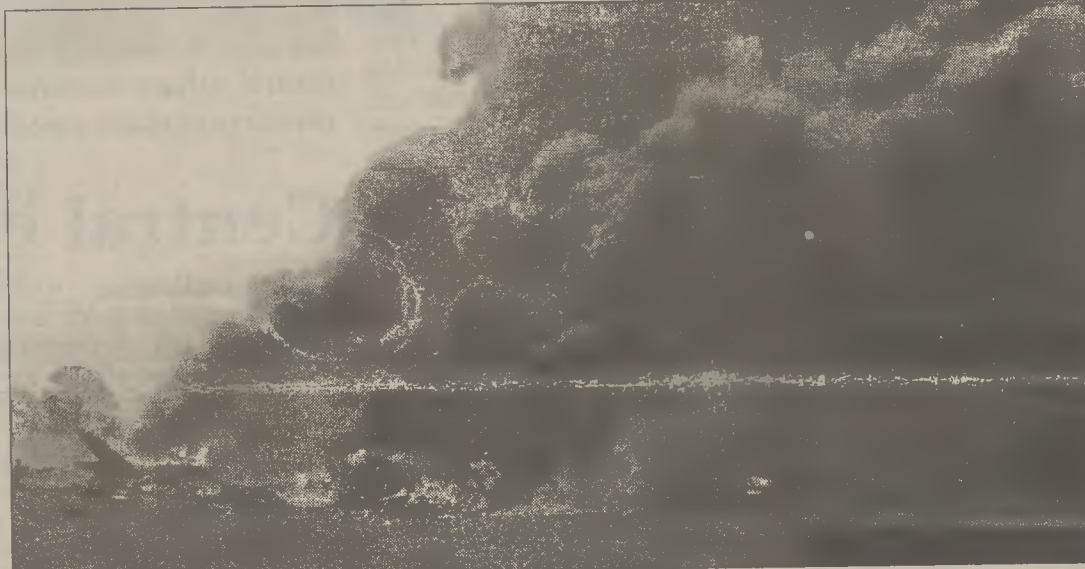
Billy White recalls hearing a boom followed by the fire whistle going off. Firefighters were told to respond to the high school. "We didn't know it was a plane crash until we got there," White said. "We just thought it was an explosion in the school bus garage."

Once on the scene, firefighters began to lay hose from fire hydrants to fight the blaze.

"The whole school bus garage was in a big ball of fire."

Fire personnel were told that there could be magnesium in the plane and that no water should be put on the magnesium because it would cause it to flare up, White said.

"We were putting water everywhere we could to knock the fire down," White said. "Our main thing was to knock this fire down to keep it from trying to spread. ... We were running wild trying to do what



Sandy Divers took this photograph of the smoke billowing from the navy fighter plane that crashed on the Perquimans County High School campus 45 years ago this month. This is what firefighters saw as they arrived on the scene. Emergency and military personnel and volunteers comb through the remains of the bus garage (below).

we could do."

Although not well equipped by today's standards, White said the fire crew got the job done.

"I have to praise the firemen," White said. "The firemen did a fantastic job."

In addition to the possibility of the fire spreading, another concern was the number of people on the scene. White said many people rushed to the scene when word got out that a plane had crashed at the high school, fearing that their children had been injured.

"It was a busy cotton-picking time," White summed up his memories of the day.

Charlie Skinner was also a firefighter on the scene. Skinner was working with the State Employment Security Commission on the day of the fire. He was taking unemployment claims in the courthouse when he heard the crash and responded to the fire call.

"The main thing that I remember about it was that I was in downtown Hertford and I heard this rumble and then I heard this fire whistle," Skinner said. "I had my gear in the car and I went right on out to the high school."

Skinner said the black smoke billowing from the crash told him where the fire was.

"We didn't have much to fight fire with at that time," Skinner, who later served as chief, said.



There were only two fire trucks, and firefighters wore raincoats as turnout gear. There was also no foam to put on the burning wreckage.

Firefighters concentrated on the burning building and fence, and also orchestrated a search and rescue type operation. Those at the scene thought that C.P. Morris, a clerical worker at the bus garage, was in the building. They later discovered that he had gone to the bank at the time of the crash. They were also looking for the plane's pilot.

A Marine crash crew from Edenton and Navy helicopters from Weeksville responded also.

Skinner said he was on the scene until about 3 p.m., when he returned to work. He came back that night as firefighters watched for flare-ups in the smoldering wreckage.

Both firefighters said there were many events of the day about which they were unaware because their main focus was on fire control.

Skinner said in addition to he and White, John

Beers, Bobby Elliott, George Fields and Henry Stokes also fought fire that day.

A support person on the scene was Mary Harrell. Harrell was one of the Hertford women who set up a comfort station near the scene for emergency and military personnel. From newspaper accounts, volunteers included Harrell, Jessie Cox, Lizzie Lee Cox and Polly Hollowell.

Harrell said she remembers the fear that swept through the town when the word first went out that a plane had crashed at the high school. Although she did not have a child at school, she was concerned about those on the scene and also the emergency personnel called to respond.

Although she doesn't remember exactly how it came about that she volunteered that day, she remembers serving coffee and doughnuts to cold, tired personnel.

"I just remember all the commotion," she said. "It was a terrible time."

## School Breakfast Week approaches

### Studies show breakfast one key to student success

The child nutrition department of Perquimans County Schools has planned celebrations around this year's national School Breakfast Week theme, "School Breakfast: Join the Club," March 4-8.

Special events being planned during the 13th Annual National School Breakfast Week include student selections on favorite breakfast items in the cafeteria; teachers, administrators and members of the community serving breakfast; and giveaways for students who eat breakfast in the cafeteria.

"Busy parents need to know that their children can receive healthy, good-tasting meals at school each morning, said Donna Harris, Perquimans County Child Nutrition Director.

The National School Breakfast Program ensures that kids who either don't have time to eat breakfast or who don't want to eat first thing in the morning will have a nutritious meal to start their day, added Harris. Every day, 7 million children across the U.S. eat breakfast at school.

Recent studies have confirmed the important link between eating a healthy breakfast and performance in school. A State of Minnesota Breakfast Study found that students who ate breakfast before starting school had a general increase in math grades and reading scores, increased student attention, reduced nurse visits and improved student behaviors. Researchers at Harvard Medical Center in Boston found that hungry children are more likely to have behavioral and academic problems than children who get enough to eat.

At school, hungry children

had more problems with irritability, anxiety and aggression, as well as more absences and tardiness.

Marcia Smith, president of the American School Food Service Association said, "Schools that take advantage of the School Breakfast Program can provide essential nourishment to children who don't eat breakfast at home. School meal programs are regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture and must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. These guidelines require that school breakfasts provide children with one-fourth or more of the Recommended Daily Allowance for calories, protein, vitamins A and C, iron and calcium. They must also be low in fat."

Perquimans County Schools has been serving breakfast to all students, free of charge, since the 1997-98 school year. The percentage of participation to enrollment was 31 percent in the 1995-96 school year, increased to 39 percent in the 1996-97 school year when a grant was received to provide free breakfast to high school students and increased to 58 percent in the 1997-98 school year when all students were provided free breakfast. The current percentage of students participating in the free breakfast program is 49 percent.

ASFSA ([www.asfa.org](http://www.asfa.org)), sponsor of National School Breakfast Week, is a national non-profit professional organization representing more than 55,000 members who provide high-quality, low-cost meals to students across the country. The association and its members are dedicated to feeding children safe and nutritious meals. Founded in 1946, ASFSA is the only association devoted exclusively to protecting and enhancing children's health and well being through school meals and sound nutrition education.

## WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY  
High: 46  
Low: 27  
SUNNY

FRIDAY  
High: 51  
Low: 35  
SUNNY

SATURDAY  
High: 57  
Low: 40  
CLOUDY