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JUBILEE DAY

Celebration gives thanks for freedoms; Emancipation of slaves remembered in prayer

S. BRADY CALHOUN
The Daily Advance

Members of Melton Grove Baptist Church and the Perquimans County branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People came together for the annual Jubilee Day Celebration on Jan. 1.

The celebration marks the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, and speakers at the ceremony made religion, freedom and gratitude the central focus.

"It's a time to reflect back on where we've come from and how much we've accomplished and how good God is," Mary Davis of Elizabeth City said. "He's brought us a mighty long way."

NAACP President and Winfall Mayor Fred Yates likened Jubilee day to the Jewish holiday of Passover, wherein people who were once in bondage give thanks to God for being free.

"It's a celebration we do every year where we give praise and honor to our lord and saviour Jesus Christ," Yates said.

Yates added that although things are going well in Perquimans County, there are still myriad issues such as housing, education and employment that the NAACP is watching carefully.

"Our education system in Perquimans County is second to none but there is still room for improvement," Yates said. "I see our county moving ahead — moving forward."

The largest issue facing Perquimans County isn't a civil rights problem, Yates said.

"Locally, we seem to be doing all right," he said. "The only threat I see isn't a civil rights issue, it's the (U.S. Navy's proposed outlying landing field) coming here. If that happened we would get all the noise and no jobs, no benefits."

On a more global front, the Rev. Alvin Boone of Melton Grove Baptist Church drew attention to the threat of war in Iraq.

"Even though we are on the brink of war," Boone said in his invocation. "Lord, we know you can disarm missiles and change a President's heart."

Jubilee Day is an annual event organized by the local chapter of the NAACP and hosted by churches in the community.

25th anniversary: Winslow Oil Company fire

SUSAN R. HARRIS

The rising sun bounced light crystals off the surface of the Perquimans River on Tuesday, Jan. 10, 1978. People across the county got up and began their daily routines on this bitterly cold, sunny morning.

But before school bells rang signalling the first classes of the day, the fire alarm rang, calling firefighters to what some tag the worst fire ever in Hertford.

An explosion of an oil tank at Winslow Oil Company on Covent Garden Street called the 22-member Hertford Volunteer Fire Department into an inferno at around 7:50 a.m.

While the cause of the fire has never been determined, it is known that two transports were loading fuel at the facility when the fire started. The drivers had left the trucks loading and were inside the oil company offices at the time of the first explosion.

Following the first alarm, Hertford Fire Chief Charles Skinner immediately put in a general alarm for assistance. Firefighters battled the blaze for an hour before the first report came in that it was contained. By 10 a.m., it was reported that about 125 firefighters were on the scene.

The most immediate danger was the threat of fire reaching both the Reed and Hollowell oil company tanks. Reed Oil was located on the adjacent lot to Winslow Oil, with Hollowell Oil just yards away on Perquimans Street. Firefighters kept water on oil company tanks to keep them cool and try to prevent further involvement. They also kept a steady stream of water on the home of Erie Haste,



John Matthews captured this image of the blazing Winslow Oil Company fire on Jan. 10, 1978. Pre-planning, area-wide cooperation and weather conditions were key ingredients in fighting the inferno with no loss of life, and containing it to the immediate area.

Farmer's Feed & Seed which sat about 10 feet from Winslow Oil Company. Haste lost a garage with playroom on the second floor and two cars, but aside from minor damages, his home was saved.

Farmer's Feed & Seed wasn't so lucky. The business was a total loss except for its grain tanks.

After the fire, Winslow Oil rebuilt in Winfall, while Hollowell Oil moved to Winfall the next year. Farmer's Feed & Seed rebuilt and Reed stayed put.

Among the first departments to respond to the plea for help were units from Bethel, Belvidere-Chappell Hill, Intercounty, Edenton, Elizabeth City, South Mills and Winfall. Also on the scene were all available personnel from the Perquimans and Chowan Sheriff's departments, Hertford and Edenton police departments, N.C. Highway Patrol, Perquimans County Rescue Squad and U.S. Coast Guard.

Immediately following the first explosion, several

homes near the fire were evacuated and all traffic was diverted away from downtown Hertford.

Five explosions were heard throughout the day, audible from as far away as 5 miles, as the smoke billowed into clouds thick enough to be seen from Elizabeth City and Edenton. The five explosions occurred between 7:50 a.m. and 2:50 p.m. The third and fourth explosions were reported as the tops of oil tanks. At 11 a.m., it was reported that between four and six oil tanks were involved.

The fifth explosion occurred when an oil tank ignited, blowing its top off. The tank lid was propelled over the home of Erie Haste and onto Grubb Street, where it hit the pickup truck of Assistant Fire Chief Pete Riddick before hitting and injuring Chief Fred White of the Edenton Fire Department. White suffered a separated pelvis and fractured ribs. Several other firefighters received minor injuries. The Perquimans County Rescue Squad, which

operated as an all-volunteer unit on call 24 hours per day before the introduction of the Emergency Medical Services Department, and medics with the U.S. Coast Guard were on the scene to assist with injuries.

Winslow Oil Company lost nine of its 11 oil tanks, offices, a warehouse, records, three transports, three service trucks and cash.

While firefighters battled fire and sub-zero temperatures, a battalion of volunteers sprang into action. A rest station was set up at Hertford United Methodist Church. Hot homemade soup, sandwiches and drinks awaited firefighters on their breaks. Volunteers wiped soot off of cold faces. Closer to the scene, an RV manned by a mother-daughter team provided respite from the bitter cold and hot coffee.

Hertford Fire Department will commemorate the day Saturday.

(Part one of a series. Next week: interviews with firefighters.)

Stolen items recovered

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Two truck loads of stolen items were recovered when the Perquimans County Sheriff's Department executed a search warrant in Chowan County last month.

Perquimans Deputy Nathan Zachary said the department got a break in cases, which date back as far as last spring, giving officers enough ammunition to get a search warrant. The Dec. 15 search of a residence on Chambers Ferry Road in Edenton resulted in the recovery of numerous stolen items and three arrests.

Charged in the cases were Henry Luther Bond Jr., 22, of Chambers Ferry Road, Edenton; Travis Hollowell, 18, of South Street, Elizabeth City; and Barry Keith Layden Jr., 19, of Drinking Hole Road, Belvidere.

Bond and Hollowell were arrested at the time the search warrant was executed, and were charged with felonious breaking and entering and larceny. Their bonds were set at \$50,000 secured.

Layden was arrested the next day and was charged with breaking and entering a motor vehicle and larceny. He was released under a \$6,500 secured bond.

Items recovered included guns, CD players, car stereos, CB radios, knives, swords and even a dog.

Zachary said other arrests are pending and the investigation is ongoing.

Law officers in Perquimans, Pasquotank, Bertie, Gates and Hertford counties, as well as in the Hampton Roads, Virginia area, had been investigating break-ins of buildings and vehicles for several months. Zachary said Perquimans officers received information from the Pasquotank Sheriff's Department in the case, and Perquimans Deputy Shelby White obtained information on Dec. 14 relating to the cases. The Dec. 14 information gave officers enough to get the search warrant.

Officers from Pasquotank and Chowan assisted with the execution of the search warrant.

County seeks social services director

SUSAN R. HARRIS

County officials are in the process of finding a new director for the Department of Social Services.

Commissioners were told at their January meeting on Monday that the Social Services Board is reviewing applications for the position, left vacant by the retirement of long-time director Chrystal Towe.

Towe was a social services employee before she was tapped to head the department in July 1987. She replaced Paul Gregory, who was chosen by the commissioners to become county manager. She retired last month.

The Social Services

Board will approach Towe about working part-time until a replacement can be found.

In other personnel items, the commissioners approved the appointments of Joshua Turpin as a deputy and Gina Wharton as the sheriff's department secretary. Leave was approved for social services employee Renae Long. Beverly Knight was appointed secretary/program assistance for the Governor's One-On-One Program.

Capital projects were also discussed by the commissioners.

Gregory reported that work at the recreation/community center under construction

in the Perquimans Commerce Centre is progressing smoothly. He shared photographs of the building with commissioners.

There is a problem finding funds to extend water and sewer lines to the site, Gregory said.

After months of discussion and making changes to the plan, the commissioners agreed Monday to order a 28 x 70 manufactured unit at a cost of \$81,613 to expand the former health department building on Charles Street to accommodate social services. Gregory said the unit is identical in size to a unit already on the site which was used to create more space for the health depart-

ment when it was there.

In addition to the building, the manufacturer will sell to the county at cost siding to be attached to the existing unit so that both additions will match. Gregory and commissioner Mack Nixon said there are problems on some sections of the old building requiring replacement of sheathing and siding.

Social workers with DSS are already using the facility; however, there is not enough room for the entire department to move to the Charles Street building.

Once the Charles Street site is complete and social services is moved, the present social services building on Dobbs Street will be renovated.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
HIGH: 63
LOW: 36
PARTLY CLOUDY

FRIDAY
HIGH: 55
LOW: 28
MOSTLY SUNNY

SATURDAY
HIGH: 47
LOW: 28
MOSTLY SUNNY