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Page 2

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Page 9

PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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DeGray guilty of attempted murder

SUSAN R. HARRIS

A Perquimans County man will spend the next 17-23 years in prison serving active sentences for attempted murder and burglary.

Matthew Roy DeGray, 24, pleaded guilty to first degree attempted murder and first degree burglary

for the May 18, 2002 beating and stabbing of his former girlfriend. The attack occurred after DeGray broke into the 21-year-old woman's home on Oliver Street at Bethel Fishing Center.

Perquimans Sheriff Eric Tilley said at the time of DeGray's arrest that his victim was in surgery for

over 6 hours to repair the damage from the attack.

"There were stab wounds and cut wounds all over her body," Tilley said at that time.

The woman was somehow able to get to a neighbor's house for help after the attack.

According to information gathered during the

investigation, DeGray and his victim had lived together and have a child. DeGray had moved out of the home he shared with the woman, and had moved into a residence with another female on Levi Creecy Road. His former girlfriend got a protective order against DeGray after he moved out of her residence.

DeGray was arrested within hours of the incident. He was held in Albemarle District Jail under a \$125,000 secured bond set by Judge Grafton Beamon until his trial date in Perquimans County Superior Court in early February. He was sentenced by Superior Court Judge J. Richard Parker.

DeGray was sentenced to 157-198 months for the attempted murder charge and 64-86 months for the burglary charge. He is to serve the sentence for one conviction, then at its expiration, he will serve the other sentence.

Tilley said DeGray will soon be transported to Central Prison in Raleigh.

Hertford man charged with rape, kidnap

SUSAN R. HARRIS

A Hertford man is awaiting trial in Albemarle District Jail on multiple charges including rape and kidnapping.

James David Nichols, 25, of 207 Woodland Street, Hertford, was arrested on Feb. 5 and charged with second degree forcible rape, first degree kidnapping, assault on a juvenile and domestic violence assault on a female. He is currently being held under a \$150,000 secured bond.

Hertford Police Chief Dale Vanscoy said Nichols is a registered sex offender, having served time for charges in Randolph County. He did register with the sheriff's department upon moving to Hertford early last summer.

The case began to unfold around 8 p.m. on Feb. 4 when officers from Vanscoy's department were called to the central communications office where they were met by a female, a juvenile and an adult male, Vanscoy said.

The female, a 22-year-old, told officers that she had been sexually assaulted at 207 Woodland Street on the evening of Feb. 3.

Vanscoy said that Nichols allegedly lured the female victim and a 12-year-old male into his home. The victim and the youth told officers that Nichols had taken the victim into an upstairs room, then told the 12-year-old to leave and lock the door behind him. The

12-year-old did leave, but did not lock the door. He said he heard a scuffle in the room in a couple of minutes, and opened the door to find Nichols allegedly sexually assaulting the victim.

The juvenile ran downstairs and got another adult male who lives in the house. The pair went back upstairs, where they said they found the door locked. The adult broke into the room and allegedly pulled Nichols off the female.

The adult male told officers he held Nichols while the female and the juvenile left the room.

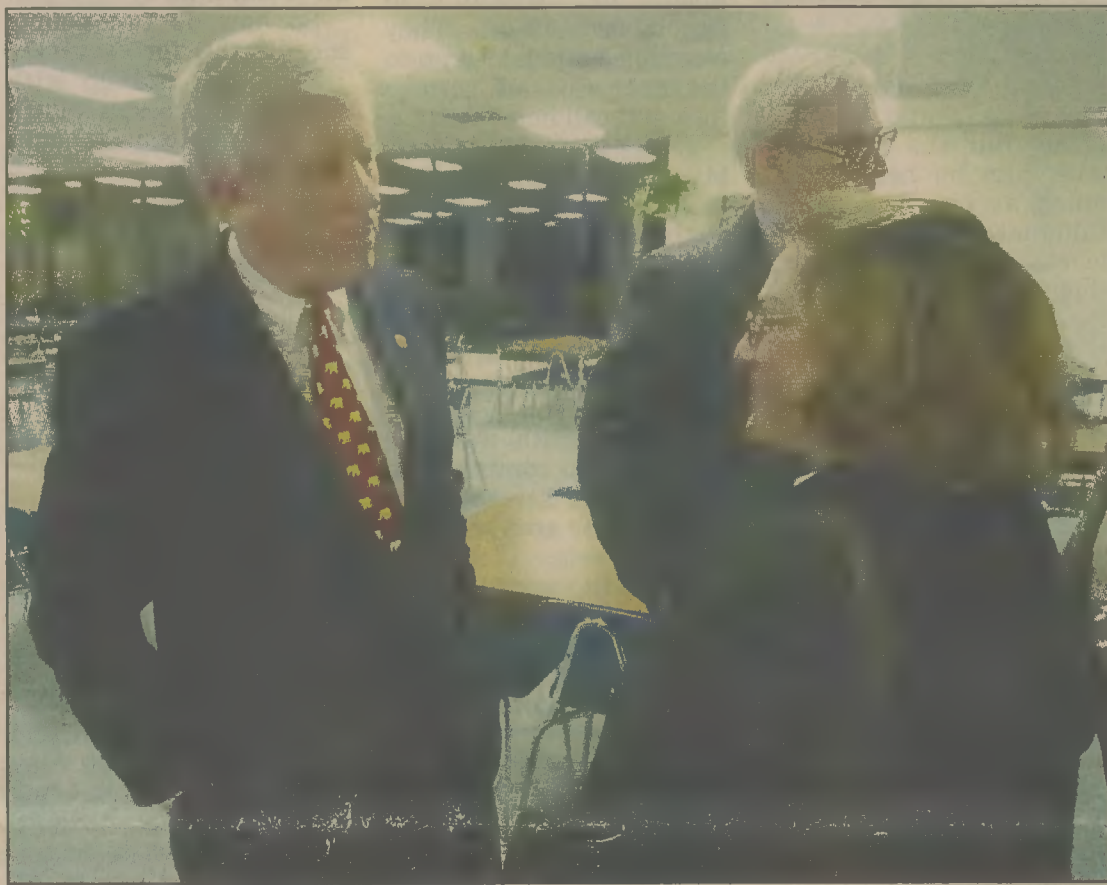
Nichols allegedly chased the 12-year-old down the street and choked him for telling what he had seen.

Vanscoy added that Nichols also allegedly provided alcohol and tobacco products to minors at the Woodland Street residence.

During the investigation, officers discovered that Nichols' wife, who also lives at the residence and is mentally challenged, had allegedly been assaulted by Nichols on the night of the other incidents.

Vanscoy said his department has received complaints of young girls being solicited by a white male in the Woodland Street area and have investigated, but to date have been unable to tie Nichols to any of the complaints.

The earlier incidents are still under investigation, Vanscoy said. He added that the case may extend to other counties.



Daily Advance photo by SAM WOLFE

North Carolina Republican Party Chairman Bill Cobey (left) speaks with Cynthia Partridge (right) at Perquimans County High School Saturday evening.

Cobey speaks at Regan Day Dinner

ROBERT SHILES
The Daily Advance

The fact that Republicans couldn't muster enough votes in the state House to gain control of the powerful speaker's position is the party's own fault, Bill Cobey, chairman of the North Carolina Republican Party said Saturday.

"We fumbled the ball... We couldn't get our act together," Cobey said. "We deserve a Republican speaker of the House... I had urged (GOP legislators) to get behind one person (for speaker), but it didn't happen."

Cobey was the keynote speaker at the Perquimans

County Republican Party's third annual Reagan Day Dinner. He joined about 100 local Republicans in honoring Reagan, a man that he described as a "great president... and a great man with a tremendous amount of confidence and humility."

"In his presence, he made you feel like the most important person in the world," said Cobey, who served a term in the U.S. House of Representatives during the Reagan Administration. "Members of the Republican Party stand on the shoulders of Ronald Reagan," he added.

Cobey acknowledged that he is doubtful a House co-speakership during the

current state legislative session will be in the state's best interest. The current Senate and House legislative session, he said, will be extremely difficult — especially in the House where co-speakers Jim Black, D-Mecklenburg, and Richard Morgan, R-Moore, will have to lead the 60 Democrats and 60 Republicans through a number of important issues, issues Cobey emphasized will be driven by the state budget.

"I'm hoping our caucus can come together, but some (members) won't," he said.

As for rifts in his own party, Cobey told the area Republicans he couldn't

Continued on page 12

Virus hits schools

SUSAN R. HARRIS

An outbreak of viral gastroenteritis kept hundreds of children home from school last week.

Perquimans County Schools Public Information Officer Brenda Lassiter said the local school system recorded 1,787 absences last week, probably an all-time high for absenteeism.

School officials hoped that having a long weekend — Monday was a teacher workday — would help curb the spread of the virus.

Middle school students seemed to have been hit the hardest, with 138—150 students out each day for a total of 716 absences. The high school recorded 467; Hertford Grammar, 407; and Central, 197. The numbers do not account for those students who left school sick after mid-morning.

The outbreak was acknowledged by Albemarle Regional Health Services across the region. Symptoms of the illness include flu-like symptoms such as headaches, muscle soreness, vomiting, stomach pain and diarrhea. They noted that children are particularly susceptible to the illness.

The health department recommended that schools take precautions to prevent its spread by encouraging frequent hand washing and good personal hygiene. Health officials are encouraged the janitorial staff to sanitize surfaces that children come in close contact with including desks, bathroom fixtures and classroom supplies.

Hertford Council moves to slow down town's speeders

SUSAN R. HARRIS

Hertford Town Council approved a three-pronged motion by Councilwoman JoAnn Morris to more strictly enforce speed limits in town in regular session Monday night.

The motion was amended to include an additional provision suggested by Mayor Sid Eley.

The four parts of the motion, which passed with one dissenting vote by Councilman Marvin Hunter Sr., are:

1. enforce the speed limits as posted within 3-5 miles per hour at the discretion of police officers;
2. to publish notices of

strict enforcement in both The Perquimans Weekly and The Daily Advance;

3. town law officers will give warning tickets for 10 days, then begin to issue speeding tickets; and

4. place signs at the entrances to the town reading "speed limits strictly enforced."

Morris had first proposed that speed limits be enforced with a zero tolerance policy, but agreed to amend her original proposal after discussion.

Morris said that there is a difference in driving five miles an hour over the speed limit on the open highway and in town, where pedestrian traffic, parked cars and congestion

make speeding more dangerous.

Eley asked Police Chief Dale Vanscoy about the effectiveness of radar.

The chief said officers attend radar certification school. During these classes, they are taught to judge the speed of a vehicle by observation as well as to use the radar equipment.

Vanscoy said Tuesday that the pitch of radar gets higher the faster a car upon which it is focused is traveling. When an officer observes a vehicle he believes to be speeding, he activates the radar, and by looking at the car and listening to the pitch of the radar, makes a determination of speed, then locks in

the radar to determine speed.

He said that radar is a tool to reinforce the determination an officer makes.

At present, two of Hertford police officers are radar certified.

The school is a week-long course, and Vanscoy tries to send officers to the closest school, which is in Kill Devil Hills. There is another course at Wilson Community College.

The problem with sending officers for certification is manpower. Vanscoy said when an officers is sent to school for a week, another officer must work those hours, resulting in overtime.

In addition, officers

must be available to go to court to testify in speeding cases. Perquimans has district court every week. Although each officer is assigned a court date, continuances may mean an officer scheduled not to be in court must appear. Officers are paid a minimum of two hours of overtime to appear in court on their days off.

Officers in Hertford must work traffic, respond to calls and investigate those calls. Whereas other departments have full-time investigators to relieve patrol officers of time-consuming investigative duties, the Hertford unit does not have sufficient manpower to do so.

WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY
High: 46
Low: 25
MOSTLY SUNNY

FRIDAY
High: 50
Low: 37
PARTLY CLOUDY

SATURDAY
High: 53
Low: 43
LIGHT RAIN