

# THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

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April 19, 2006

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## Sunday fire raises arson suspicions

MARGARET FISHER

A fire at Michael Brusko Design Build destroyed the building at the Commerce Centre on Sunday night.

At about 9:40 p.m., observers driving past 1100 Harvey Point Road noticed that the architecture and real estate building was on fire and called Central Communications.

In the meantime, owner Michael Brusko of Edenton received a call from his security alarm company and was told that something was wrong with the sensors in his building. He then received another call informing him that his office building was on fire.

Hertford Fire Chief Bob Reed said the fire had broken all the way through the roof with heavy smoke when he arrived at the scene about five minutes after getting the call. Winfall and Bethel fire

departments also responded.

"It took us probably about 45 minutes to bring it under control," Reed said.

Hertford Fire Department turned the case over to Hertford Police Department because of the time of evening, intensity of the fire and how quickly it spread, said Hertford Police Chief Dale Vanscoy.

The fire was likely contained in the attic until it broke through the roof, causing it to collapse, Vanscoy said. A ladder truck from Elizabeth City Fire Department was summoned because of hot spots on the roof.

Arson investigators from the State Bureau of Investigation spent about eight hours on Monday sifting through the debris to find a cause. Elizabeth City Fire Marshal Barry Overman brought his arson canine, Sheba, to find a possible accelerant.



PHOTO BY SUSAN HARRIS

A Sunday blaze at Mike Brusko Design Build in the Commerce Centre on Harvey Point Road may have been the work of an arsonist.

The canine alerted her handler in an area towards the back of the building near some windows, Vanscoy said. Soil samples from that area were taken to the SBI lab on Tuesday.

"We're just at the beginning of the investigation," Vanscoy said. "It could have been arson. We're treating it as a crime scene. Nothing has been ruled out

at this time."

Brusko, who appeared visibly upset, said that he was able to retrieve his important files and drawings, although some of them were damaged by smoke and soot. Brusko's building was the first to be built at the Commerce Centre.

"If it is arson, then I hope they catch whoever

did it," he said.

Witnesses who arrived on the scene early told police that they didn't see any signs of a fire until it broke through the roof.

Anyone who may have information concerning the fire at Michael Brusko Design Build can call the Hertford Police Department at 426-5587.

## Paper truck hits Popeye's

MARGARET FISHER

A Cox Newspapers truck ran off the highway last Wednesday and into the local Popeye's eatery — stopping short of shattering the building's corner of windows.

At about 5:25 a.m., Randy Ray Garris, 60, of 541 Burgess Road in Greenville, was driving south on U.S. Highway 17 after dropping off a load of newspapers in Elizabeth City. As he approached the Church Street intersection in the left lane, he crossed the outside lane and headed towards the restaurant.

The truck hit the opposite side of a ditch, which slowed the vehicle down, and broke a cable guide wire connected to concrete barriers. It came to rest at the corner of the eatery. The front of the truck bent the metal framing where the windows form the corner of the building and chipped some pieces of the concrete foundation. No structural damage occurred to the building, said Hertford Police Chief Dale Vanscoy.

"The driver was kind of delirious," Vanscoy said. "He didn't know the date or where he was."

A blood screen was done, though no alcohol or drugs was detected. There were no signs that he had received a blow to his head. Vanscoy didn't rule out an illness or falling asleep as possible reasons for the accident. Garris had begun his route in Greenville at about 3 a.m.

The information gathered is being sent to the N.C. Department of Motor Vehicles for them to review Garris' license, he said.

Garris was charged with careless/reckless driving and taken to Chowan Hospital where he was checked and released.

## Speeding cause of Monday wreck

MARGARET FISHER

A one-vehicle accident on Snug Harbor Road ended with injuries to a man.

At about 7:15 a.m., Ernest Howell, 38, of 2551 Jones White Road, Roper, was driving southeast at an unsafe speed, according to a N.C. Highway Patrol report.

Howell lost control of his 1997 Ford at a curve and traveled left of the center of the road. He headed into the left shoulder of the road and into a ditch bank. He continued along the ditch and struck a driveway culvert, crossed the driveway and hit a utility pole. His vehicle continued across another driveway and overturned.

Trooper K.R. Briggs and Perquimans County Emergency Medical Services responded. Howell was flown to Sentara Norfolk General, treated and released.

Charges to Howell are pending.

## Man charged with credit card, truck theft in separate cases

### Truck stolen from neighbor, card from stepfather

MARGARET FISHER

A 20-year-old man allegedly stole a truck from his neighbor and a credit card from his stepfather, using it to make a number of purchases.

Myron Hill, 55, of 899 Ocean Highway, told Perquimans County Sheriff's Office that he saw Daniel Crandall of 905 Ocean Highway driving north in Hill's 2001 Ford F-150, said Sheriff Eric Tilley. The truck

made a U-turn at Snug Harbor Road and was then parked at Emmanuel Pentecostal Church.

Investigator Shelby White, assisted by an officer from the Hertford Police Department, found Crandall walking along Snug Harbor Road. Some of his personal belongings were found in the truck.

Crandall was charged with breaking or entering a motor vehicle, felony larceny and possession of a stolen vehicle. He was taken to Albemarle District Jail and placed on a \$10,000 secured bond.

In mid-March, Frank Norman reported that a credit card that he had recently applied for had been activated and someone had been purchasing items with it at the Red Apple and WilcoHess. Norman

had not actually received his card in the mail, to his knowledge, Vanscoy said.

A clerk who works at one of the convenience stores told officers that she remembered Crandall using the credit card, said Police Chief Dale Vanscoy. During an investigation, Crandall, who lives with Norman, was identified a number of times, Vanscoy said.

On April 10 at about 10 p.m., Crandall was picked up by officers and charged with 20 counts of unauthorized use of a credit card, financial card theft and 20 counts of obtaining property by false pretenses. He was transported to Albemarle District Jail and placed on a \$12,500 secured bond. The credit card was not found.

## Antiques shop opens

MARGARET FISHER

Martha Badger and Bettie Vail enjoy buying antiques. But after awhile, they ran out of places in their homes to keep their prized collections.

"When you buy so many things, you eventually have to sell them," Vail said.

Vail and her husband did just that by selling antiques at shows when they lived in Alexandria, Va. But in 1996, the couple moved to Edenton where Vail met Badger.

Badger and her husband ran a booth in an antique mall in Nashville, Tenn., until 1998. Selling antiques wasn't always her focus.

"I've always collected antiques — well, forever,"



PHOTO BY MARGARET FISHER

The Chamber of Commerce sponsored a ribbon cutting for Antiques Limited on Ocean Highway South last week.

she said. "I didn't always sell them, I just collected them."

The two women combined their love of antique collecting and opened Antiques, Limited at 658 Ocean Highway South in

March. Last Thursday, they celebrated their opening with a ribbon cutting.

Badger, who works part time as a nurse practitioner at Britthaven of Edenton, was looking for

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## Two vie for sheriff

(Editor's note: Each candidate for a contested local office was sent a questionnaire asking him or her to discuss their qualifications for and knowledge about the office which they seek. This week, we publish answers submitted by candidates for sheriff. Please note that David Layne did not respond to our written, mailed request for information nor to telephone messages left at his home.)

**Law Enforcement Experience:**

1987-1992 Perquimans County Sheriff's Office as a Deputy, 1992-1996 Elizabeth City Police Dept. as a Patrol Officer, Field Training Officer and Employment Interview Committee member, 1996-Continued on page 7



Name: Eric V. Tilley

Age 42

Present employment: Sheriff of Perquimans County

Spouse: Sherry Tilley

Children: None

Education: Graduate of Perquimans County High School and NC Justice Academy

## WEEKEND WEATHER

THURSDAY  
HIGH: 81, LOW: 58  
SUNNY

FRIDAY  
HIGH: 78, LOW: 61  
SCATTERED T'STORMS

SATURDAY  
HIGH: 78, LOW: 61  
SCATTERED T'STORMS

