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## Kings Mountain Herald

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Kings Mountain, NC

# Possible billing errors investigated

## City must pay back misused Powell Bill money

The City of Kings Mountain spent Powell Bill funds of \$174,999 in 1993-94 but not for streets as was designated and will have to repay the money to the state over a five-year period.

"I don't think they will charge a penalty but of course they could," said city auditor Darrell Keller. He said the state will charge interest on the \$174,999.

Finance Officer Maxine Parsons said that she verified in a letter to the state that the cash is not on

hand for the street improvements.

Keller said the city will end fiscal year 1993-94 at June 30 with \$16,376 cash.

The audit will reflect a negative \$374,813 in undesignated fund balance compared to \$85,000 in fiscal year 1992-93.

"We've run wild on expenditures and borrowed from Peter to pay Paul to pay John," said Councilman Jim Guyton.

Keller said the city had to catch up for overspending the budget in

prior years.

"This year the city will carry over \$314,000, compared to a \$1.1 million in 1993-94, which the city owed and could not pay," said Keller.

"Since we paid off \$700,000 this year then the following year should show pluses instead of minuses," said Guyton.

"Hopefully you'll break even if you continue to hold the line on spending," said Keller.

**See Repay, 12-A**

An in-house audit of the City Utility Department, which includes electric meters and billing, is underway, according to City Manager Chuck Nance.

Nance said that some apparent errors were discovered in the process of checking an industrial customer's bill when the demand charge was not found plugged into the new computer system.

"This is not just one customer," said Nance, responding to what he said are unfounded rumors flying around town that the city would be wiping out a big bill for one small industrial user.

Nance said that the problem could go back as far as three years.

He said the results of the audit will be turned over to City Attorney Mickey Corry for his advice on a possible legal matter.

"If the city owes any utility customer the city will pay," said Nance.

Utility Commission Chairman Jim Guyton said the city won't be wiping out utility bills.

Guyton said the subject had not come up before the utility commission, which meets Monday at 6 p.m., nor at City Council, which meets Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.

"I've heard some rumors," said Guyton.

Councilman Ralph Grindstaff acknowledged that he had heard rumors but that nothing could be verified until all the facts were in hand and that would occur only after the audit underway by Nance, Finance Director Maxine Parsons and Utility Director Jimmy Maney.

Parsons said the electric department changed out meter service to one customer and did not change the multipliers.

"We checked that industrial customer's bill and then started an internal audit," she said.

**See Billing, 13-A**

## Kings Mountain People Book was labor of love for Janet Falls, age 90

By ELIZABETH STEWART  
of The Herald Staff

It took two years for retired school teacher Janet Falls to finish her book but for her and her family "The Falls of Oaklawn" was a labor of love.

The book is about the close-knit Falls family of Kings Mountain and a chapter is devoted to each of the 10 children and their parents, Alvin Price and Sarah Elizabeth Patterson Falls.

The setting for the book is the 109-year-old family homeplace nestled in a canopy of oak trees in the Patterson Grove Community. Janet and her brothers and sister grew up in the house where Janet, 90, and her brother, Hugh, 79, the last surviving siblings, reside.

The popular North School sixth grade teacher retired in 1969 after 42 years in the public schools. She taught in Kings Mountain 12 years but began her career teaching French and History in Mooresboro and then taught in Mecklenburg County and in Gastonia before coming to Kings Mountain.

Miss Falls' tumble out the back steps of her home kept her indoors and she decided to write her book, enlisting the help of nieces and nephews to provide some of the materials and help with the research.

With her keen memory and attention to detail, Falls has compiled memories of happenings from the early years to the present.

"Our roots are special and the book is my tribute to my beloved family," said Janet, who said that kinfolk laugh and cry when they read the memories she first wrote with pen and pencil and which Becky Falls Scism typed on 8 1/2x11 white paper.

The attractively bound book is easy to read and is illustrated with pictures. On the front cover of "The Falls of Oaklawn" by Laura Janet Falls is a photograph of her mother sitting on the tree-shaded lawn. The book is dedicated to Janet's mother.

Alvin Price Falls, a Kings Mountain pioneer, was born in 1861, the year the Civil War began during President Abe Lincoln's administration. His initials AFP are inscribed in the chimney he built where he also inscribed the date of the house he built 109 years ago.

Among the pictures are jars filled with beans and carrots canned in the late 1920's and early 1930's and prize winners at the 1933 World's Fair.

Each family member, including cousins and nieces and nephews, have received complimentary copies of the book.

Janet included short pages about herself and many pages about her siblings and their families, typical of her longtime concern for her large, devoted family.

Until 1953 the roads by the beautiful country home were dirt and Janet and her brother, Hugh, recalled that because there were no school buses the children walked five miles a day to school from the Patterson Grove Community to Central School in Kings Mountain.

Janet started school in one-teacher Patterson Grove School which operated four months of the year. In 1937 the Patterson Grove Community got electricity but Janet still kept her kerosene lamps.

Janet Falls remembers hard times during the Depression. Her father was a surveyor and farmer. Her mother was a full time homemaker. She also remembers the good times the children had together.

Janet graduated from Winthrop College in 1927 when tuition for out-of-state pupils like her was \$90 a year. In-state tuition was \$45.

One summer she attended the Sorbonne, the oldest and most prestigious college in the University of Paris.

All teaching and conversation was in French and at the beginning of the term the students took both oral and written exams. She stood, as was the custom, to recite the



JANET FALLS

oral exam. She was late for class one morning and had to stand for her French lessons. She said the reason for her tardiness was that "she had to take refuge in English." She was never late again.

Every day was tour day and the students visited places of historical and literary significance in Paris.

Falls said her study in Paris and her stay with Madame Bour and others made her a much better French teacher.

She said she got a different perspective on teaching at four mission schools - Jamaica, Haiti, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic.

Relaxing at her home this week, Falls said she found Haiti a much different place in 1952 than she found it in her travels later in life and from current reports of unrest in the country.

"I found Haiti reasonably peaceful and that might have been because their president who had dictatorial powers controlled his subjects by fear. Military police with guns on their shoulders guarded the parliament at all times. They policed the streets," said Falls.

"The only disturbance I observed while there was a policeman unmercifully beating a small boy for stealing some food. He then

dragged the child down the streets and out of sight with him screaming for dear life. All that because a hungry child could get food no other way.

Falls described Haiti as beautiful with an abundance of fragrant tropical flowers.

Since retirement Janet's travels have taken her to 30 countries in Europe, Africa and Asia but favorite spots were the Middle East, Egypt and the Holy Land. She also toured eight of the 10 Provinces of Canada and four countries in West Indies.

Long active in the Thursday Afternoon Book Club and Open Gate Garden Club, Janet is a life member of Alpha Delta Kappa, honorary teacher's sorority.

"My eyes are not as good as they used to be and I don't read as much as I would like," said Janet. She said she also leaves the cooking and yard work to her brother, her best friend.

A member of Central United Methodist Church she was surprised on a recent Heritage Day with a gift as the member who had served the longest period of years in the church.

Nieces Ann Falls Davis and Sarah Falls McCraney and nephew

**See Falls, 13-A**

## City hires rec director, Parsons finance director

Two key jobs in the city were filled this week by City Manager Chuck Nance.

Former Interim City Manager Maxine Parsons was named Finance Director at annual salary of \$38,100 and Karen Langston-Byers of Bessemer City was hired as the new Director of Parks and Recreation at annual salary of \$33,000.

Byers, formerly Program Coordinator for the Gaston County Parks and Recreation Department, will report to work at the Kings Mountain Community Center October 31.

"After reviewing the work experience and education qualifications of Mrs. Parsons, I felt that she was the most suitable person for the position of Finance Director," said Nance.

"She is obviously aware of our current financial situation and will play a vital role in helping us regain our financial strength."

Said Nance, "I am sure there are others who also have excellent credentials and would have done a fine job for the city. However, I feel that it's important that we utilize the knowledge and awareness that Maxine has and also she won't be handicapped by coming into a new environment with a new staff."

Parsons, who is a graduate of Gardner-Webb University, earned her Master's in Business Administration in December of 1993. She served as Interim City Manager until September 1 when Nance, of Spindale, assumed the duties vacated by George Wood, who resigned March 21 for a similar position in Cleveland, Tn.

She joined the City of Kings Mountain in October 1989 as Assistant Finance Director.

As the Interim Manager she prepared the 1994-95 budget and formulated a financial plan to stabilize the financial condition of the city, freezing hiring and spending for three months. She recommended change in meter reading, billing and collecting of utility bills to improve cash flow which was adopted in July by Council and worked



BYERS PARSONS

closely with the Utilities Committee on the wastewater treatment project at Grover Industries.

She was adjunct instructor in accounting, auditing and marketing at Cleveland Community College from 1987-1991 and program coordinator and instructor in economic development for the State of South Carolina in Columbia, SC from June 1989 to June 1991, working with Oshkosh and Newark Electronics in recruiting new industry startup.

Byers, 33, taught Integrated Science in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in 1992, Modern Dance in grades K-6 in the Gaston County Schools from 1989-92 and Health and PE at the Junior High level in Charlotte Schools from 1987-89. She also supervised an operational district of seven stores for Southland Corporation in 1986-87, sold insurance for State Farm Insurance and qualified for the Million Dollar Month Club from 1984-86 and was Cultural Arts Specialist Supervisor for the Charlotte Parks & Recreation Department in 1977-84.

Byers holds a B.S. degree from Winston-Salem State University and dance certification from UNC at Charlotte. She has done graduate work in Health and PE at Florida State University and North Carolina A&T University.

She currently serves as a professional basketball official, the first black woman in a profession dominated by men.

Nance said he interviewed 30 applicants for the Recreation Department job and narrowed the field to two candidates last week.

## KM nurse hopes to be county's first midwife

By ELIZABETH STEWART  
of The Herald Staff

If she lands a job as a practicing, professional midwife next year Kelly Grant, 27, will become the county's first.

"I can hardly wait to start delivering babies," said Grant, a registered nurse for six years in Labor and Delivery at Cleveland Memorial Hospital where she has seen plenty of duty assisting new babies make their entrance into the world.

"But standing by and helping isn't the same thing," says Grant, who says nothing can beat the thrill of the birth of a baby.

Grant and her husband, John Grant Jr. of Kings Mountain, plan to wait to start their family until after Kelly is established in her new

profession in a health department, private office or women's clinic.

"I hope I won't have to go outside the county to work because we love our home in the Oak Grove Community and our families are here," said the daughter of Doug and Beth Eubanks.

The field is wide open for midwifery and family nursing, says Grant, who says that she will also be trained in prenatal care, routine gynecology and in contraceptive counseling as well as the actual delivery of babies.

Grant said her sister, Susan, a local beautician and Gaston College student, couldn't believe Grant's choice of a new profession but Grant heard about Frontier School of Midwifery in Kentucky from two midwives who live in Shelby

and work outside the county. In August 1993 she also heard about Mary Breckenridge Hospital and Health Center near Lexington, Ky. and she signed up for the two year community-based nursing program and loves it.

Grant completes homework assignments on computer and by mail but also must attend special sessions at the Health Center in Kentucky and the Midwifery School and will take her clinical training at a Rock Hill, SC hospital. When she completes her training she will have the equivalent of a master's degree from Case Western University Medical School, Cleveland, Ohio.

A 1985 graduate of Kings Mountain High School, Grant attended Gaston College and gradu-

ated from UNCC with a four year degree. She worked at Kings Mountain Hospital in the obstetrics department until it closed in 1989.

All her life she has loved nursing and it wasn't unusual to see her with a nurses' kit as a little girl growing up in Kings Mountain.

Being both a nurse and a midwife combines the best of both worlds, according to Grant, who looks forward to the role of a primary care provider.

She said that some 1300 infants are born at Cleveland Memorial Hospital in Shelby each year to mothers who range in ages from 11-50.

Most of them have healthy babies and I have been present for many of those births," said Grant.

But standing by and assisting a

doctor is nothing like performing the delivery and that's her goal.

Grant said that 55 other midwife candidates in her class are age 26 to late 40's. She said that the first midwife for whom the school was founded was Mary Breckenridge and she rode horseback in the 1800's to deliver babies in the backwoods of Kentucky.

Mary Breckenridge Hospital and Health Center near Lexington is regarded as one of the top schools in the country. The cost of a two-year midwifery program is expensive, about \$35,000. However, some state loans and grants are available.

A prospective midwife (nurse practitioner) must have a four-year college degree and experience in

**See Grant, 13-A**



KELLY GRANT