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# Kings Mountain Herald

VOL. 106 NO. 47

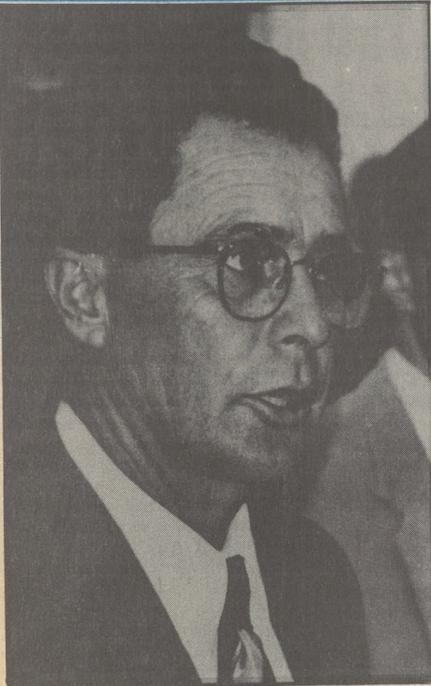
Wednesday, November 23, 1994

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## Chief: City Council interference real reason behind resignation



WARREN GOFORTH

By ELIZABETH STEWART  
 of The Herald Staff

Interference in the operation of his department by some City Council members for as long as two years led to his sudden resignation Thursday, said Chief of Police Warren Goforth.

"The controversy over this seized truck that we traded in November 12 along with another vehicle and which I later bought was just the straw that broke the camel's back," said the 45-year-old Chief, who joined the KMPD seven years ago and has 20 years of service in law enforcement.

"At no time have I done anything illegal, immoral or intended to deceive anyone in the City of Kings Mountain or the community," said Goforth.

"I am physically, mentally and spiritually drained," Goforth told The Herald hours before he appeared before a packed City Hall to defend his actions after rumors escalated last week that he was considering resignation.

"I will not name names," said Goforth, apparently referring to the chain of events that began last Friday and ended a week later with his abrupt departure.

*"Controversy over seized truck...was just the straw that broke the camel's back."*

- Warren Goforth

Goforth turned in his uniforms to City Manager Chuck Nance Monday. The city has not yet returned his truck or reimbursed him \$1,095 for the 1987 GMC Suburban he bought from a Shelby car dealer Friday night after he and Narcotics officer Billy Benton had traded the Suburban along with a 1989 Dodge Daytona for a third vehicle to be used in undercover operations.

The truck has been parked since its purchase at the Kings Mountain Fire Department. It was the first federally seized vehicle that Benton said he was aware of and Mayor Scott Neisler said the truck was seized over two years ago. Federal law requires such a vehicle can't be disposed of for at least two years, Neisler said.

"Several city commissioners have had my department under a microscope for some time and I have had little support from some of our city fathers," said Goforth. He recounted numerous calls from complaining Council members, also acknowledging the support of some.

Goforth tried to quit last spring and tendered his resignation during an executive session of Council but Council asked him to stay, saying he would have their support and he could run the department without their interference.

Goforth said he agreed that he would stay on at least until June.

His earlier resignation stemmed from a petition that was circulated by his officers who didn't want to return to a seven day work shift which had been suggested by Council during a budget session to cut back on police staff overtime.

Goforth obtained a copy of the petition from a councilman before the Council meeting set to vote on the matter and withdrew his request.

After that incident Goforth said that he was given full authority to run the department and with the blessings of the administration.

See Chief, 3-A

## Nance, customers work on method of repayment

City Manager Chuck Nance told members of the city utility committee Tuesday that he has contacted six of the eight customers either under-billed or over-billed by the city for electric service and initiated discussions one-on-one with four about how they can be repaid or pay the city.

Nance said the customers include two churches and one industry and he will take the results of the discussions to City Council at Tuesday's 7:30 p.m. meeting at City Hall.

The city is in process of correcting recent errors found in electrical utility billings.

Nance said he would probably not have a list of auditors ready for Tuesday's meeting but indicated the list would be available by the December 13 meeting of Council.

Utility Chairman Jim Guyton estimated that it will be January or February before a full audit of the utilities begins. Guyton and Councilmen Dean Spears and Phil Hager agreed that they will recommend to the full

See Repay, 5-A

## City not alone in billing errors

Citizens who owe the city for more than a year's worth of water, sewer, gas or electrical services will pay only for one year, if a recommendation of the city utilities committee passes City Council Tuesday night.

The three members of the utilities committee - Chairman Jim Guyton, Dean Spears and Phil Hager - agreed that residential customers and churches who owe the city back bills can be billed for only 150 days and all others for 12 months.

The matter was tabled at last month's Council meeting after Mayor Scott Neisler broke a tie.

"Contrary to local belief that we are the only city with utility problems the City of Black Creek had demand multipliers wrong for two years and the City of Huntersville had to go back seven years an found they had underbilled 127 customers and overbilled 58," said City Manager Chuck Nance.



CENTRAL DEDICATION - Calvin Wallace, Director of the Southwest Technical Assistance Center for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, gives the keynote address at the dedication of Central School as the District Office Sunday afternoon. A tour of the building was held afterward.

## City officials, citizens voice support of chief

Publicly, city officials support Police Chief Warren Goforth.

City Manager Chuck Nance, Mayor Scott Neisler and Commissioner Norma Bridges all said they hated to see the chief resign after serving the city for seven years.

Goforth had kind words for his boss, Nance, saying that Nance had only been on the job two months and "is a professional man who is trying to get himself inundated to the point of really finding out what's going on in Kings Mountain."

"He's surrounded by political groups that have influenced him, however," said Goforth who added that he doesn't "believe those influences have really changed his mind about his professional standing or anything else."

"I'm my own man," said Nance who will make the final decision of whether the Chief keeps the drug car he bought after it was traded along with another car for a used car for the Kings Mountain Police Department Narcotics Division or if the city will reimburse the Chief.

The Chief said this week he really wants to keep the car to run errands but he is willing to transfer title to the city for \$1095, the exact cost he paid for it from a Shelby car dealer.

Nance said he asking for clarification on a federal law which requires that confiscated drug property only be used for law enforcement purposes or declared surplus and sold at public auction or given to another agency.

Vehicles seized in drug raids normally are sold at auction and the money turned over to the schools.

See Support, 5-A

## Interim chief not in plans

City Manager Chuck Nance says he will not immediately appoint an interim Chief of Police.

"The department will be run through the normal chain of command, as if the chief were out of town," Nance said at a press conference called by Chief Warren Goforth to announce his resignation Friday afternoon.

Nance said police personnel will answer to him and he will also be responsible for purchasing in the department.

This week the city began advertising the position of Police Chief and Nance says he anticipates the interview process will not be long.

Goforth, who came to Kings Mountain on June 22, 1987, was paid an annual salary of \$38,000. He started his law enforcement career with the Cleveland County Sheriff's Department in January 1974 as a dispatcher and moved to the Shelby City Police Department as a patrolman in March 1976, working up through the ranks to the position of Lieutenant. He graduated from the FBI Academy in December 1978 and has completed specialized training and taught law enforcement courses at Cleveland Community College and Gardner-Webb University.

Goforth and his wife and son reside on Moss Lake.

Captain Bob Hayes, a police department veteran, serves as Assistant Chief. Hayes was Acting Chief after the retirement of Chief Jackie Barrett and served in the interim period before Goforth was hired.

## Haley Bridges KMHS Carrousel Princess

Haley Bridges, 17, senior at Kings Mountain High School, will represent the city in the annual Carolinas Carrousel parade Thanksgiving Day in Charlotte.

Kings Mountain's Carrousel Princess is a blue-eyed blonde who stands five feet seven inches tall and plans to major in either pediatric nursing or elementary education at Gardner-Webb University.

The big Thursday parade will wind down Charlotte streets at 2 p.m. The parade will be televised by WBTV Channel 3.

Bridges went to Charlotte Sunday to participate in pre-parade activities including break-

fasts and lunches with judges and the Queen's Coronation Ball on Wednesday.

Active in the Blazer and Marching Bands at Kings Mountain High, she is an honor student and a member of the French club, SPO representative and active on the annual staff.

She is a member of First Wesleyan Church and was named to "Who's Who." She is also a Candystriper at Kings Mountain Hospital. She ranks No.15 in a graduating class of 224.

Swimming, exercising, playing the clarinet, attending church, working on the year-

book staff and reading are her major interests.

This summer she said the whole family vacationed in Wilmington and toured the USS North Carolina and appreciated the history lesson since both grandfathers served in World War II. She is the granddaughter of Margie Bridges of Kings Mountain and the late Clyde Bridges and Mr. and Mrs. Otis Greene.

The whole Bridges family, including her sister Mary Etters, will be watching from the reviewing stand as Haley rides in the parade



HALEY BRIDGES

## Mayor: I'll keep asking questions

Mayor Scott Neisler said this week he will continue to ask questions of city employees because that's what his job as the mayor requires of him.

He was responding to a letter from an attorney for Finance Director Maxine Parsons in which Parsons asked the mayor to "get off my back" and said she was tired of hearing innuendoes she had credited to the mayor.

Parsons said she had been

blamed for errors found in electrical utility billings that go back to 1992 when she was not Finance Director.

"Unfortunately all city employees and elected officials like me are in the public scrutiny at all times and I will continue to express my viewpoint and represent the citizens of Kings Mountain to the best of my ability regardless of the consequences."

The mayor denied that he has slandered anyone.



YANCEY PATTERSON

## Yancey Patterson thankful to be 99

By ELIZABETH STEWART  
 of The Herald Staff

Yancey Patterson has good reason to be thankful this Thanksgiving.

God has blessed him with 99 years on this earth.

"I can't hear well and I broke my hip recently and may be in pretty bad shape but I'm thankful for life and for my family," he said this week as he relaxed on his porch on a beautiful Indian Summer day.

Clois Price Patterson, his wife of nearly 71 years, was by his side.

Mrs. Patterson said she was 15 years old and her husband was 28 when they said their "I do's."

"I guess it's a remarkable feat to be married as long as we have but we have been happy," she said.

Patterson, whose friends all him Yan, said he can't attend church due to failing health and he has to have his hearing aid and still asks his callers to talk loudly.

But he enjoys company. He looks forward to seeing his family, neighbors and regular visits

from Cleveland County Home Health nurses.

Sunday about 80 relatives joined Patterson for a happy birthday party at daughter Sue Bullock's home. A decorated birthday cake was cut and served with all the trimmings.

Thursday the family will take fixings for the turkey that Mrs. Patterson cooks at her home on Brice Street. She expects all nine children home at some time during the day, although some of them have to work on the holiday. The nine children

See Patterson, 5-A