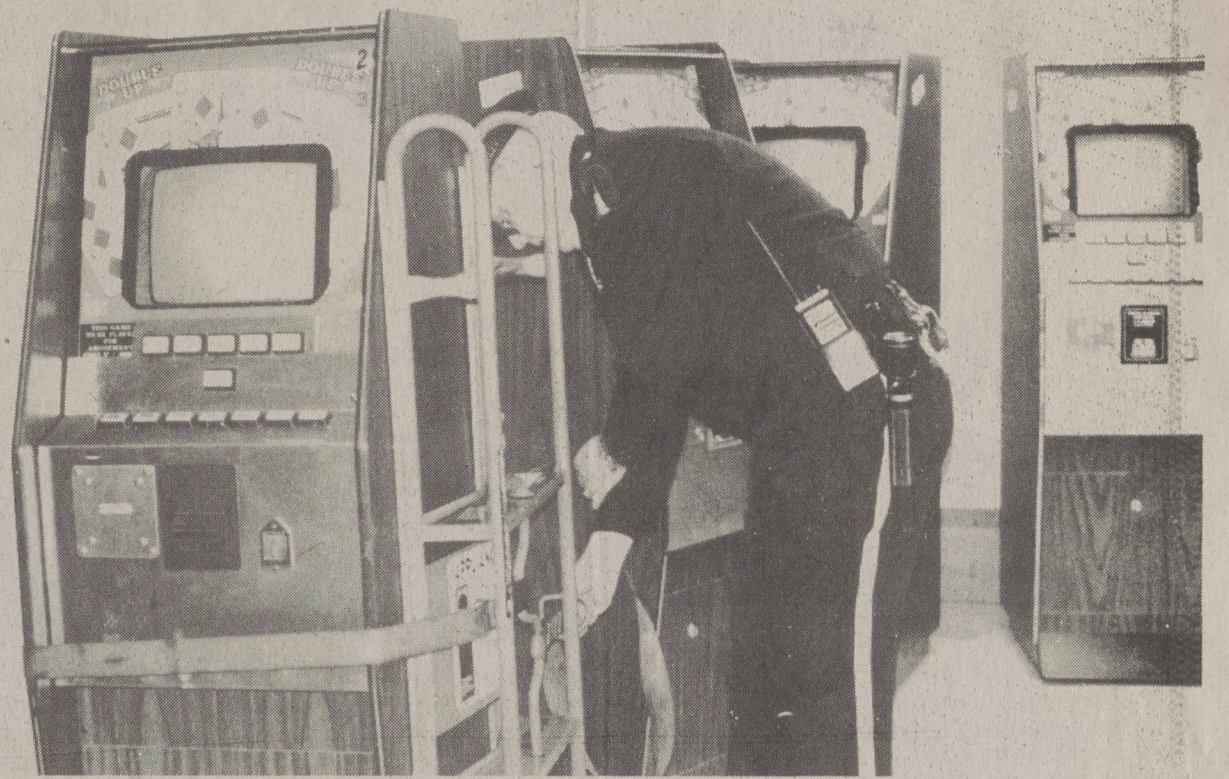
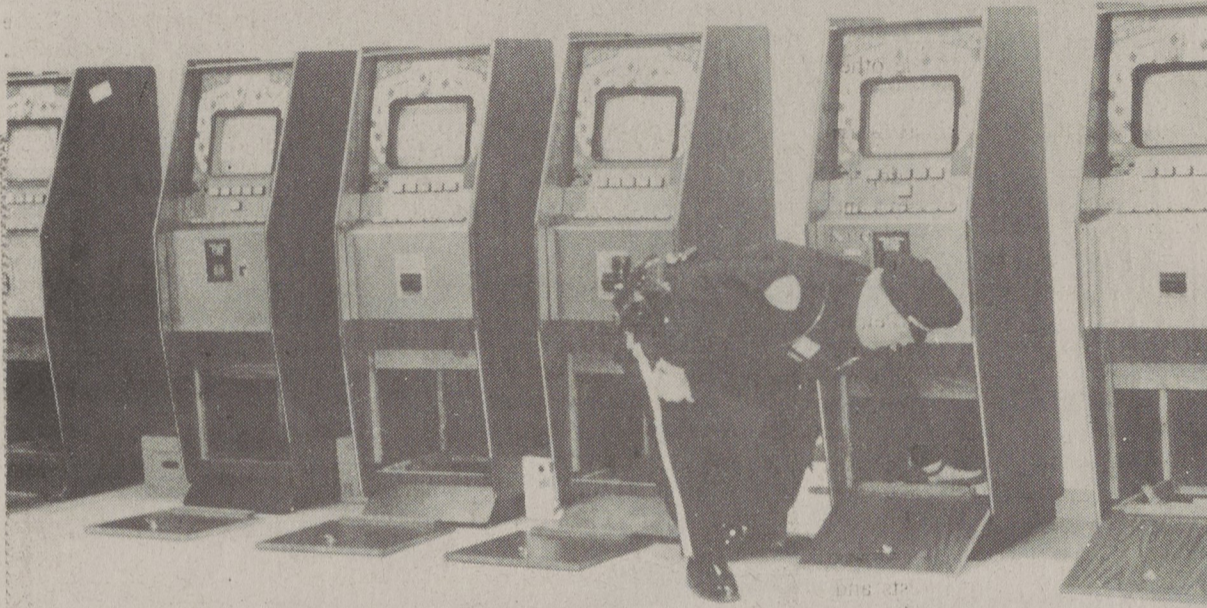




Lt. Houston Corn guards the front door of a local business Friday, one of eight establishments raided in a crackdown by police on illegal gambling operations in the city.



Captain Richard Reynolds checks out a video poker machine and prepares to take it out of a local business Friday after police raided illegal gambling operations in the city.



Ptl. Jerry Tessner confiscates money from a video poker machine during a raid of local establishments Friday. Six of the 13 poker machines confiscated at one local business are pictured.



Ptl. Brent Hart, facing camera, and Captain Richard Reynolds load up video poker machines on a UHaul during a big raid of illegal gambling operations Friday.

STING

From Page 1-A

Kenneth Bryant Hamrick, 52, owner of Silver Villa and Hugo's Bar and Grill, 902 S. Battleground Ave., was arrested at Silver Villa Restaurant and Bar, 13 counts. He was charged with four counts of operating a slot machine, two gambling violations, two counts of making unlawful agreements, two counts of illegal gambling and one count of allowing gambling in a house of entertainment.

Linda Rosa Hamrick, 41, 506 Branch St., co-owner of Silver Villa, four counts, including operating a slot machine, allowing gambling in a house of public entertainment, illegal operation of slot machines and allowing violations to occur.

Willard Pete Johnson, 56, 612 Mauney Ave., owner of Pete's Game Room, 413 N. Piedmont Ave., four counts, including gambling, illegal operation of slot machines, two counts, and one count of keeping slot machines.

Larry James Payne, 52, owner of Houston's, 807 N. Cleveland Ave., eight counts, including two counts of illegal operation of slot machines, two counts of keeping slot machines, two counts of gambling, and two counts of operating a slot machine.

Robert Michael Heath, 44, 811 Landing St., two counts of gambling, two counts of illegal operation of a slot machine, two counts of operating a slot machine, two counts of making an agreement and two counts of keeping a slot machine.

Hayes said the state ALE charged Kenneth Roberts, owner of Depot Stop N Go with a number of counts and Angela Short, an employee of Mike's Game Room, with 14 counts.

Because violators can only be charged with a misdemeanor, punishable by a two year maximum sentence per count, Hayes said that many of those arrested only received "a slap on the wrist." They were free under \$500 bonds awaiting trial in Cleveland County District Court February 6.

As officers stood watch over the machines Friday, flashing signs above the machines read:

"No cash payoff. These machines are in compliance with N. C. statutes."

But when officers started checking on receipts they found at one establishment that at least 14 payments had been made to gamblers that day alone.

"You've got people paying every penny they make into these machines," said Lt. Houston Corn who stood at the door to one of the establishments which was filled with nothing but a cash register and poker machines.

A handful of customers were asked to leave the premises at one location but at all the locations the operation was smooth with cooperation from operators and cus-

tomers, according to Hayes. Police guarded the doors as other police cleared out the machines and carted them out the door.

Cash receipts confiscated by police documented cash payouts to players who accumulated credits on the poker machines, said Hayes.

Police loaded the machines onto UHaul trailers and took them to the police department Friday afternoon for evidence. County magistrate Cecil Murray set up his office at the Police Department to process the suspects.

"If the justice department says they can have the machines back, we'll give them back," said Hayes. He said the machines will be held until after the court trial and if the judge orders they be destroyed that the police will take the machines to the county landfill.

The money confiscated in the bust will be used for drug enforcement by police and for schools, under law.

The poker machines are valued at \$3500 each.

Hayes said that none of his officers had prior knowledge of the big

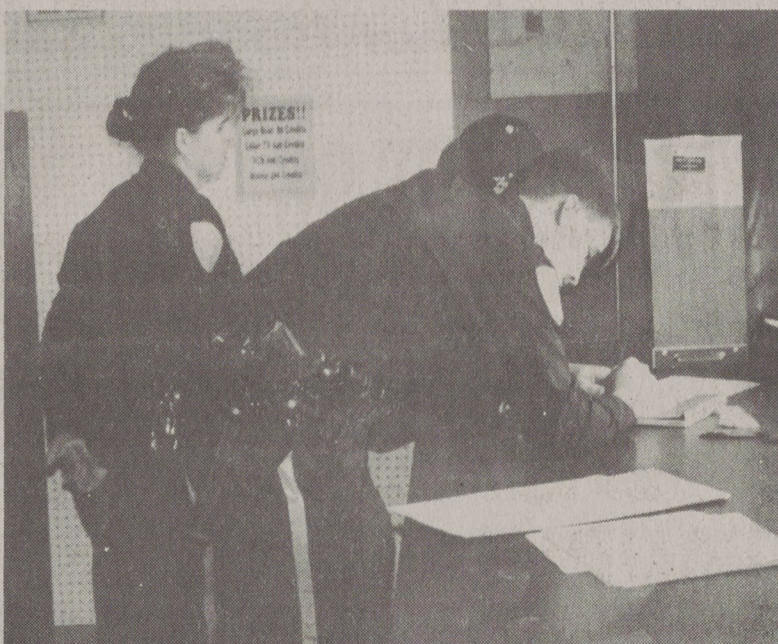
sweep. They were sent a memorandum from him to report to the police department at 3 p.m. Friday for an inspection and were told to dress out in full uniform with bullet proof vests.

"This was a very secretive operation, not because we didn't trust our officers but because we wanted it to be the success it was," he said.

Officers gathered at 3 p.m. in the police department. Hayes and Reynolds called in the various sergeants and assigned the squads that would go to the various locations and the search teams went out simultaneously.

"We wanted everyone to be hit at once so there would no chance for calls to be made to warn other businesses that we were on the way," said Hayes.

Hayes said he was well pleased with the full cooperation he received from the owners of the various businesses and from the public. "We're putting people on notice that gambling won't be tolerated in Kings Mountain," said Captain Reynolds.



Ptl. Lisa Capps, left, and Ptl. Brent Hart serve a warrant on a suspect charged with illegal gambling operations Friday during a raid by police.

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