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AMERICAN DREAM

Douan Mounghane escaped from Laos as child, volunteers for Peace Corps to help other people

By ELIZABETH STEWART
 of The Herald Staff

Douangchit Mounghane, 21, a Laotian-American from Kings Mountain, is realizing the American Dream. "I'm so excited," says Douan, who left for Jamaica Tuesday to volunteer for the Peace Corps as a community environmental health advisor. After two years she hopes to pursue her life-long dream to study medicine and become a pediatrician.

Flashbacks of Laos are faint memories to Douan, who escaped to America when she was five years old and moved to Kings Mountain 10 years ago with her parents, Chantay and DiDi from Illinois.

Although flashbacks of her native land are hard to distinguish from dreams and reality at times, Douan crossed the Mekong River in a canoe after she fell out of the canoe and was scooped up by her father. They were

separated from her mother and later reunited at a refugee camp. Fires devoured their straw huts in camp after camp and they lived on a pig farm until they came to America in December 1980 and found snow and a new culture for the first time in a new land.

"The snow symbolized an end to our former lives and a breathtaking new beginning in a foreign land," said Douan.

Douan said her parents risked their lives to bring their only child to America and to give her an education.

"They expected me to excel and not to permit any diversions from my studies," said Douan who said she picked up the English language at an amazing pace and completed her college studies in December 1995 after 3 1/2 years. She was an undergraduate research assistant



DOUANGCHIT MOUNGHANE

See Mounghane, 2-A

County puts off industrial park, calls for study

Led by arguments by County Commissioner Ralph Gilbert and Shelby Mayor Mike Philbeck, Cleveland County commissioners Tuesday night unanimously put on hold a decision on a taxpayer-financed industrial park.

Gilbert called a decision now by commissioners on a site for a proposed park premature. He said a decision would lock-in the county on a multi-million dollar land deal that had not been fully researched.

After a two-hour discussion of the project which was not listed on the regular agenda, the board on motion by Commissioner Jim Crawley and seconded by Gilbert authorized a study of all available industrial property in the county by the Cleveland County Economic Development Commission. The vote did not stipulate how much the study would cost or how long it would take.

"But it will take more than 45 days and that will give some time to research this matter further," said Gilbert who said time was running out on an unnamed source's option on the M. L. Plonk Estate property near Kings Mountain.

"If somebody's putting the screws to you you ought to know who's doing it," said Gilbert, obviously referring to the option taken on the 260 acres near Reliance Electric as the proposed site for the park which reportedly had a sale price of \$5,000 per acre.

Gilbert said a final decision on the park should not be made before December when three new commissioners will be sworn.

"Let's not let the commissioners who have been defeated or didn't seek reelection make a decision on something important as this," Gilbert said during a debate which was attended by a large crowd, none of whom disputed the need for an industrial park but some said private investors - not government - should finance it and some said more study should be given to the location.

"Government should not do what the private sector

See Park, 3-A

Potholes irk Kings Mountain Councilman

Public Works Supt. Karl Moss and City Attorney Mickey Corry will meet Friday to review bids for paving of streets in the wake of complaints by at least one city commissioner pushing for an aggressive street paving plan.

Meantime, Moss said street crews are patching potholes in several areas of the city and are repairing a utility cut in front of Carolina State Bank on East Gold Street.

"We are running three men short in the street department but we have been busy the past week repairing utility cuts and are ready to start paving as soon as the contracts are reviewed and signed by the city and Asphalt Paving," said Moss.

Ward III Councilman Ralph Grindstaff said he spent his vacation week riding the streets and checking for potholes and other needed repairs he sees as the city's two major priorities.

The other priority Grindstaff plans to push at the

"I feel betrayed by supervisors..."

-Councilman Ralph Grindstaff

July 30 Council meeting is the building of a new police station and soon. He says he will recommend to Council that money be set aside to start the building process.

"That old police building should have been closed years ago," said Grindstaff. He said the city is looking at receiving a big check as the result of a power settlement and he wants that money earmarked for the police station.

Grindstaff put his complaints about the streets in

a formal memorandum to City Manager Gary Hicks July 2, with copies to the full Council and Mayor Scott Neisler. Grindstaff says the city may have to repair at least one 18-months-old sub-division.

"I feel betrayed by supervisors who tell me that everything's up to snuff on these kind of projects and then I measure sections of a street and see asphalt deteriorating to a condition that water now is between the asphalt and the bonding," said Grindstaff.

Hicks acknowledged receipt of Grindstaff's letter and said he is doing some checking himself.

"It's apparent that the city will have to fix what already should have been fixed," said Grindstaff in his memorandum.

"It is this type of operation in the city that continues to plague the city and continues to drain our financial resources."

See Grindstaff, 4-A

\$18.7 million interim budget adopted by KM School Board

A \$18.7 million interim budget for 1996-97 was adopted by the Kings Mountain Board of Education Monday night.

Finance Officer Terri Haas said that until the North Carolina legislature acts the budget won't project any additional teacher allotments. By October 15 the board, under law, must adopt a 1996-97 budget resolution, Haas said.

The budget includes \$11.4 million from the State Public School Fund; \$663,897 from Federal Grants Fund; \$4 million from the Local Current Expense Fund and \$281,551 from the Capital Outlay Fund recently approved by the Cleveland County Board of Commissioners; \$1.4 million from the Child Nutrition Fund; and \$884,244 from the Head Start Program Fund.

The budget amendments approved Monday night increase the total operating expenditures \$751,580, including \$145,092 for five classroom teaching positions; \$137,490 for technology funds; \$112,241 for Central Office administration; \$27,480 for staff development; \$28,138 for Vocational program support; \$94,914 for three positions for instructional support; and \$18,955 for transportation.

Haas said that the adjustments were made because not all funding information was available when the initial state allotments

were released. She said others are made as the funds become available from other sources, such as federal funds that flow through the State Department of Public Instruction.

Other adjustments to the State Public School Fund, she said, were to adjust the dollar amounts available to cover position allotments. Positions such as teachers are budgeted by the state at an average salary. The level of experience and the type of certificate held determines salary. The state matches salaries with benefits, social security, retirement and hospitalization but does not budget for, but funds, annual leave, longevity and disability. The revenues for local current expenses in the interim budget increased \$1,074,396 and the amendments reflected new sources of income including \$380,340, Smart Start; \$22,899, foreign language grant; \$15,251 summer school tuition; and \$57,066, JTPA.

Other revenue sources which exceeded originally estimated projections included after school care and summer day camp, \$179,543; supplemental tax, \$102,433; and fund balance allocation \$134,497.

The increase of \$113,393 in the federal grant fund was due to additional funding of existing pro-



HERE'S EGG IN YOUR FACE - Tandra Ramsey competes in the egg toss during Thursday's Independence Day celebration at the Kings Mountain Parks and Recreation Department. Ramsey and her teammate, Maury Williams, had the athletic skill and experience to win the event. More celebration photos are on page 3-B.

Construction to start July 22 on KM Peak Generation plant

McDaniel Construction Co. of Gaffney, SC will start moving in equipment July 22 at the city's North Gaston Street Substation to begin construction of the proposed \$2 million peak generation plant.

Utilities Supt. Jimmy Maney said the North Carolina Local Government Commission has approved the borrowing of money for the project expected to be completed in November.

All that remains now before a ground-breaking is for the contracts to be signed and accounts set up for the funds to be distributed as the project progresses.

"We're looking at a 4500 KW peak generation facility but the plant could be updated to 6000 KW pending Duke Power Company's settlement with the city of an existing 206 complaint," Maney said this week.

Maney said the city is tentatively scheduled to move to a "pure coincident" peak billing rate August 1 which would mean a shorter payback period for the new facility.

He said Duke Power, the city's supplier of wholesale electricity, measures its highest peak during a 60-minute interval when the load is greatest during the month. At that particular time, Maney explained, Duke would send a load signal and the city would receive it through a modem and operate the peak generation facility during that peak period.

"This procedure would reduce the peak of generation (whether 4500 or 6000) multiplied times the current \$10.19 per KW charge minus any operation and maintenance expense," he said.

More savings would be generated because the cost of operation would remain constant, said Maney.

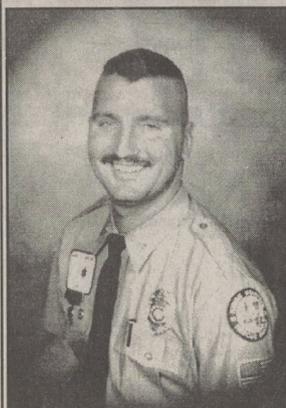
Maney said the city has taken an aggressive and innovative approach to stay competitive in a deregulated electrical market. He commended City Council, the mayor and administrative staff for looking at similar power generation plants in Concord, Gaffney, Winston-Salem and Rock Hill and taking an option that many cities cannot because they are locked into power contracts and can use generation only in emergencies.

"It's only a matter of time with deregulation and retail wheeling until retail customers can switch to power suppliers whether that supplier has the lines in place or not and we have to be ready," said Maney.

The city submitted a 14-page application plus financing contracts, audited information and feasibility and engineering studies to the LGC for review.

The peak generation project has been on the drawing board for several years but it is the first major project Kings Mountain Council has undertaken since the 1989 bond issue.

Kings Mountain People



TIM ADAMS

Accident inspired Adams to help others

A plant accident got Lt. Tim Adams, 27, hooked on the Kings Mountain Rescue Squad.

Adams, a squad member for four years, was working at Anvil Knitwear in Kings Mountain when a hystler fell on his foot and crushed it. The Kings Mountain Rescue Squad was called and in Tim's words "they did a good job taking care of me."

While he was out of action for about six weeks he became friends with his rescuer, Curtis Sims, and it wasn't long until Adams decided to join the squad. He is a certified diver for the Rescue Squad and also an

Emergency Medical Technician.

The first call for help he received was to a domestic incident where a man was shot in the face and partially blinded. After that the life and death-situation calls were numerous, including drownings, wrecks and heart attack victims.

Adams says his experience with lifesaving prepares him for his new job after completion of 11 weeks of police rookie school at Cleveland Community College. Currently a dispatcher at the Kings Mountain Police Department, he is looking forward to patrolling on foot or in a po-

lice car.

"I started thinking about a career in law enforcement when I was in elementary school because I had friends I admired," said Adams, referring to former KMPD officer Jimmy West who is now with the Gastonia Police Department.

Adams said he and West's brother were pals and the whole family became close.

Caring for people runs in the family. Adams is married to registered nurse, Kimberly Queen Adams of Gaston Women's

See Adams, 4A

INSIDE AT A GLANCE

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