

Give blood Thursday at
First Baptist



American Red Cross

Mountaineers in
state playoffs
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KM Police to begin
bike patrol
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Roamin' 'Round Kings Mountain

By Gary Stewart



LAST-MINUTE TOUCH-UP - Keisha Byers cleans the front window prior to the first day of business at the new Kentucky Fried Chicken on East King Street Tuesday.

FBI follows cash trail to jail Ghannt and 6 others

In U.S. federal court documents filed Tuesday in Charlotte, the FBI outlined an elaborate plot by David Scott Ghannt, 28, and six alleged accomplices suspected of stealing \$17 million from a Charlotte armored car company's vaults but they also say that Ghannt's capture in Mexico Sunday may have saved his life.

The arrest affidavits filed by Erik B. Blowers, special agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, were unsealed Monday.

Blowers said the investigation uncovered reports of big spending which led investigators down a money trail that led to the arrests. Court documents alleged that wiretapping conversations had three of the six suspects discussing Ghannt's murder.

Ghannt was arrested Sunday in Playa de Carmen in the resort town of Cozumel, Mexico.

The six Gaston County suspects charged with bank larceny and aiding and abetting after the fact allegedly helped cover Ghannt's tracks for five months.

Jailed in Mecklenburg County Jail without bond pending another court appearance Thursday are Steven Eugene Chambers, 30, his wife, Michelle Denise Chambers, 25, both of Cramer Mountain; Kelly Jane Campbell, 28, of Mount Holly; Eric Hailey Payne, 30, of Belmont; Michael McKinney, 25, of Gastonia, recently hired by Steven Chambers as a personal bodyguard; and Thomas Nathan Grant, 21, of Vale.

Blowers presented affidavits in court Monday

which support six complaints and arrest warrants, 17 search warrants and three seizure warrants.

Authorities searched homes and safe deposit boxes belonging to other suspects and to several others who allegedly handled the stolen cash. Other charges may be pending.



DAVID SCOTT GHANTT

Also seized were 20 items, including a 1998 BMW, a 1998 Chevy Tahoe, a 1998 Ford pickup, a 1998 Toyota Sienna, a 1999 Ford Mustang, a 1998 Harley Davidson Motorcycle, jewelry, inventory and assets of M&S Furniture Gallery in Gastonia, credit union and bank accounts and safety deposit boxes, currency and securities in Gastonia, Huntersville, Dallas, Gastonia and Cherryville.

The case started October 4, 1997 when Loomis Fargo Company, 2050 Suttle Avenue, Charlotte, reported the theft of \$17 million belonging to Nations Bank and First Union from its Charlotte vault.

Security cameras caught a man authorities say was Ghannt, a vault supervisor, loading the 2,748 pounds of cash, mostly in \$20s, into a Loomis van between 6:45 and 7:45 p.m. No one was observed assisting Ghannt during the theft.

On Oct. 6, 1997 the Loomis van was located in a remote wooded area near 12301 Moores Chapel Road in Charlotte. Recovered were two videocassette tapes which allegedly recorded Ghannt during the theft, one .38 caliber handgun which was allegedly stolen from Loomis apparently at the time of the theft and \$3 million in U.S. currency. The odometer mileage on the vehicle indicated that the van traveled directly from Loomis to the recovery site which was located two miles from the Gaston County/Mecklenburg County line. Investigators said they thought that a large vehicle had to be used to offload the missing currency.

Ghannt's wife reported him missing the next morning.

On October 6 Ghannt was indicted in the Western District Court of North Carolina on one count of bank larceny. He was featured on "America's Most Wanted List" and Loomis offered a \$500,000 reward.

Two days after the theft, authorities say Steven and Michelle Chambers started making large bank deposits and 24 days later bought a home in the plush Cramer Mountain section of Gaston County. "Chambers, a known associate of Payne and

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KFC in new building on East King Street

Kentucky Fried Chicken, a mainstay on East King Street, Tuesday morning opened its new building right next door to the KFC which has provided finger-licking good chicken to Kings Mountain residents for many years.

Plumbers and electricians were busy all day Monday getting the building ready for occupancy, and at lunchtime Tuesday the spacious 3,500 square foot building was jammed with customers.

The new restaurant is more than triple the size of the old building. The seating capacity of 82 and the parking lot with 35 spaces both are more than double the size of the old facility.

Manager Debbie Shaw said the new restaurant also includes state-of-the-art equipment with everything computerized from the kitchen to the cash register.

KFC is open from 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday-Wednesday and from 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Thursday-Saturday.

KM-BC DRIVE-IN OPENS - Another business that opened its doors this week is the Kings Mountain-Bessemer City Drive-In which has began its 49th season on Friday night.

Drive-in theaters, once popular throughout the U.S. and especially in the warmer climates of the South, is on the decline, though. The local drive-in is just one of 11 in North Carolina and one of less than 500 in the United States.

But the Stinnett family, who built KM-BC Drive-In in 1949, are optimistic that the drive-in will remain popular in this area. They also own the Sunset in Shelby and the Tri-City Drive-In in Forest City.

Rick Stinnett, 41, operates the three drive-ins and looks forward to the KM-BC Drive-In celebrating its 50th anniversary next year.

"I grew up in the business," he says. "My mom still lives right beside the theater."

Gay and Mozelle Stinnett built the drive-in in 1949 and at first offered not only top quality movie entertainment but a full-service restaurant

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Celebrating in style

Ruth Putnam's wish granted by her friends

By Elizabeth Stewart

Cancer patient Ruth Gold Putnam, 43, got her wish Thursday for a romantic, candlelight dinner at Outback Steak House with her husband, Ricky Putnam Sr. on their first wedding anniversary.

Mrs. Putnam was also surprised with a limousine ride to Gastonia and greeted at the restaurant with a dozen red roses.

The Putnam anniversary treat began when Mrs. Putnam told her home health nurse Rhonda Shirer that her secret wish for an anniversary present was a special dinner with her husband.

"We just can't afford dinner at a restaurant," said Ruth, who said she is very grateful for the City of Kings Mountain's insurance benefits for her husband that have provided the money for her medical costs. She said the city's sick leave and vacation policies have also helped her husband to be able to accompany her to the doctor and hospital. Mr. Putnam has worked for the city for 20 years and is employed by the street department. His son, Ricky Jr., is a supervisor in the city's sanitation department.

Shirer has been a special friend of the Kings Mountain Putnams since last July when she started visiting her patient three or four times a week and now assists her with a morphine pain pump that is available to Putnam 24 hours a day.

Putnam underwent surgery, chemotherapy, radiation and reconstruction for cancer in 1996 and learned last November that more treatment was needed.

"When it all started we thought it was a minor ovarian problem but it turned out to be a malignancy in the female organs and I have been a pa-



Ruth and Ricky Putnam go out on the town to celebrate their first wedding anniversary.

tient of Dr. Robert Higgins in Charlotte for some time now," said Mrs. Putnam.

"My wife never complains," said her devoted husband.

But Mrs. Putnam says her husband is the angel in the family and spoils her "rotten."

The couple, who married Feb. 28, 1997 have six children by prior marriages. Putnam's three boys and Mrs. Putnam's daughter and two sons make up the family which also includes five grandchildren. Michael Putnam, 21, lives at home and attends Northside School in Shelby and other children are Barbara Grissom of Kings Mountain, Eddie and Billy Grissom of Durham, Ricky Putnam of Kings Mountain, and Wayne Putnam of Grover. The grandchildren are David Putnam, Summer Putnam, Jada Putnam, Kelsey Putnam and Jacob Brock.

Neither Ricky or Ruth talk about some of the "bad" days that Ruth experiences, only about the "good" and Friday night was one of the "great" days.

Both Ricky and Ruth dressed up in their Sunday best to be escorted by a tuxedo-clad driver operating a long, white limousine. Ruth's nurse had made

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Dixon road connector plans are shaping up

The Dixon School Road extension/connector is being designed and contracts are expected to be let in October, Ray Spangler, Division 12 engineer of the State Department of Transportation, said Friday during an all-day City Council retreat.

Spangler said the "B" section of the project that runs between Phifer Road and I-85 will be designed in Raleigh and will be a subsequent project.

Spangler and the county's economic development director Steve Nigh said major building projects in this area, some of them in the beginning stages, would create many job opportunities.

The theme of Friday's retreat was "Kings Mountain 2000 and Beyond."

Nye said plans for a Cleveland County Industrial Park on US 74 near Bethware School are moving forward.

Patriot Homes expects to close on 40 acres of property on Crocker Road and build in 1998. Highland Business park is going up off Floyd Street in Kings Mountain and Johnson Business Park off York Road expects to have a first shell building up and running in July.

Spangler said costs of right-of-way acquisition may delay construction of the Shelby Bypass.

Nye said a recent inducement policy approved by the county commissioners could target specific area development and encouraged local people to take advantage of the policy. The policy would assist warehousing and distribution, manufacturing and commercial developers in providing utilities.

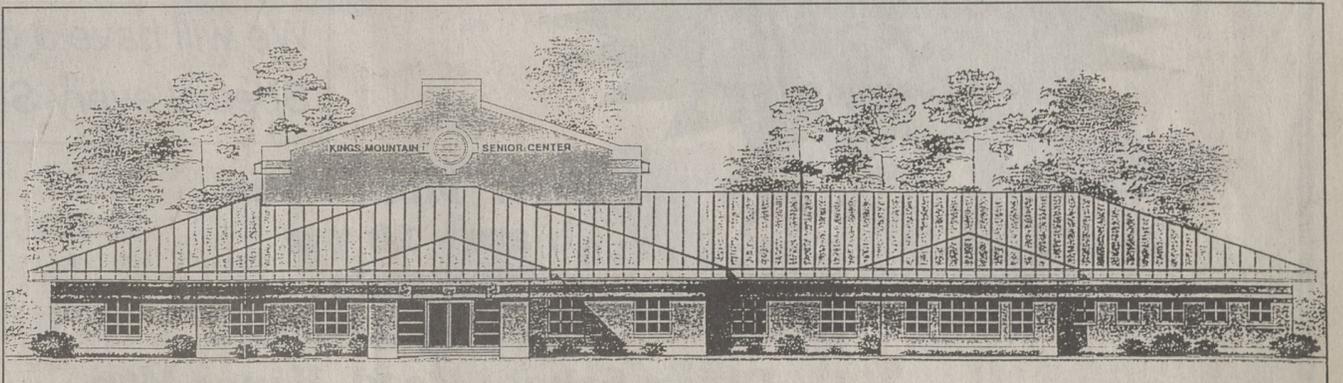
Nye commended city officials for their preparation work in upgrading utilities.

Responding to a question from banker Jay Rhodes, Spangler said DOT gets "bad press" about pot holes and catches the heat about road maintenance. He said \$300 million is spent for maintenance but there are 78,000 miles of roads in the state. Spangler said counts had been made of the large number of potholes on portions of US 74 and blamed some of the problem on the concrete

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PROPOSED NEW SENIOR CENTER - This is an architect's drawing of the proposed new Kings Mountain Senior Recreational Center. The city is applying for a matching grant to help pay for the building which would also require private funds.