

## **SWEETWATER MAN ESCAPES WTC 9/14/2002**

*The following article won Third Place "Best News Story" in the Tennessee Press Association's 2002 Newspaper Awards*

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By JASON REAGAN  
Managing Editor

In the midst of so many tragic stories after Tuesday's terrorist attacks, one Sweetwater family found reason to celebrate in the rescue of one of their own. Leroy McCroskey, a Sweetwater native and New York City firefighter, narrowly escaped the World Trade Center's south tower as it crumbled to the ground Tuesday. "It was like a nightmare," he said from his New York home Thursday morning. "I made it by the grace of God."

### **View from Ground Zero**

As a member of Battalion 20, McCroskey, along with a new partner, was dispatched to the World Trade Center after the station received a call about an unknown explosion there.

"The first alarm came down as an explosion call. We thought a small plane had hit the building," he said.

He later discovered a larger plane, American Flight 11, had struck the north tower. As McCroskey awaited orders at a nearby triage center, he saw the unthinkable.

"I saw the second plane come in," McCroskey said, referring to United Flight 175, which struck the 1,350-foot south tower 15 minutes later.

"I first thought: 'Terrorists,'" he said.

McCroskey's narrow brush with death came with a rumble as he searched for victims in the south tower lobby. Less than one hour after the second plane's collision, McCroskey felt the building shake.

"I felt a rumbling. Everybody starts running," he said.

As dust and concrete rained down upon the fleeing victims and rescue workers, McCroskey made a horrific discovery.

"I looked back and my partner had tripped," he said. "People started running over him."

McCroskey also fell during the escape, severely spraining his ankle but managing to escape the torrent of destruction.

As those fleeing ran for Liberty Street, adjacent to the falling tower, McCroskey searched for his fallen young partner, who had been assigned to him three weeks ago.

“I looked back for my partner. I didn’t see him. He had been covered with soot and concrete,” he said.

A bulldozer later removed enough debris to recover the body of McCroskey’s partner.

“He was a kid fresh out of the academy,” McCroskey said of his partner, whose name has not yet been released.

From a triage center on Liberty Street, McCroskey witnessed the fall of the north tower. McCroskey was treated at the scene and returned to work Wednesday to assist in relief efforts.

“We removed a lot of bodies,” he said.

## **Back Home**

As McCroskey witnessed the carnage at the World Trade Center, his Sweetwater family tried feverishly to contact him, assuming correctly that his battalion would be first on the scene.

“I’m still shook up over it,” said Annette McCroskey, Leroy’s daughter.

She and other family members were visiting friends in Atlanta when they saw the planes slam into the World Trade Center.

Unable to contact Leroy, the family raced back to Sweetwater to await any news — good or bad. Annette and her son, Diqun, were glued to television reports throughout Tuesday afternoon.

Some of McCroskey’s Sweetwater relatives include father Freeman McCroskey and Leroy’s sister, Sissy Latham.

“I was calling every minute,” said Latham, when family members arrived in Sweetwater. She recalls painful hours filled with broken connections and busy signals as phone circuits became jammed or were damaged by the explosions.

As Latham continued to call Leroy’s home using a landline phone, Annette worked her cellular phone in hopes of hearing good news

“I was determined if I was going to have to stay up all night long, I was going to find out something,” Latham said.

She found out something after midnight, early Wednesday morning when she finally made contact with her brother.

“When (Sissy) said ‘Leroy!’ we just started screaming and hollering,” Annette McCroskey said.

“All I could do was break down and cry,” Latham said.

The two immediately phoned several worried friends and relatives.  
“He just made it out by the grace of God,” Annette said.

## **Sobering Thoughts**

Surviving such a vicious and calculated terrorist attack brought a fresh perspective to Leroy McCroskey’s outlook on both American perseverance and U.S. foreign relations.

“I saw so many people coming together,” he said as he worked shoulder to shoulder with rescue workers from Puerto Rico, Washington and North Carolina, brought together for a common cause.

“I thank everybody (in Monroe County) for putting me in prayer,” he added.

From McCroskey’s perspective, terrorists should be stopped at the root.  
“It’s time to go in and fight those countries (which harbor known terrorists),” he said.  
“It should be a wake up call for us.”

# ASU Community Mourns Virginia Tech Shooting Victims

*By Jason Reagan  
Watauga Democrat*

Hundreds of candles brightened the darkness — both real and metaphorical — across Appalachian State's Sanford Mall Wednesday night as an estimated 500 people huddled around a luminous array of candles spelling "VT" to honor the 32 students and faculty killed in Monday's mass shooting at Virginia Tech.

Led by student body president Forrest Gilliam and ASU chancellor Ken Peacock, the crowd lit candles, wrote messages of hope to the survivors and offered tears, prayers and solidarity to a stunned campus after the nation's most horrific multiple-murder scene.

"Tonight, we stand together in the dark because we are lost, looking for direction," said a visibly emotional Gilliam even as individual spectators lit candles. After a moment of silence, Susie Greene read the names of all 32 lives snuffed out abruptly by student gunman Cho Seung-Hui.

As Greene slowly announced each death, several ASU students began showing visible emotional trauma and leaned on friends as the enormity of the loss quickened with each name Greene called. Peacock urged students to show concern for each other and to be willing to intervene when a fellow student shows signs of instability.

"We have that kind of care and that concern," he said.

Earlier Wednesday, authorities disclosed that Cho was committed to a psychiatric hospital more than a year before the shootings and was later released and ordered to seek outpatient treatment.

"We are the family that cares for each other. We can make this campus the safest campus anywhere," Peacock said.

The chancellor's words echoed the expressions seen in candle-lit, sober faces in the crowd.

"We just plain hurt. I feel it, I see it," he said.

"Let us work together to protect the freedom of openness we enjoy."

The memorial came just hours after NBC revealed Cho mailed the network a package containing photos and videos of him waving pistols and an angry, profane speech blaming his acts on rich "brats."

"You had a hundred billion chances and ways to have avoided today," Cho said. "But you decided to spill my blood. You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never wash off."

The package was apparently processed at the Blacksburg post office about an hour and 45 minutes before Cho opened fire and eventually ended his own life

# Appalachian Women: Blazing Trails in Song and Verse

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By Jason Reagan

The Appalachian Voice Magazine (2012)

Ask most people what they think when they hear the term “Appalachian Women in Music” and the likely response may be “Coal Miner’s Daughter/Loretta Lynn” or maybe their eyes will brighten as they shout “Dolly Parton!”

And, although Lynn and Parton paved the way for a generation of musicians from the hollers and mountains to the stage of the Grand Ole Opry, the deeper traditions echoing down the Appalachian mountain range over the decades whispers a rich tapestry of women making their songs heard despite the barren soil from which it often came.

“I think there were probably more socioeconomic factors that kept women from the forefront of history in Appalachian folk music than those that brought them to the front,” Mark Freed, a North Carolina-based folklorist said.

For many folk singers of Appalachia – both men and women – their musical muse spawned not from light-hearted days spent idly by a mountain stream, but rather from the depths of the hellish coal pits with songs as gloomy and combustible as the coal dust that inspired their lyrics.

“I think the women songwriters from the coal camps were forced to the forefront,” Freed said.

“They were the ones at home with starving children, dealing with company thugs, and witnessing the atrocities of coal camps.”

Such was the genesis of Aunt Molly Jackson.

Born in 1880, the daughter of a bankrupt grocer and union activist in Clay County, Ky., Jackson felt the black arm of the mines at a young age when her father had to close his store due to the failure and abandonment of a nearby coal mine.

Just as the Appalachian mines robbed her father of his livelihood, it stole everything she held dear, killing her first husband in a 1917 accident and blinding both her brother and father in another incident. To cope with such horrors, Jackson turned to her great-grandmother’s rich folk music heritage.

Such loss and her seemingly natural sense of justice, no doubt shaped Jackson’s evolution into one of the century’s best known protest singers.

“She was at the height of her glory when she was giving someone she thought was no good a hard time,” recalled Jim Garland (Jackson’s half-brother and fellow musician) in his autobiography “Welcome the Traveler Home.”

“These troublemaking instincts led her to write many a fine song.”

By 1930, Jackson’s songs began to take shape as a key factor in bringing deplorable mining conditions in places like Harlan, Ky. to light.

Songs like “Poor Miner’s Farewell” and “Kentucky Miner’s Wife” brought the plight of the miner to the attention of a wider --- some would say national --- audience.

The combination of her great-grandmother’s pure folk roots and her flaming internal combustion to right wrongs launched Jackson into greater heights of fame when she recorded her first album in New York City in 1931.

Her work inspired a generation of younger folk singers and led to a later folk music revival in Greenwich Village, as well as lighting a bright torch for the burgeoning labor movements of post-Depression America.

“She came to be perceived by intellectuals of the time as an ‘authentic’ representative of the American folk,” said Alexis Luckey, a folklorist at the University of Virginia, writing in a 2005 article.

“Her folk identity...was later crafted for symbolic purchase by political groups, folk collectors, and, most importantly, Jackson herself,” Luckey said.

Almost synonymous with folk music are the equally melodious names, Maybelle and Sarah Carter.

Born in the mountains of Scott County, Va., the Carter’s – along with Sara’s husband A.P.—recorded more than 250 songs between the late 1920s and 1941.

“Maybelle’s ‘Carter Scratch’ style on the guitar became one of the most mimicked styles across the region,” Freed said.

“The harmony singing of Sara and Maybelle was extremely influential,” he added noting a pantheon of other folk music goddesses who helped shape a generation of later musicians; pioneers like Hazel Dickens, Jean Ritchie, Lulu Belle and Ola Belle Reed.

The list goes on but amid these triumphs, perhaps the most poignant aspect in the development of Appalachian women of music was the heart-wrenching poverty and heartbreak that often consumed regions of Appalachia through unfair labor practices, hellish mining conditions and general exploitation.

“Women were backed into corners where speaking out and writing songs were the only ways to try and overcome their situations,” Freed said.

Here’s hoping future generations of songwriters never forgot those dark corners where a little lyrical light still shown.

725 words.

A much-anticipated High Country summer tradition will once again shine on the local arts scene --- this time with a return to a more outdoorsy theme.

An Appalachian Summer Festival, regarded as one of the top regional art festivals in the South, will bring back an audience favorite to Appalachian State University as part of a diverse line-up of musical acts and artistic exhibitions throughout the month of July.

For the past few years, the grand finale concert, featuring a nationally known musical act, has been held indoors at the Holmes Convocation Center.

This year, organizers are switching back to the traditional outdoor concert venue, brining the event to Kidd Brewer Stadium.

According to Megan Stage with ASU's Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, the university made the change due to popular demand.

In addition to a dazzling display of fireworks, the July 23 concert will also fire up the explosive music of CMT Music Award winner Dierks Bentley, a rising country star who's rocketed to the top of the charts seven times with such songs as "What Was I Thinkin'", "Come a Little Closer" and "Sideways."

Gates will open at 6:30 p.m. and the concert begins at 7:30 p.m. "Tailgating and picnicking are encouraged," an ASU spokesperson said. Discount tickets will be available for Blue Ridge Electric Members.

Other chart-makers scheduled to perform include Canadian pop and country singer-songwriter k.d. lang on July 15 as well as jazz vocalist ensemble The Manhattan Transfer (July 30), who charted to No. 7 in 1981 with their hit "The Boy From New York City.

On July 2, the heart-warming stories and sounds of the African Children's Choir will fill the air at Farthing Auditorium. The choir is comprised of African orphans who have lost parents due to disease, poverty or war. After touring for a year, the children return to their homeland and receive a full education as another group of children go on tour.

According to an ASU spokesperson, the show includes, "singing, dancing and drumming indigenous to their home countries. The children have performed at many prestigious events and concert halls; for Kofi Annan at the UN General Assembly Hall in New York; with Mariah Carey & Sir Paul McCartney at Live 8 in London; and at Nelson Mandela's AIDS Awareness Concert in South Africa. In 2008, the African Children's Choir performed for Queen Elizabeth II and appeared at a special concert at the White House for President George W. Bush."



Ben Vereen and Chita Rivera will belt out a Broadway retrospective on Jul8 at Farthing with the show "Our Broadway."

One of the festival's more symphonic performers, the Broyhill Chamber Ensemble, will fill the air with strains of classical music July 6, 20 and 27.

Other musical or dance acts include: The Sunset Limited (July 9), the Eastern Festival Orchestra with Susan Graham, mezzo-soprano (July 3) and Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg (July 10), Aspen Santa Fe Ballet (July 14) and Mountain Heart with Tony Rice (July 29),

In addition to a summer selection of fine music and dance, the festival also includes a visual arts component which will include: The Turchin Center's Summer Exhibition Celebration (July 1), Family Day at the Turchin Center (July 16), the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival (July 16), the Halpert Biennial Juror Talk & Afternoon Tea Reception (July 17), the 25th Rosen Outdoor Sculpture Walk (July 23) the inaugural Rosen-Schaffel Young Artist Competition (July 24), as well as a number of films and lectures.

Preseason events will begin May 27 through June 29.

According to the ASU Cultural Affairs Office, An Appalachian Summer Festival is presented annually in July by the university's Office of Arts and Cultural Programs. Begun as a small chamber music series founded by festival patrons Arnold and Muriel Rosen, the festival is now one of the nation's most highly regarded, multi-disciplinary art festivals.

Festival corporate sponsors include: Westglow Resort and Spa, Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation, Scholars Bookshop at the University Bookstore, McDonald's of Boone, Northern Trust, SkyBest Communications, Inc., Mast General Store, La Quinta Inn & Suites of Boone, Storie Street Grille, Reynolds Blue Ridge, Boone Area Visitor's Bureau, Nationwide, A Park Terrell Agency, Goodnight Brothers, Footsloggers Outdoor & Travel Outfitters, Peabody's Wine & Beer Merchants, Chetola Resort, the Broyhill Inn and Conference and Mountain Lumber.

For more information, a complete schedules and tickets, visit [www.appsummer.org](http://www.appsummer.org).

## **Banking Privacy**

*Note: This article analyzes the modern problem of banking privacy through the eyes of three North Carolina residents.*

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By Jason Reagan

News-Argus Business Editor

It's been said that information is power. For consumers in today's computerized world, the flow of financial information such as account numbers can prove powerful to some companies, and costly to consumers.

Goldsboro retirees Daniel Ward and R.D. Merritt Jr. found that out the hard way. After comparing notes recently, the two Goldsboro residents found themselves saddled with what they say are unauthorized bank account charges and club memberships charged to their accounts.

Ward's troubles began in 1998 when he noticed a charge for \$63.59 that he couldn't remember authorizing on his Wachovia Mastercard account. After investigating, he discovered he had been enrolled in a discount club with Minneapolis-based catalog retailer Damark.

The club charged a fee in return for discount coupon offers. Ward recalled an earlier phone solicitation for the service. He also recalled refusing the belligerent telemarketer's offer.

"I definitely declined," he said. "I told them I was definitely not interested." The retired garage owner asked for the unauthorized charge to be removed from his account, and Wachovia complied.

Ward later learned that his daughter-in-law, Charlene Ward of Wake Forest, had a Damark charge on her Wachovia credit card for the same shopping service.

The company said Mrs. Ward had authorized the \$63 debit on Dec. 11, 1998 - the day she was admitted to the hospital after a serious car accident.

“There was no way” an authorization could have been made to Damark, she said. “I was unconscious for a couple of days.”

Cari Hepp, spokesman for the North Carolina Attorney General’s office, said the office has received 75 complaints about Damark.

Damark spokeswoman Diane Rider said that, if a customer is charged without permission, the company immediately takes it off the bill. She defended the company’s telemarketing practices.

“A lot of times, a husband or wife will sign up for the club without the other spouse knowing about it.”

Both Wards said that was not true in their cases.

In R.D. Merritt Jr.’s case, his Wachovia money market checking account was debited three times by different companies for services he never authorized.

Merritt, a Bell South retiree, first noticed the discrepancies last July. The charges were around \$10 each and involved an insurance company and two health care discount clubs. Unlike Ward, Merritt said he had never been contacted by any of the vendors.

“I was pretty upset about it,” he said, “I believe I would have remembered a phone call like that.”

“We haven’t seen that,” said Ms. Hepp. She added that while the attorney general’s office fielded 150 complaints about unauthorized credit card charges last year, it had not received a complaint involving checking accounts.

Merritt immediately ordered the companies to credit his account for each unauthorized charge, with help from Wachovia officials. He said he is still waiting for some of the companies to refund his money.

“I finally got it stopped,” said Merritt, who hopes his next statement will reflect all of the credits.

Jay Reed, spokesman for Wachovia, would not discuss individual customer complaints, citing “security and confidentiality issues.” But he said that, in general, the bank quickly credits accounts when a customer calls its attention to an unauthorized charge.

Reed said Wachovia does not share account numbers with companies with whom the bank has joint marketing agreements. These agreements allow Wachovia to share other information like names, addresses and phone numbers.

“The only way for a customer account to be debited is when the customer provides the account number to the third party,” he said.

Merritt and the Wards remain baffled as to how their account numbers were obtained by the vendors.

George King, ombudsman for the North Carolina Banking Commission, said consumers should carefully check their banking and credit card statements each month for unauthorized charges.

Banks mostly assume that a debit order to charge an account is legitimate. It is up to the consumer to check each item, he said.

He also warned hackers can steal account numbers and wreak havoc with consumers’ finances, especially when consumers shop online.

“The real scam artists would rather have your account number and bank transit number than they would your checkbook.” He said consumers should keep such numbers as inaccessible as possible.

The recent flood of joint marketing agreements between banks and third-party vendors comes from increased competition for customer accounts, said Kevin Mukri, spokesman for the federal Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

His agency, which regulates federally chartered banks, has experienced an increase in unauthorized debit foul-ups, both intentional and accidental. “The nature of finances is changing rapidly,” he said. “Consumers need to be aware of these changes.”

One such change is the Financial Modernization Act, passed last year by Congress. It requires banks to get permission upon the opening of an account before releasing customer information to a third-party vendor. And, it gives consumers the right to block banks from providing their personal information - such as phone numbers—to third parties such as telemarketers.

However, this information could appear in the middle of a page of fine print as part of the new account paperwork a customer signs.

Reed said Wachovia follows this law and notifies new account holders of its privacy policy. He added that customers may be taken off any vendor solicitation list by request at any time.

In response to problems like those experienced by Ward and Merritt, Congress announced the recent formation of several task forces to address privacy issues.

According to an Associated Press report, privacy of financial, health and employment information is now one of the highest priorities for Americans.

For Merritt and Ward, such priorities now seem higher than ever. “I learned to not depend on banks without checking up behind them,” Ward said, “I’ve had a good lesson in privacy violation.

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## Local banks are ready for New Year weekend

By JASON REAGAN

News-Argus Business Editor

Despite the constant hype surrounding what may happen come 12:01 a.m. Jan. 1, bank officials serving Wayne County expect a calm new year.

When polled last week, eight banks operating branches here assured the News-Argus their computer systems have been tested and are fully Y2K compliant. However, even if minor complications come up, each has worked out some kind of contingency plan.

Since nearly every computer we use is programmed to read 2000 as "00," many analysts fear that computers might misread the new year as 1900 and shut down --- a possibility that has caused government agencies and corporations to spend billions of dollars testing and re-testing their machines.

"We're looking forward to a Happy New Year," said John Metz, president of KS Bank, echoing the sentiments of his colleagues that on Jan. 3 --- the earliest most branches will open --- it will be business as usual. Most banks will be closed for the New Year's weekend, although many will have technicians on call should any problems arise.

Because of a federal law passed last year, all banks and thrifts were required to be Y2K compliant by June of this year. Since then, officials say getting the word out to customers has been their main task --- a goal that has cost a lot of money and manpower.

For example, Bank of America, one of the nation's largest, spent \$550 million to ensure compliance, said company spokesman Eloise Hale.

And all the mailings, Internet postings, hotlines and advertising is apparently working. A recent poll conducted by the Associated Press in July found 31 percent Americans believed that banks stood the greatest risk of experiencing Y2K problems

--- the largest percentage among all industries. By December, that number was down to 18 percent.

Preparation has probably been the greatest factor in this shift. While millennial computer bugs have been the topic of countless sound bites, articles and even movies, most banks have been quietly working on the problem as early as 1995.

At the local level, some bankers have noted a slight increase in cash withdrawals and customer questions about Y2K in general but nothing coming close to a panic.

"When you talk about people's money, they want to be sure it's safe," said Lee Borden, senior vice president of Triangle Bank, adding that the Wayne County offices have received a moderate stream of Y2K-related customer calls.

All bank officials here were quick to point out that America's federally insured banks continue to be the safest place consumers can leave their money.

"No one ever lost a penny in an insured bank," said Bill Whaley, area vice president for First Citizens Bank.

Discouraging large cash withdrawals has emerged as a unified theme across the industry. Banking leaders point out that most homeowners policies do not cover huge sums of stored cash. In the event customers do make a run on cash before Jan. 1, Otis Meacham of the N.C. Banking Commission said that the federal government has already approved a \$50 billion infusion into the nation's banking system. His advice to consumers on New Year's Day: "You should treat it like any other weekend."

Despite the overall optimism, banks are still making contingency plans. Most will run an extra set of financial records on Dec. 31 as a precaution. Paul Stock, president of the N.C. Bankers Association, also urged consumers to diligently keep records of checking and savings accounts.

Consumers should be aware of possible Y2K scams as the year draws to a close, especially with phone solicitations, said Harold Bost, Year 2000 Program Manager for Centura Bank.

"Banks will never call you for account information," he said. "We already have it."

# The Secret of Her Success

## Monroe native's firm earns ad accolades

*The Advocate & Democrat*  
Sunday, April 14, 2002

**By JASON REAGAN**  
**Managing Editor**

For Monroe County native Lisa Atkins-Bingham, success is a matter of faith. And faith, she believes, is the key to ultimate life success.

That formula, coupled with what she says is the perfect team, seems to work well for Bingham, president of the Bingham Group in downtown Knoxville.

The firm, positioned in just about every aspect of advertising and public relations, recently experienced just how such a vision worked, winning several Addy Awards — the advertising world's equivalent of the Oscars.

"Faith is the opposite of fear. Without incredible faith I would have given up a long time ago," said Bingham during a recent interview.

The Bingham Group took home several awards in their division of the Addys including accolades for colorful, futuristic print ads and brochures for regional energy company Tengasco, as well as a homespun, whimsical series of television spots for Knoxville's Braden Furniture and a variety of other concepts.

As with many successful professionals, Bingham credits an early influence for sparking her creative success.

In Bingham's case, local art teacher Sue Sloan — then at Madisonville High School — helped inspire her artistic talents as a student.

Bingham would later go on to earn a bachelor of fine arts from the University of Tennessee in 1985.

Working as a graphic artist for the Tennessee Valley Authority helped steer Bingham in the direction of corporate work, leading to several freelance assignments and a stint with a West Knoxville advertising firm.

In the early '90s, Bingham began to feel a pull toward opening her own shop.

Sparked by a \$5,000 loan arranged through local banker Larry Belk, the Bingham Group was born humbly in Bingham's Sweetwater home.

After working with a steady stream of clients from across the Southeast, Bingham decided to move her office to Knoxville's Old City four years later with only one other employee.

And like most success stories, Bingham's reputation and clientele mushroomed, as the group added clients as diverse as Gemtron and the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. Five years later, Bingham's firm moved up — literally — landing in a chic office suite on the 20th floor of downtown Knoxville's Riverview Tower.

Throughout the early and later successes of her firm, Bingham maintained strong ties to her spiritual roots.



“I have always felt such a sincere gratitude for the talent God has given me that I feel I should thank him every day by doing something with it,” she said.

Entwined within her strong faith is an equally strong belief in the value of teamwork.

“(My team has) made a huge difference in my life,” she said.

“When you start a business, you work many long hours, weekends — whatever it takes to get the business started.”

“A few years ago I realized the real challenge was to achieve some sort of balance between work and your personal life. So having a team with experience that our clients can count on has been such a blessing,” she added.

“My best team member has been my husband, Joe. He has been my biggest supporter, encourager and confident. I could not do anything without him.”

Walking through the Bingham’s Group’s futuristic offices, gazing at the gorgeous view of the Tennessee River, absorbing the crackling creative energy in the place, it’s hard to argue with Bingham’s strategy.

Changing technology places a tremendous role in the firm’s evolution.

The Bingham Group is one of the few agencies in the region with in-house television facilities capable of producing commercials and videos.

The firm’s recent string of Addy awards is nothing new. The firm consistently wins, places or shows in the annual contest.

Bingham offers a simple word of advice to others thinking of starting a business.

“Never give up,” she said.

“You learn more from your mistakes than your successes. If it’s something you really want to do — pray about it — then go for it. It’s not going to be easy,” she added.

“I wondered for years if what I was supposed to be doing with my life was advertising. Then I realized you can be a disciple wherever you are — even in advertising.”

Bingham’s many clients might just shout an enthusiastic “Amen!” to that sentiment.

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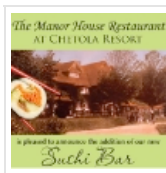
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NOVEMBER 11, 2010 ISSUE

## Clock Is Ticking for WWII Video Project

Story by Jason Reagan

A Boone man wants to keep the spirit of Veterans Day alive every day of the week with a local video project.

Ken Wiley, author of *D-Days in the Pacific with the U.S. Coast Guard: The Story of Lucky 13* a World War II Coast Guard veteran, is asking his fellow Watauga County comrades to tell their stories on camera for the Veterans Video Museum project.

“We went 50 to 60 years and didn’t talk about it,” Wiley said, speaking of the war.

“So many veterans are passing away, and stories of their activities have never been told.”

Wiley has been scheduling veterans for video shoots weekly at the Lois E. Harrill Senior Center in Boone for the past few months after starting the program in 2006 in Mountain City, Tenn.

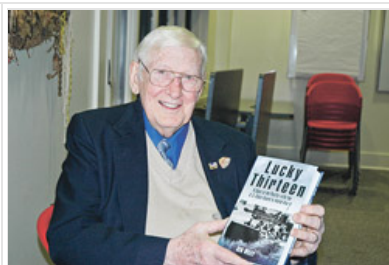
While in Tennessee, he interviewed about 152 veterans and, since bringing the project to Boone, has brought the total to about 200 veterans.

After a typical interview, Wiley makes a DVD for the veteran and places a copy in the local library. So far, he has turned three over to the Watauga County Public Library.

He said he had heard about an audio project chronicling veterans’ stories by the Library of Congress but felt that video would be a more effective way to tell so many vivid stories from a regional angle.

“I thought, ‘Let’s keep it in the local area,’” he said.

Now that Wiley has started the camera rolling, he’s looking to Watauga County to make the project a



Ken Wiley, author of *D-Days in the Pacific with the U.S. Coast Guard: The Story of Lucky 13*

### Thursday’s Veterans Day Events

These events are taking place on Thursday, November 11, to commemorate Veterans Day.

7:30 a.m. ASU ceremony, Dougherty Administration Building, ASU

10:00 a.m. Military Officers Association of America Ceremony, Boone Mall

11:00 a.m. Ceremony, Memorial Park, Blowing Rock

**North Carolina Symphony:**  
From Brahms to Bach - and Back Again  
Grant Llewellyn, music director  
Thursday, November 11, 2010  
8pm, Farthing Auditorium

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### LOCAL WEATHER FORECAST

#### Current Weather

Location: Boone, NC  
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Humidity: 39%  
Feels Like: 62°F

62°F



Forecast - Click for detailed forecast

reality here.

“It’s not something I can do myself,” he said. “I have to get the community behind me.”

Toward that end, Wiley has contacted the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce, the Watauga County Public Library, county officials and U.S. Rep. Virginia Foxx.

As for Wiley, he has told his story in the pages of *D-Days*. A chronicle of his wartime experience aboard a Coast Guard attack transport in the Pacific, *D-Days* explains how the U.S. conducted a military campaign across 6,000 miles of ocean from Wiley’s personal perspective.

According to the *Journal of Military History*, “This very well written and organized account...should appeal to both scholars and the general public and should be in every library of every World War II and Coast Guard historian.”

“I wanted to leave some record of what happened to me during World War II to my own children and grandchildren,” Wiley said.

He was scheduled to present a lecture and book signing at the Watauga library on Tuesday.

For more information about the Veterans Video Museum Project, call Wiley at 828-264-4724.

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### TOP NEWS ACROSS THE NATION

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At least 15 people died and more than 100 were injured in a suicide car bomb attack on a police facility  
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##### [Coach accused of whipping players](#)

A Jackson, Mississippi, high school basketball coach is accused of whipping students for "failing to run  
[November 11, 2010 2:05:46 PM EST]

##### [New evidence in N.C. missing girl case](#)

Authorities investigating the disappearance of a 10-year-old North Carolina girl have recovered "evidence  
[November 11, 2010 3:14:16 PM EST]

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After eight months of bickering and political paralysis, Iraqi leaders have finally reached a power-shar  
[November 11, 2010 1:59:16 PM EST]

### HIGH COUNTRY MAGAZINE

By Jason Reagan  
Editor  
Watauga Democrat  
Boone, N.C.  
July 4, 2005

On a warm, July 4<sup>th</sup> day in the Silverstone community of western Watauga County, Clyde Wilson almost wasn't born.

Today, the Boone resident plans to celebrate his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday on Monday.

"It was a special day, the day I was born because I just weighed a pound and a half," he said, recalling that he almost didn't make it. Nevertheless, his family celebrated his birth in 1912 along with the birth of a nation.

Upon meeting Clyde, it's obvious he's built to last and he still commands a razor-sharp memory. His hearing's not so good and he has trouble with his eyesight. But, ask Clyde about his past and he can recall just about any event with details that would prove astonishing for someone half his age.

He moves about slowly, using an intricately inlaid cane, but his eyes brighten when he talks about his past.

The middle child of Arlie and Betsy Wilson, Clyde and his brothers, Boyd and Ernest, grew up in a county rife with economic downturns even before the Great Depression.

“I’ve worked for fifty-cents a day,” he said. “Lots of times, after you worked a week, they couldn’t pay you.” While making money for his family as a gardener and doing other odd jobs, Clyde found the time to attend Cove Creek School where he would later meet the girl he was to marry, Maude Williams.

“We worked young — we had to work,” he said. Helping his father, who served as Watauga County’s treasurer, make a weekly commute ranked as one of his top household chores.

“I’d ride a horse (and bring another horse) from Silverstone to Boone to pick my Daddy up. Arlie would stay in town during the week and make the 15-mile journey with his son on Fridays back home.

Although Clyde had at least ten years on most World War II soldiers, he still answered the call to duty at the age of 30 while working at a naval facility in Norfolk, Va.

“I felt like I ought to go so I let the draft catch me,” he said.

As a member of the Army’s 429<sup>th</sup> Engineers unit, he landed in North Africa in 1942.

The U.S. commissioned the unit for a few specialized tasks — most notably the construction of a road from Iran to an uneasy wartime ally, Russia.

As motor sergeant, Clyde ensured every vehicle stayed in top shape and remained within the convoy.

That job became a life-threatening hardship when the unit crossed the Himalayan Mountains on its eastern trip.

“We had airplane wreckers (flatbed trucks with large boom-cranes for hauling aircraft) that were 60-feet long,” he said.

“We took 50,000 five-gallon cans of gas.”

The trucks couldn’t navigate some of the hairpin mountain passes so Clyde and his comrades had to maneuver a bulldozer under the trucks’ rear axles to move them around.

In the Himalayans, the unit took some heavy but faraway fire from entrenched Japanese units — mostly snipers and artillery troops hidden in caves.

But the unit’s biggest threat came not from Asian gun barrels but from the mountain climate.

Growing up in the High Country may have prepared Clyde for cold winters — but not the 40-below-zero temperatures his outfit faced.

“The weather got bad for three days and three nights in the Himalayans. We had to wait for a thaw.”

But rather than surrender to the elements, Clyde devised a plan to survive.

“What I did — I shoveled snow up around a truck, sealed it off and left a little place to get under it.”

After weathering the frigid attacks and finishing the road to Russia, the engineering unit unloaded those 50,000 cans of gasoline and built an airport in China. By

1945, the war wound down and Clyde could almost taste his homecoming.

The Army offered soldiers a chance to go stateside if they agreed to sign on as a second lieutenant for two more years.

Clyde remembers telling one of his friends, “I don’t want to be a lieutenant. They get all the slack from the top up and the bottom down.”

Finally, he agreed to a 45-day leave with the understanding that he would reenlist for another year.

“But I remember saying, ‘If I ever get out of here, I’m not coming back,’” he said.

And he never did.

On his return trip home, his transport airplane caught fire in India. Wilson’s previous orders to return for 45 days and return for one year were on that plane with him.

“Those papers were on me when the fire started. That’s a good time to lose them,” he said with an enigmatic grin.

Arriving stateside at Fort McPherson, Wilson “told my captain what I’d done and he said, ‘don’t you worry — you won’t have to go back.’”

Wilson surprised his parents, who by then had moved to Ashe County, with an abrupt homecoming in October of 1945.

“I was at home before they knew I was around. I just walked in the door,” he said.

Clyde married Maude and they began what will be a 60-year marriage this month.

While Maude worked as a teacher in several places, including Mabel School, Clyde worked as a service technician and salesman for Ivy Wilson's Boone dairy equipment business.

"I covered 21 counties, seven in North Carolina, seven in Tennessee and seven in Virginia."

Later, he would work as a mechanic in High Point and a shop foreman in Greensboro before retiring to Boone in 1991.

He looks forward to celebrating his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday and has long enjoyed sharing it with Independence Day. For his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, more than 70 visited his Forest Hills home including well-known community leader, the late Alfred Adams.

And it's pretty obvious he's looking forward to his 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

"Those wives — they really keep you going, don't they."



# When it comes to evolution, don't monkey around

Celebrations were under way Thursday to commemorate the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin, the British naturalist who developed the first scientific theory of evolution and the concept of natural selection.

To quote the New York Times, Darwin's theory, presented in the epochal "On the Origin of Species," "recognized that species contain vast amounts of variation, some of which could be inherited. Variations that made individuals better adapted to their environment would let them have more offspring. Natural selection, as Darwin called this process, would gradually create enormous changes over millions of years."

By now, most readers probably expect me to launch into some kind of diatribe either about the merits or demerits of Darwin's historic contribution to science and to further comment on the ongoing debate over the teaching of evolution vs. the creationist notion of intelligent design in America's classroom.

Indeed, Darwin makes for excellent debate fodder. According to Gallup and Pew Research Center polls, more than 40 percent of Americans hold the belief that human beings were created by a higher deity in our present form — in opposition to Darwin's view of natural selection.

As made famous by the inaccurately named Scopes Monkey Trial in Dayton, Tenn. in 1926 (a mere 40-minute drive from my hometown), the misconception that humankind evolved from monkeys continues to produce mountains of paper in the form of editorials and thousands of megabytes in online forum space.

So, what can I add to this furor?

Not much.

Apparently, I share the same evolved sense that my prehistoric forbearers possessed — a handy little trait known as "prudence."

The same survival mechanism that prevented my ancestors from sticking their face into a beehive compels me to simply watch the Great Evolutionary Debate from the sideline (also known as the Weasel Gene).

However, I did run across a well-written essay by Steven Dutch, natural and applied sciences professor at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, which matches my beliefs in that he attempts to simply address misconceptions about evolution rather than arguing about the theory as a whole. Dutch clearly accepts the theory and he clearly provides factual analysis to some popular myths. Dutch writes (in the following excerpt):

## Myth 1: Humans Evolved From Monkeys

Humans and great apes had a common ancestor about 5 million years ago. Humans and

monkeys had a common ancestor about 50 million years ago. Nowhere, except in the most illiterate anti-evolution literature, will you find a claim that humans evolved from monkeys.

## Myth 2: Evolution is Only A Theory

“Theory” does not mean “hypothesis” or “guess.” “Theory” means an organized set of related ideas. If you have a set of previously disconnected observations, and you come up with a possible explanation, you have an organized set of related ideas - a theory. A theory that hasn't been confirmed is a hypothesis. People commonly but incorrectly talk as if theories and hypotheses are the same thing. All hypotheses are theories, but all theories are not hypotheses.

## Myth 3: If Nobody Saw It, We Can't Be Sure It Happened

If you find your house trashed and your TV and stereo missing, will you hesitate to call the police because nobody saw it happen? Would you want the judge to dismiss the case just because you only had forensic evidence, but no witnesses?

## Myth 4: Science Can't Say Anything About Origins

Maybe not. But once the origin happens, everything after that is history. And historical evidence is preserved in the physical record (Editor's note: Evolution does not claim to explain how life began).

## Myth 5: Evolution is Just Random

Is the following number sequence random: 592653589793238462643383279? It not only looks random; it is random. But lacking in meaning? No. These are the digits of pi beginning with the fourth decimal place.

Random does not mean “meaningless.” The scientific meaning of random is that something cannot be predicted with better accuracy than that predicted by statistics. The phenomenon is its own simplest description. Biological systems are far too complex to describe or predict mathematically. We have incomplete information, and significant events like climate change or asteroid impact are unpredictable.

No matter what religious beliefs we each hold, it's difficult to argue with the mountains of evidence that have been added and continue to bolster Darwin's theory. At a bare minimum, we owe it to one another to get our facts straight, using credible sources like Dutch, before we dip our feet in the rhetorical waters.

While new scientific theories may propose a perceived threat to some religious believers, it's also true that most of our community's religious practice is built around faith that has withstood centuries of change — belief evolves.

It's up to each member of any faith community to weigh what we know against what we have believed and determine the best course for each spiritual life.

Following such an evaluation, there's no reason a thinking person can't accept a well-established scientific theory while still maintaining their chosen spiritual path.

Rather than dividing us more, events like Darwin's birthday should provide inspiration to people of all philosophies and faiths.

The fact that, 200 years later, we still continue to grow in knowledge and community in conjunction with our diversity of beliefs, backgrounds and ethnicity, shows that, at the very least, we continue to evolve as humankind. We walk; we fall; we get back up and learn from past mistakes.

If Darwin were alive, I think he would agree that that's a theory we can all accept. — the theory of human benevolence (I obviously inherited the Inherit the Wind-Bag Gene, didn't I?).

*Jason Reagan can be reached at [reagan@mountaintimes.com](mailto:reagan@mountaintimes.com).*

# ‘Little Dealer’ leaves huge shoes to fill

Reagan’s Ramblings, May 1, 2009

They say you can tell a lot about a person by their telephone demeanor.

In fact, marketing companies tell their employees to smile when they talk because people seem to know when they do.

Norman Cheek always smiled when he phoned me — of this I have no doubt. I couldn’t see it but I knew a grin was there.

Not long after I arrived in the editor’s seat here in 2003, I could count on Norman to call me every few months about an upcoming community project.

In fact, my mental image of local community service will always be the diminutive but dynamic figure of Cheek with his ever-present smile.

Whether he was challenging his fellow merchants to donate supplies for area troops across the ocean in Iraq or setting the bar ever higher for donations for Project Graduation, Norman knew the secret of community development: People want to help their neighbor — they just need a push sometimes. And push Norman did — always with a smile.

In all of our conversations, which opened and closed with Norman laughing about something, I knew going forward that Norman would get what he wanted. Maybe an article urging people to welcome home troops from Iraq with a hometown parade. Perhaps a story to support Project Graduation.

You got it, Norman.

Although Norman’s moniker as “The Little Dealer with the Big Heart” attached to his business persona, it could have just as easily been applied to his sense of philanthropy.

Norman was the perpetual dealer, making deals with businesses to see just how many truckloads of supplies he could get for soldiers far from home or garnering one more dollar from a business to fund some community need.

I often wished I could have heard the conversations between Norman and other business owners when he made his pitch for donations. How could they say “No?”

As the years passed, the “Norman calls” dwindled. A hip replacement and a chronic respiratory ailment made dealing compassion more difficult for him.

When I heard Norman died on Wednesday morning, my first thought was “I’ll never hear that infectious laugh on my phone again.”

While his Toyota lot was filled with Camrys, Priuses and Celicas, Norman’s real inventory brimmed with compassion, caring and a little mischievous humor and he never ran out.

When I first met Norman in person, his twinkling eyes and 100-watt smile made me think (benevolently, mind you), “This guy’s up to something.”

And, he was.

He was up to the challenge of meeting his community’s need.

Ask a Watauga County Teacher of the Year who drove one of Cheek’s Toyotas around for a year as a prize.

Ask a child whose Mom or Dad was serving in Iraq but who nevertheless felt the familial warmth from

Norman's work with the local military support group.

I suppose now we'll have to change Norman's nickname to "The Little Humanitarian with the Big Shoes to Fill."

I'm optimistic, though.

Somewhere in Boone is Norman's philanthropic heir.

I'm hopeful someone will call me soon with a plan to save the world — one local deed at a time.

Whoever you are, remember to smile when you call.

It's not hard. Think about Norman Cheek.

*Jason Reagan is the editor of the Watauga Democrat. He can be reached at [reagan@wataugademocrat.com](mailto:reagan@wataugademocrat.com).*

# Delta Pulls Out Of Hickory Airport

By Jason Reagan  
Editor  
The Mountain Times

Less than a month after Hickory and Boone officials toured the High Country promoting new jet service in Hickory, Delta Air Lines now says its clipping the wings on the fledgling effort.

In a published report in the Hickory Daily Record, Delta confirmed Tuesday that it will cease daily flights to and from Atlanta effective Nov. 30.

Delta began offering three direct jet flights a day to Atlanta seven months ago. Rumors began to surface about the Hickory service's future after Delta filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection Sept. 14. The beleaguered airline announced plans to cut 9,000 jobs as one of the methods of trimming \$3 billion in costs. The company owes about \$20 billion.

The company issued only a brief statement according to a report by the Daily Journal's Andrew Mackie.

"The customer demand between Hickory and Atlanta did not meet expectations for that market," Delta spokeswoman Benet Wilson said in the report. "When the demand is not there, we have to move our resources where they are better utilized."

A Delta executive told Hickory officials in August that the city needed to help bump up the number of passengers on its flights.

In his Daily Record report, Mackie said passenger rates hovered around 40 percent this summer. Recently, the passenger had risen to around 60 percent, giving some reason for optimism.

"As the numbers were coming up, we felt that would bode well for us," Hickory city manager Mick Berry told the Daily Record on Tuesday. "We knew it was a fragmented market and it would take time for people to change their habits. We thought there were positive trends, but obviously, it wasn't to the point that Delta wanted."

Hickory spent \$250,000 on its initial marketing effort — \$30,000 coming from federal grants.

Watauga County officials echoed Hickory's disappointment with the announcement.

"It's a loss for the region," Boone Area Chamber of Commerce president Dan Meyer said Wednesday, adding he had taped part of a television presentation in Hickory last week with other regional officials touting the importance of the Delta service.

"The effect locally is two-fold," he said, adding the High Country now loses the "ease with which tourist and visitors could get in and out as well as convenience for seasonal residents.

"It does effect business here — especially entrepreneurs who might work out of their homes," he said.

"I'm afraid it could be a long before another airline comes in here," he added.

"This was our best chance."

Previously, the Hickory airport offered a shuttle by propeller plane to the Charlotte-Douglas airport, but U.S. Airways dropped the service in 2002, leaving Hickory without a major air carrier. Delta came in offering jet service this year with 40-passenger jets.

In September, Hickory mayor Rudy Wright and the airport's Air Service Development director Duncan Cavanaugh joined Boone Mayor Velma Burnley in a promotional tour.

Wright said in September he hoped the simultaneous rise in gas prices would have enticed more people to hop on board.

On Tuesday, he said Hickory had done all that could be reasonably expected.

"We changed everything we could to try to make it work," he told the Daily Record. "Then it fell on Delta to sell the tickets."

During the media tour in September, Burnley pointed out the importance of the service to High Country travelers and residents. The jet service is not only beneficial to Hickory and the regional airport but important to the High Country as well, Burnley said. She believes population in a 50-mile radius of the airport could support expanded service.

At the time, Cavanaugh said there were no official surveys or statistics to reflect who is using the jet service, but said informal observation of the airport's parking lot reveals a host of Florida license plates. He said this was important to the High Country because it reflects tourists and seasonal residents. Delta offers service to four major Florida cities from Atlanta.

Burnley earlier recalled Boone's own search for a potential airport in the 1990s, and said Boone didn't have the numbers to support such an enterprise. She pointed out

many people who live near major hubs still have to drive 50 miles to get to the airport, so Hickory would not be inconvenient.

Delta's Hickory withdrawal could also be a part of the airline's recently announced plan to focus more on international flights.

In a report with Forbes.com, the airline announced a new goal to gain 35 percent of its revenue from international flights by 2007 — up from its current rate 20 percent.

Most of Delta's competitors earn about between 25 and 40 percent of their revenues from international routes.



By Jason Reagan  
Editor  
Watauga Democrat

Four Banner Elk volunteer firefighters died and two swam to safety after their small boat overturned more than a mile from the North Carolina coast, the Coast Guard said Thursday.

Coast Guard spokesman Mark Adams said the boaters got into trouble off Lockwood Folly Inlet near Shallotte on Wednesday and their 18-foot boat capsized, leaving them adrift at nightfall. The boaters had tied themselves to the craft, but about 10 p.m. tried to swim about 1 1/2 miles to Holden Beach as they drifted in the ocean.

Four of the men didn't make it to shore and the two who did were hospitalized. Three of the four victims were wearing life jackets when their bodies were found.

Two survivors, Paul Poore and Sean Knight, made it to Holden Beach.

The dead were identified as Kevin Bell, 38; Nathan "Griff" Lyerly, 22; Michael Shope, 21, and Archibald "Arch" McFadyen, 20, all from Banner Elk.

Lyerly, Shope and McFadyen attended Lees-McRae College.

Lyerly, a senior from Mooresville, Michael Shope, a junior from Raleigh, and Archibald "Arch" McFadyen, a sophomore from Raleigh, were all volunteer firefighters. Shope was a member of the Lees-McRae men's soccer team.

Bell was the assistant fire chief in Banner Elk, where his father, Mickey Bell, is chief.

The men were on vacation, the college students celebrating spring break.

According to Brunswick Beacon staff writer Carol Trapani, the men left a house at Ocean Isle Beach at approximately 12:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Ocean Isle Beach Police Chief Curt Pritchard said the firefighters boarded a 21-foot catamaran, which capsized at approximately at 2:30 p.m.

"Pritchard said the men put on lifejackets and tried to tie their shoe strings together to avoid being separated. Pritchard said the men failed to complete a mayday call," Trapani wrote.

"When the Coast Guard recovered their bodies this morning, three had lifejackets on and one did not," Pritchard said.

The survivors were found when the Holden Beach Police Department received calls about two suspect prowlers Wednesday at approximately 10 p.m.

"When officers responded there were two men in front of the house, wet and holding on to life jackets, at 338 Ocean Boulevard West," Chief Wally Layne told the Beacon.

The survivors, believed the catamaran had gone four to eight miles offshore when it capsized, Layne said.

"All the area fire departments, water, rescue and the Coast Guard were contacted," Layne said.

"We searched the strand at Oak Island, Holden Beach and Ocean Isle Beach and the Coast Guard had their boats and two aircraft out through the night," Layne said.

"At 8 a.m., the Coast Guard advised us they had recovered four bodies."

Officials said they weren't sure why the boat overturned.

The National Weather Service issued a small craft advisory for the area, warning of winds to 10 knots and waves of 1 to 2 feet. Water temperatures were 58 degrees.

The bodies were recovered after the Coast Guard searched with planes, helicopters and boats. A Marine Corps helicopter also searched.

Coast Guard crews planned to flip the boat over and bring it to shore.

Adams said boaters should stay with their vessel if it overturns.

"The biggest point here is to stay with the vessel as long as possible, because we found the boat before we found the persons,"

he said. "It's much easier to see six people on a white-hulled vessel than in the open ocean."

### Local Reaction

A sense of deep shock, almost unreality, pervaded the Banner Elk fire station on Thursday afternoon. Firefighters from Linville, Newland, Beech Mountain, Foscoe and surrounding areas as well as local rescue workers and paramedics stopped by to express sorrow, hug each other and show support for their comrades.

"We're all like brothers here," Avery County rescue worker Justan Mouts said through tears.

Several of the men's colleagues knelt before a memorial displayed in front of the station — a fire engine festooned with black drapes, flowers and four firefighter helmets. Some left cards and flowers. Others just stared at the grim reminder of a unbelievable disaster.

"This is the worst tragedy we've ever had," Banner Elk VFD Captain Fred Shrader said.

Calamity is new to the department. No one at the 35-member department could recall a similar tragedy in their 41-year history and the department has never suffered a loss in the line of duty.

Amid all the grief, Shrader kept alert for more news from Brunswick County. A contingent of firefighters planned to leave for Ocean Isle Beach to pick up Poore and Knight as well as take care of vehicles and personal belongings.

Firefighters began to hear the news Thursday morning. "It spread like wildfire," Shrader said. "It's a great loss to this department." Bell, a full-time Avery County paramedic, planned to become a full-time firefighter and hoped to eventually work for the Charlotte department as did Lyerly.

"Kevin took training very seriously," Beech Mountain volunteer firefighter Captain John Hoffman said. "He was always helping, always there with the greenest guy."

"It's a bigger loss to Avery County," he added.

McFayden, Shope and Lyerly served the department between a few months and three years.

Even amid such great loss, business has to go on at fire department but the Linville and Beech Mountain departments have agreed to help cover calls for now.

“We’re playing everything by ear,” Shrader said. “I’m at a loss for words.”

Community support showed up in several prominent ways from sympathetic calls and e-mails to mountains of food delivered by local restaurants and people.

“This community has been great,” firefighter Allen Bradford said. At Lees-McRae, students who knew the three college students are still in a state of disbelief.

“It just doesn’t seem real,” senior Jaime Allen said.

“We’re all very close,” she added as she comforted her fellow students gathered at the station.

“Everybody knew them. Everybody liked them.”

“Everyone at the college is deeply saddened by this tragic loss,” Lees-McRae College President David W. Bushman said.

“These young men were not just students at Lees-McRae, they were active members of the local community. They epitomized the highest ideals of the college, living a life of engagement and displaying a commitment to be in service to others. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and friends during this difficult time.”

The college will hold a prayer service on Monday, March 20 at 7 p.m. in Evans Auditorium in the Cannon Student Center.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

# Safety on Trial

*Officials seek new ways to prevent disorder in local courts*

*By Jason Reagan*

*High Country Press (2010)*

A lack of modern security at the Watauga County Courthouse is causing some insecurity among local judges, attorneys and employees.

Buried in the campaign rhetoric of the November election under mounds of debt debate, the need for greater security in the courtroom was raised in several local forums and is now raising some eyebrows.

“There really is no courtroom security except for the bailiffs,” Clerk of Court-elect Diane Deal said, referring to the local sheriff’s officers who are stationed in the courtroom or the special officer who patrols the courthouse halls.

“And we don’t want to wait until an incident happens. We want to have something in place.”

While the courthouse in Boone does contain limited security measures — cameras, secured offices, and the special deputies — none of the three courtrooms contain x-ray devices, or installed metal detectors and all four public entrances to the courthouse are unsecured.

Around the High Country, the Ashe County courthouse offers one secured entrance to the public equipped with a metal detector. Avery County courtrooms each have metal detectors.

“The first thing that needs to happen is that we limit the entrances to the county courthouse,” county commissioner-elect Nathan Miller said. During a recent political forum, Miller, a Boone-based attorney, laid down courtroom safety as one of his key campaign planks.

“It’s a liability to the county and it’s really about the safety of our citizens,” he said, pointing to a recent case in which a plaintiff successfully sued the Orange County, N.C. government for an undisclosed amount after being injured in a courtroom incident. Courtroom security falls under the jurisdiction of the Watauga County Sheriff’s Office but any costs involved in improvements would have to pass through the county board of commissioners.

Currently, the sheriff’s office deploys a bailiff for each courtroom as well as a roving officer who patrols the rest of the courthouse. During more turbulent criminal trials, the WCSO may also deploy more deputies and officers often use handheld metal detectors.

“The last time we looked at it, it was a question of economics,” county manager Rocky Nelson said.

Nelson said grants had been submitted for money to improve security but no funds were forthcoming.

He added, District 24 Superior Court Judge Phil Ginn has called for a meeting to include several elected officials, judges, courthouse staff and sheriff’s officers to discuss a plan of action to improve security.

Limiting access to the courthouse may be more difficult than it seems, Nelson said, because the entrances are paired on two levels and there could be problems with handicap access.

Miller said he preferred limiting public access to the King Street entrance on the bottom floor and suggested the roving deputy could oversee a metal detector there.

County officials and Sheriff Len Hagaman had previously discussed limiting access to one entrance per level equipped with metal detectors and sheriff’s officers. Adding that much equipment and more personnel could cost between \$250,000-\$300,000. Nelson said the issue would be discussed at an upcoming commissioners’ retreat. Hagaman was out of town this week and could not be reached for comment.

The issue of safety in the courtroom has especially drawn the attention of the judges of the 24<sup>th</sup> District, which encompasses Watauga, Avery, Madison, Mitchell and Yancey counties.

Several judges have said that, among all the counties in the 24th, Watauga’s courtroom security measures cause them the most worry.

“I am responsible for the safety of the staff and the safety of all the persons who are there,” District Judge Greg Horne said. “It does concern me that we have security limited,” he added, especially when certain criminal cases are tried.

“Tensions tend to run high anyway just over the nature of the proceedings,” he said. State law authorizes judges to order searches in open court if deemed necessary and Horne said he had done so in the past.

“We have had issues with folks bringing in items,” he added. “Like everything, it is a manpower issue.”

According to Miller, Mecklenburg County offered Watauga County two older metal detectors and an x-ray scanner in 2007 but a lack of manpower prevented the county from taking them but the offer may still be open if money can be found to pay for more personnel.

“Something must be done,” he said.

# The Beat Goes On

*Booksellers celebrate 50 years of “On the Road”*

*By Jason Reagan*

*Editor*

*Mountain Times*

It's been 50 years since Beat author Jack Kerouac chronicled his semi-autobiographical, semi-fictional account of life “On the Road.”

Nearly 40 years after his death, Kerouac's rambling but oddly coherent epic of continental crisscrossing continues to inspire young readers to pack a rucksack and see America — an America that many feel has faded away with the post-modern white noise of suburbia and super-highways.

“[On the Road] expressed a pattern as old as the nation, probably older, maybe first set out by [poet Walt] Whitman,” Leon Lewis, Appalachian State University English professor, said.

“I'm thinking of the open road calling to all of us, beginning on the Atlantic coast when the first folks from Europe landed and began the trek west.”

Beat It

Locally, several booksellers have found unique treks upon which to celebrate the golden anniversary of “On the Road.”

Boone's Black Bear Books will feature its first poetry slam on Friday, Sept. 21 in recognition of Kerouac's work as well as the spirit of the Beat generation encapsulated in spontaneous poetry reading. All Beat literature will be discounted — this year is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of poet Allen Ginsberg's seminal work “Howl.”

“It's pretty much an open mic night except we have no actual mic,” said Erin Thompson of Black Bear Books. “So anyone is welcome — musicians, poets, actors, jugglers. We don't discriminate,” she said.



“We try to celebrate every aspect of literature and it’s hard to do that without recognizing the contribution that Jack Kerouac made.”

Along with a group of other post-World War II writers and poets, including Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, William S. Burroughs, Neal Cassady and Phillip Whalen, Kerouac is credited with launching a counter-culture movement in the 1950s which seeped into the much broader Vietnam War-era movement in the 1960s and 70s — a movement which would inspire post-modern philosophy and a new kind of music in rock and folk.

### The Kerouac Effect

ASU English professor Joseph Bathanti sees “On the Road” as a generations cry for a road less traveled and an external and internal search.

“On the Road” ... takes seriously in its way Horace Greeley’s injunction, ‘Go west, young man, go west,’” he said.

“It galvanized, in my mind, a generation’s desire once that generation caught up with the book – to strike out in search of America, but more specifically the search for self.”

Adds Lewis: “More of us than anyone imagined found that someone was writing about things that mattered to us in a manner that we could respond to.”

Despite Kerouac’s success, Bathanti sees a somewhat negative influence often emerge among young writers inspired by the book.

In 1951, Kerouac feverishly penned “On the Road” within three weeks from a Manhattan apartment. Without editing or multiple drafts, he typed out a long single-spaced paragraph on eight sheets of paper then taped it together to make a 120-foot scroll.

“That’s not how at all how good writing gets accomplished,” Bathanti said, adding he sees many Kerouac wannabes try to imitate the Beats in his creative writing classes.

“Kerouac, fueled by Benzedrine, cobbled his novel together in a few days of blazing insane fervor – the white heat of the moment,” he said.

“So Kerouac, not to take anything away from him, poses a dangerous model for young writers. Not just his terribly self-destructive life-style, but the fact

that his method did not admit the kind of meticulous revision, draft after draft, so crucial to producing a good piece of writing.”

### Speaking of the Scroll

A replica of Kerouac’s original scroll, recently released by Penguin Press, is currently on sale at the Scholar’s Bookshop at ASU’s University Bookstore along with several discounted books by and about Kerouac and the other Beats.

“I think it’s the kind of book that sticks with you,” Bill Pillow, manager of the Scholar’s Bookshop, said. “When I read it. I was 18 and I was getting turned on to all the beat writers,” he said, adding “On the Road,” still shows brisk sales among the bookstores 18-23-year-old customer base.

Whether its appeal still sparks a flame of non-conformity in the hearts of aging Baby Boomers or sends another generation of backpackers traipsing across the changing face of America, dog-eared copies of “On the Road” will likely be a staple in dimly lit coffeehouses for another 50 years, a sentiment Lewis believes stems from its universal appeal among the young and young at heart.

“The road-trip, as we know it today, owes everything to Kerouac and OTR – the notion that if one simply gets in his automobile and strikes out, often without a destination, adventure, even enlightenment, awaits.”

*Note: A touching story of a blind college student made homeless by the floods of Hurricane Floyd in September, 1999. Despite being confined to a federally-subsidized travel trailer, Quiloe Cook faced Thanksgiving like every challenge in his life: with a smile and determination. This story appeared on page one as the annual Thanksgiving feature.*

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## FEMA trailer resident faces Thanksgiving with optimism

By JASON REAGAN

News-Argus Copy Editor

Don't tell Quilloe Cook about adversity.

Within the last 10 years, he has lost his eyesight, his home to Hurricane Floyd's flooding and now faces the holidays living in an 8-by-28 foot temporary trailer, with his service dog, George, by his side.

But don't tell him to feel sorry for himself. "It could have been worse," he said defiantly.

Cook's story mirrors that of hundreds of Wayne County flood victims. By now, many of those left homeless have either rebuilt or moved elsewhere.

A handful, like Quilloe (pronounced Key-low), live temporarily in travel trailers provided by FEMA either on their old home sites or at the site on Graves Drive known to locals as the "FEMA Park."

"I'm glad I'm still alive," Cook said as he reflected on his renewed Thanksgiving perspective. "I can get up and start over."

He knows about starting over. Born in 1969, Cook was diagnosed almost immediately with diabetes --- one of the youngest in the nation at the time.

Despite early onset of the disease, he describes his childhood as normal. Except for the special diet, diabetes never bothered him.

At the age of 21, Cook ran a stop sign he said was obscured by a rose bush. His car was struck by a drunken driver. The trauma of the wreck aggravated Cook's diabetes and, by the time he turned 24, he

completely lost his eyesight.

Despite the tragedy, Cook pressed on, enrolling at Wayne Community College two years ago as a history major. He settled into the normal routine of any busy college student only to be interrupted by Hurricane Floyd.

As the torrential rains fell Sept. 16, Cook was not too worried. He lived in an older, two-story house on Miller Avenue which has been in his family for six generations. He had been told the house was not located in a flood-prone area.

"They were wrong," he said.

As the first floor of the house began to fill with water, Cook, his mother and step-father took refuge in the second-story apartment occupied by his aunt and nephew.

"My mom told me later the water got about this high," Cook said, touching his hip.

After staying with family for several days, Cook applied for temporary housing at the suggestion of FEMA officials and moved in at Graves Drive around mid-October. "You take it in stride," he said of the move, "We moved so much when I was younger, I got used to it."

He admits, however, it's hard to get used to life without his "stuff." Like so many flood victims, Cook lost virtually all of his personal possessions. He misses the nostalgia: things like a baseball glove from his childhood and several pieces of family antique furniture.

A small, black computer disk may have been his saddest loss. It contained a copy of "Areiah's Song," a family tale told through the generations. He had finally transcribed this story of an Islamic princess on hard copy only to have it snatched away by Floyd's watery hand. With a faint smile, Cook taps his forehead: "It's still up here."

Cook said instead of feeling cramped in the small travel trailer, the unit's size made it easy to find his way around. "I'm still finding new things," he said.

His companion, George, a mix of Labrador and golden retriever, mostly

occupies a corner of the trailer where he maintains an alert, tail-wagging vigil. Cook worries about the flood's effect on George. "I can't prove it; but I think (George) suffered a nervous breakdown," he said with a subtle grin. "After moving around so much, I've noticed he makes more mistakes lately." George's distraction may also be because he lost two of his favorite chew toys in the floodwaters.

One thing Floyd could not steal was Cook's educational goals. After one more semester at Wayne Community College, he plans to attend N.C. Central or Eastern Carolina. Cook scoffs at the notion that he is an optimist. "I'm a realist ... I've learned to deal with situations as they come," he said.

Ultimately, he wants to teach history or tell folktales as a career. He remembers many of the stories told by his grandparents. He wants to help give shape to students' understanding of history by retelling the colorful tales of generations past.

His family will still celebrate Thanksgiving, probably at his mother's house. Because of flood damage to his mother's kitchen, the meal will be less extravagant, and just "not the same." But the family looks forward to the meal simply because it brings them together.

"I'll be happy," Cook said. "All my family's still here."

To his fellow flood victims, he gives this Thanksgiving advice: "Just be happy God was watching over you ... be glad you're still here."

# Local Startup Prepares Crisis Response

*By JASON REAGAN  
Managing Editor  
Monroe County Advocate  
Jan. 20, 2002*

Imagine the unimaginable.

What if a terrorist group invaded Sequoyah High School threatening to release biological weapons?

Picture a local disaster as massive as the Sweetwater chemical spill of 1996.  
What about a nuclear accident at Watts Bar?

Now picture local emergency officials, linked by high-speed Internet lines, coordinating evacuations, hostage situations or complex disasters using on a laptop computer and a piece of software designed in part by a Sweetwater man to deal with these scenarios. In Michael Hamilton's world, technology may soon play the role of lifesaver should man-made or natural calamity visit Monroe County.

Hamilton's company, Visual Consulting, develops software out of his Hidden Brook home.

Even as terrorists were slamming planes into the heart of the nation, Hamilton and programmers with the Oak Ridge National Laboratory were developing the Responder Assets Management System (RAMS) to help emergency workers deal more effectively with virtually any crisis.

In fact, security officials at the Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City are using the same system Hamilton helped develop to counter any possible terrorist threat. Using high-tech video cameras coupled with a massive database of maps and blueprints, the software can help police or hostage rescue teams map out a strategy by walking a viewer through an endangered facility using actual pop-up video screens.

Marketed by the Oak Ridge firm Public Safety Systems LLC, RAMS, or RAMSAFE, is the culmination of a partnership between the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the Y-12 weapons plant and contractors like Hamilton's Visual Consulting — a partnership that ultimately brought Hamilton to his new home in Sweetwater.

A former resident of San Jose, Calif., Hamilton had achieved the Silicon Valley dream — his own software company, financial security and career success.

In 1998, Hamilton married Sweetwater native Kathy Meyer and decided to make a lifestyle change.

“My wife brought me out here to look,” Hamilton said.

Struck by the area’s natural beauty and access to his favorite hobby, Hamilton was ready to give East Tennessee a chance.

“Being a bass fisherman I was quick to agree to move to Tennessee,” he said.

The couple decided to try a simpler lifestyle in her hometown. Hamilton vowed to semi-retire to enjoy the fruits of his technological labor.

“I was going to do nothing but compete in bass fishing tournaments,” he said. After settling in Sweetwater however, Hamilton soon found himself lured back into the world of software development and was soon hooking more contracts than bass. Inevitably, Hamilton met several programmers working in the Oak Ridge technology corridor. He moved Visual Consulting officially from the West Coast to the Sweetwater Valley.

“The next thing I know I was involved in several projects,” he said with a grin. Today, in addition to his work with the RAMS system, Hamilton has contracts in Rhode Island, California and Italy, in addition to his extensive work in Oak Ridge. Initially, Hamilton worked with Sobran in a programming contract with former ORNL head contractor Lockheed-Martin.

“Then I met two guys and found out about RAMS,” he said.

Soon after agreeing to work on the security software package, Hamilton was given permission to assert intellectual property rights to parts of the software he developed — an important and often profitable move for a programmer resulting in possibilities of future royalties.

The agreement also allowed Hamilton to use some of the programming in other marketable applications.

Developing a software package that will allow police to get a complete picture of a secured facility soon became Hamilton’s chief task.

He helped develop a module with RAMS called Situation Master. Using 360-degree video cameras from Oak Ridge’s IPIX, the tool gives law enforcement officials the ability to virtually walk through a building and actually see hallways, rooms or other locations.

Situation Master can also link together road maps, floor plans and satellite photos to allow emergency crews to better evaluate almost any crisis situation.

The system has already been tested by 80 FBI agents and Hamilton said they gave the software high marks.

Working with the University of Tennessee, Hamilton also helped developed the Response Options Generator, a tool that helps emergency workers quickly deal with biochemical disasters.

For example, if a train again derailed in Sweetwater, spilling a dangerous chemical in a repeat of the 1996 wreck, emergency workers could input the name of the chemical into a computer and instantly be given step-by-step instructions to best handle the situation, including immediate precautions, evacuation information, symptoms of chemical exposure, how many workers to use and who to call on the state and federal levels.

Although demand had been brisk for public safety software, Hamilton said the events of Sept. 11 have changed the focus of the software market.

“Before 9/11 everyone was almost exclusively focused on Situation Master. Because they were looking at the system in the context of Columbine (school shootings) and other school shootings,” he said.

“That’s really what Situation Master was designed for... response to hostage situation.” Since Sept. 11, much of the focus — especially after several anthrax scares — have been focused on the Response Option Generator for its access to biological and chemical data. As RAMS continues to gain media attention during the Winter Olympics, Hamilton probably ranks as one of the most valuable behind-the-scenes programmers for the software package, having worked on it the longest and having designed most of its components.

Visual Consulting currently receives a royalty of one percent on RAMS (now marketed as RAMSAFE) through an agreement with BWXT-Y12 after receiving permission to assert copyright from the Department of Energy.

Despite a nationwide downturn in the technology sector, Hamilton sees a bright future for local technology firms.

Also, Visual Consulting has signed agreements with BWXT-Y12 that will give VCI an ownership position in Public Safety Systems, LLC in March.

Hamilton even envisions a day when Sweetwater and Monroe County may make a name for itself in the tech world.

“I’d like to go up to the Oak Ridge (technology) corridor. Get several multi-million contracts in place; come back down here; build a little bricks-and-glass building and hire some local people. I want to stay here. I don’t want to commute to Oak Ridge for the rest of my life,” he said.

Visual Consulting recently leased a small building as a data center in Sweetwater at 917 Monroe Street.



“We have been renovating and will be moving some equipment into it in March,” Hamilton said.

“I think it would be neat to bring a little of the Silicon Valley to the Sweetwater Valley.” Jason Reagan can be reached at 337-7101 or by e-mail at [mcanews1@xtn.net](mailto:mcanews1@xtn.net).

# Wave of Nostalgia Breaks on Theater's Closing

By Jason Reagan  
Mountain Times

The closing of the Appalachian Twin Theatre in downtown Boone last week unleashed a local wave of nostalgia and wistful hopes about the future of the historic landmark.

In addition to the thousands of childhood memories made in front of the movie screen, most local folks also remember the theater's next-door neighbor, the Appalachian Soda Shop, as a place where they could get a square meal for under a buck as well as a sense of community — on the house.

The Redmond family opened the shop in 1950 in the building now occupied by The Tin Can on King Street.

Among the cozy booths and clean lunch counter, Nell Redmond watched the fortunes of the shop and the theater rise and fall over the past 57 years and at 79 can still serve up a fresh batch of hometown memories every bit as tantalizing as a hot order of burgers and fries.

Nell was married to the shop's owner, Tom, in 1958 and the couple served up thousands of meals from the narrow shop until 1991 when Tom's battle with Alzheimer's forced the couple into retirement. Tom died in 1995. Their story begins on a tobacco and chicken farm near Mountain City, Tenn.

Fryer-crossed lovers

It's no joke that, if a chicken hadn't tried to cross the road, the Redmonds might never have gotten to the other side of matrimony.

While on furlough from the Army in 1945, Tom accidentally steered his car into one of Nell's father's fryers near the family farm in Neva, Tenn. When the dust and feathers settled, the sight of such a handsome soldier struck Nell's heart, as well.

"Lord, I thought that was the best looking man I ever looked at in my life," she said in a recent interview.

Later, a job cleaning for Tom's sister brought Nell to Boone. When the soda shop came up for sale, however, Nell found herself working with her "best looking man."

When Tom, an Iredell County native, heard about the shop, he decided to take the plunge into small business ownership after looking around at cross-country options.

"He drove to California to try and find whatever he would like to do," Nell said. "He didn't find anything so he came back to Boone."

The shop opened in 1950 and Tom recognized Nell's potential as a key employee. Earlier, she had served food at a restaurant known as the Bus Station in Mountain City and now she had the chance to help start a new hometown tradition and work with the man who would soon become her husband eight years later.

#### Enter the Soda Shop

Without much in the way of fanfare, the shop soon turned successful.

"We cleaned it up and opened it up and started serving sandwiches," Nell said.

In addition to serving as a before-and-after dining choice for theater buffs, the shop became part of a weekly social tradition for people living outside Boone. Every Saturday, farmers and rural workers came from the hills for a day on the town.

"We had people from the country. That's who Tom catered to," Nell said. "That's why he wouldn't go up on his prices. Because he said they were hard-working people."

"They could come in our place, have a Coca-Cola for 5 cents and a hot dog for 15 and a hamburger for 25. Then they could go to the movies and have a ticket for 10 cents and a box of popcorn for 10 cents."

When the shop first opened, Nell worked the grill as cook while Tom waited on tables. Tom became known for his trademark paper cook's hat bearing the logo of Waldensian Bakeries. As the years went by, the couple switched jobs and the shop grew in popularity, becoming known for its low prices, locally purchased beef, friendly waitress and simple menu — burgers, hot dogs, BLTs and chili. In fact, the shop's famous chili recipe passed away when Tom did in 1995 — he never told anyone.

"Nobody knows it," Nell's son, Tom Jr., said. "There's something about that chili that was totally different from anything else."

Since Tom's griddle creations were known as bargains, running a tab was forbidden. He always told would-be burger debtors, "I don't do credit." But he would never let a customer in need go without a meal. Nell recalls his policy: "'If you're hungry, I'll give you a sandwich,' That was it."

When the shop changed owners in 1991, hamburgers cost 85 cents ("all the way"), cheeseburgers, 95 cents; and hot dogs, 75.

#### Neighborly Friends

Due to the hectic pace of running a downtown eatery, Nell said she didn't get a chance to see any full-length movies at the Appalachian but she did sneak away for a short film.

"Every Saturday morning, if we weren't too busy, I would go and see the Little Rascals," she said.

What Nell may have lacked in movie-screen time, she more than made up for in the friendships she forged with the App's staff. Former theater manager J Beach and employees (later managers) C.J. and Polly Hayes visited the Soda Shop nearly every day for coffee. The running catchphrase for about 40 years among the group was "Well, who pays this morning?" Nell said the two businesses formed a bond akin to that of brothers and sisters. She still sees the Hayes on a regular basis.

### The Things You See in a Soda Shop

The everyday operation of a small soda shop can cook up a feast of tales over the years. Years before Wendy's made "Where's the Beef?" famous, Nell recalls the time regular customer J.B. Greene returned a burger to her without any meat. In her rush to prepare a mess of burgers for the hungry lunch crowd, she had overlooked on patty and said she never made the same mistake again.

Nell still laughs when she thinks about the false teeth.

One day, a man walked up to her and asked, "Did you find my teeth?" The customer had taken out his false teeth at some point in his meal and wrapped them in a napkin. After he left, presumably toothless, Nell cleaned off the table and promptly threw away the choppers.

"We had to go through the garbage to find them and I laughed until I couldn't laugh anymore," she said.

### From Cradle to Griddle

Now a Boone police officer, Tom Jr. (to avoid confusion, he will be called by his mother's nickname of "Tommy" from here) had a high public profile from the day he was born, thanks to the soda shop's customers.

"I had a bassinet down there and I put him in it and set it in the display window," Nell said.

"All these people would come up to the window and peck on it and play with him."

Tommy grew up with downtown Boone as his playground. While mom and dad ran the shop, he served a few meals to help out, played in the front yard of the Daniel Boone Hotel across the street, and — his favorite memory — roamed every square inch of the next-door Appalachian Twin.

"Sometimes I would watch a movie. Sometimes I would go up to the projector room — I learned to thread it," he said.

Over time, the theater manager came to see Tommy as a volunteer employee. He helped clean the theater and would perform other odd jobs. "I did it for fun," he said. Between movies, he and his friends would often sneak behind the screen and play on the stage that remained from the days when live shows were part of the theater's regular schedule. "It was pretty dusty and spooky by then," he said.

### Hope for the Future

Last week, when she read about the theater's demise in the Watauga Democrat, Nell said the news saddened and shocked her. She remains optimistic about the future of the landmark, hoping Appalachian State University might step in.

"It would be nice if the college would put their theater over there," she said.

"Whatever it would take to keep the theater aspect going," Tommy added.

Looking back on her 41 years of serving tons of beef, watching teenage romance bloom and wither in the shop's booths and even once witnessing a very drunken man "crawl down King Street" after paying for a hamburger, Nell has no problem choosing her favorite part of the job.

"I loved the people and it was just special. I never had a cross word with anybody."

# Local cocaine dealer reveals hidden world of small-town trade

By JASON REAGAN

Managing Editor

The Monroe County Advocate & Democrat

The following is an interview with “Frank,” the alias of a convicted former cocaine dealer. Frank recently talked with the Advocate & Democrat about his life and downfall as a dealer, how he was arrested, jailed and humiliated by the experience and how he learned to take a new life path of reform. In order to protect Frank’s identity, some details of the interview have been changed.

Frank used to deal cocaine. He never used any, but from his home in a Monroe County town, he literally made hundreds of thousands of dollars and destroyed lives. He eventually lost the money as well as his freedom and some important future opportunities. Frank might say he lost and regained his very soul. His story is one of pain, loss but of ultimate personal redemption. It contains a lesson in the dangers inherent in the fake thrills and deals of the Monroe County drug trade. But at the bottom line, this is simply Frank’s story about how a summer fling turned to disaster.

Advocate & Democrat: “You were born and raised in this area. Tell me about your childhood.”

Frank: “I had a pretty normal, happy childhood. We struggled. It was hard to make ends meet at times but we never really went without things we needed. I wasn’t an angry child. I made decent grades. I was respectful to my elders and parents. But, I guess your parents can only teach you so much. My mother raised me to do the right thing.

A&D: “At what point did you become aware that drugs were a part of our community?”

Frank: “I was probably around 13 or 14 years old. I didn’t know it at that time but I found a pill bottle of cocaine in a field while I was playing. I asked my mother what it was. She didn’t know either and she threw it in the trash. Later, when I got into selling drugs, I looked back and said ‘Man, that was cocaine that I found.’”

A&D: “When were you introduced to the drug trade? How did you get mixed up in it.”

Frank: “When I was 19, I got mixed up in it here in (Monroe County). I saw these 18 and 19-year olds driving fancy cars with loud music and girls. They were partying and having a good time. One summer, some of us got mixed up with that. When I started, I just thought I could earn some extra money, like a summer job. I wanted more money than I had. I didn’t really have anything to spend it on I just wanted more.”

A&D: “Were you bothered by the possible consequences of dealing?”

Frank: “You see people go to jail. But it don’t register. You expect one group to go to jail and you say: ‘Those people are just dumb and got caught. But these people (who don’t get caught) are smart.’ People talk. I knew who was (dealing) and involved with it. I just went to (some older men) and said, ‘I’d like to make some extra money.’” That’s basically how I started.

A&D: “What was the dealer’s response when you asked him about it?”

Frank: “They were shocked. They said, ‘You don’t need to get involved in this.’ They tried to discourage me from doing this. I kept on asking them. Their objective was to make money and I had myself convinced that this was what I wanted to do. And, I don’t blame anybody (for the decision). A lot of people like to blame their parents. I don’t blame it on anything. It was a conscious decision. I had been preached not to do it. But, I thought that it can’t be that bad — I’m not using it. I’m only making some money. It’s like walking for awhile. You look back and you walked ten miles further than you intended.”

A&D: “How was the local dealers structured?”

Frank: “They were independent dealers. I never asked too many questions about how they got it. I just knew this guy had it. There really wasn’t a lot of conversation. It’s like going to the store. You go home; you cook your food and eat it. You don’t ask how it got there. I found out more on how to sell from some friends.”

A&D: “Do you recall that first deal you made?”

Frank: “I was by myself. No one else knew about it. I saw a guy in my neighborhood. I knew he was a drug user by who he associated himself. He was out of place and not from my neighborhood. He was riding up and down the street at 3 a.m. I pulled him over and asked what he was looking for. He told me and I told him to meet me down the street.”

A&D: “What were you feeling at the time?”

Frank: “I was nervous. I was scared but at the same time I was anxious and happy inside because I knew I was about to see what it was all about and see how I could make easy money. I was also hoping he wasn’t an undercover cop. It was about midnight. We got out of our cars on a back alley road. We exchanged hands. I sold him two \$20 hits. Just like that. I made \$30 just like that.”

A&D: “That night, when you were at home in bed, what thoughts went through your mind?”

Frank: “I can’t sleep — scared and happy at the same time. I knew I was doing something wrong, that if my parents found out all hell would break loose. I still chose to risk it — to play that game of Russian Roulette. That night, I was restless. I thought: ‘Man, I’m a drug dealer.’ There was a feeling of power.”

A&D: “How long and how much did you deal before you were arrested and convicted? What was your daily routine?”

Frank: It went on for about two years. In that time, I made about a total of \$250,000. After awhile, people thought it was a phase for me. I didn’t intend for it to grow as fast as it did and the amount I was dealing. When I got caught, I was dealing with some heavy hitters.”

A&D: “What did you do with the \$250,000?”

Frank: “Some dealers like to flash their money around. I didn’t. I just stuck it back in a closet mostly.”

A&D: “Did violence or guns ever enter the picture? Did you ever feel threatened?”

Frank: “I never had anybody threaten me. You have different kinds of drug dealers. You have those who look for that kind of stuff. It’s an ego trip. Then you have drug dealers who are really successful. In a sense, they act like any other business. I never crossed anybody. Nobody ever owed me money and I never owed anybody.

A&D: “Talk about the days leading up to your arrest.”

Frank: “I ended up making a deal with an undercover cop. Bam! That was it. I was eventually arrested and convicted of conspiracy to sale cocaine and spent (time) in a prison boot camp.”

A&D: “What were you thinking when the judge pronounced your sentence?”

Frank: “How could I ever get mixed up in this kind of stuff? What was intended to be summer fun turned into a way of life. Once you start doing something and entertain that thought, it’s going to become a part of you.”

A&D: “What kind of personal loss did you experience?”

Frank: “I lost time with my (child). It was devastating to see my mother cry after all the things she tried to tell me. She beat herself up, blaming herself about what went wrong.”

A&D: “After you got out of jail, you changed your life and reformed. How?”

Frank: “I found a job. I’m active in church and married with children now. Before I got sentenced, I rededicated my life to Christ and I just said, ‘Lord, you know my needs.



Take this out of my life.’ Every time the church doors were open I was there. I distanced myself from the (drug) crowd. I didn’t entertain that thought. It was willpower. It wasn’t me.”

A&D: “What insights or lessons did you learn?”

Frank: “I hurt a lot of people along the way. I destroyed lives. I destroyed mothers. I destroyed fathers. I destroyed kids. I destroyed families. I destroyed grandmothers. I look back on that — I wasn’t cold on purpose but just being in that profession makes you cold automatically. I knew people were struggling at home. I knew kids weren’t eating. I knew women were selling themselves and I didn’t care. I was about my money and that was the business I was in. It’s so different from the kind of person I am now.”

A&D: “How can the drug problem be stopped?”

Frank: “It’s one of those things where you can only hope to contain it. You will never be able to totally stop it. It’s like the reproduction of babies. You can’t stop it. You can only slow it down using birth control or contraceptives. Every day when a drug dealer gets killed or locked up, there’s some kid getting started up. The only way (cocaine) will be stopped is if they stop it at the border.”

A&D: If you could speak to every teenager or young adult in Monroe County, what would you tell them about using or selling drugs?”

Frank: If you’re thinking about using or selling drugs, it’s like making a decision to eat or sleep. Every decision has a consequence for it. It’s either good or bad. You know (drugs) are bad. You know it’s wrong. You know it’s against God’s will. So if you choose to do it, expect the worst. I was one of those who thought, ‘It can’t happen to me. I’m going to do it. I’m going to make \$100,000, get out and no one will ever know.’ Wrong again. Once you entertain that thought, you cannot just stop.”

# Local Banjo Champ on the Rise

By Jason Reagan  
The Mountain Times

A Boone native is hoping to pluck his way to bluegrass stardom.

Former Watauga High School student Cody McGuire recently won third place for his age division at the New England Area Banjo Championship.

Now a senior at Grayson County (Va.) High School, McGuire, 17, wants to follow in the footsteps of his teacher, former national banjo champion Steve Lewis. During the competition, Lewis backed McGuire up on guitar as he hammered out the tunes that pushed him to third place.

In addition to the accolades of his admirers and the judges, McGuire also won a new banjo.

Looking ahead, McGuire is hoping to attend either Appalachian State University or Belmont College in Nashville.

An “A” student, McGuire Cody also finished 6th in the Virginia state wrestling tournament and plays on the Grayson golf and baseball teams.

McGuire said he is currently writing his own music and will soon start another original album.

McGuire began his five-string saga as a 10 year old debuting at the Watauga Education Foundation’s Shooting Stars talent show as a student at Hardin Park Elementary School.

When he's not working on his own music, McGuire fills in for the Key City Boys, a Wilkesboro bluegrass band.

In summers past, McGuire played in Bonaire near Aruba with globe-trotting troubadour Andy Owens and his Bonaire Bluegrass Band.

McGuire's previous CDs, "Blue Ridge Banjo" and "The Old Home Place" (with the Key City Boys) are available at Appalachian Music in Boone, Blue Moon Music in West Jefferson, Barrs's Fiddle Shop in Galax, Va. and Easters Music shop in Mt. Airy.

For more information about McGuire, please call (336) 366-7245 or (276) 773-2773 or by e-mail at [coachmcguire3@hotmail.com](mailto:coachmcguire3@hotmail.com).

**Client: Carolina Mountain Living October, 2010**

*The Arts by Pat and Ed Pilkington*

## **A View from the Stage and Canvas**

**By Jason Reagan**

For Pat and Ed Pilkington, life is art and art is life, whether it's played out on a dramatic stage, painted onto a canvas or sung out in a jubilant choir.

The Boone couple has dedicated their lives to their respective muses and that has included a few rare works of art known as their three children.

Ed's first love has always been the theatre — both as a stage actor, director, writer and college instructor.

“As long as I'm acting I'm happy,” he said.

Although Pat first entered the art world as a musical and later choral singer, her love of painting has taken her to the heights of artistic happiness and has also provided solace during some of her life's stormiest seasons.

While Ed is known in the area for serving as Appalachian State's theatre director and instructor for 30 years, Pat worked for 25 years with Boone-based relief group Samaritan's Purse after starting as a volunteer.

However Pat and Ed may have ended up in the High Country, their journey started at the extreme end of the state as they began to share a life and dream.

*From the Lost Colony to the Big Apple*

Everything was new for Pat when she began her first outdoor summer theatre work at the Lost Colony historical drama on Roanoke Island on North Carolina's Outer Banks.

She had learned to sing for the stage, act and perform in choral in Goldsboro while still in high school and later studied voice at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro.

She decided to try out for the Lost Colony between her sophomore and junior years.

Even though both had attended Goldsboro High, the couple didn't meet until that fateful summer. By then, Pat had already cut a folk album and was playing the part of Joyce Arthur opposite Ed's Father Martin.

After graduating five years earlier from Ithaca College in New York, Ed became a regular at the Lost Colony where he met Pat. "We dated six weeks and ran off to New York City together," Pat said with a grin.

When asked why, Pat added "We just thought we would get married."

"And get famous," Ed finished.

"We weren't thinking about the future," she said.

After doing some singing and acting, the couple found out Pat was pregnant so they decided to move to the more family-friendly New Jersey and commute to Manhattan.

"We were poor and we didn't know it and didn't care because we were in love," Ed said.

Pat worked for a sweater firm in the Empire State Building.

After Pat quit to have their first child Jennifer, Ed went to work for Shell Oil. But it wasn't long before their New York aspirations turned to Carolina dreaming.

***Carolina On My Mind***

Despite the daytime domesticity of the New Jersey suburban life, Ed continued to act and was eventually called back to North Carolina when Elon College hired him to teach theatre.

Meanwhile, Pat was hired to sing in a Presbyterian choir in Burlington.

Budget woes led to Elon to cut their theatre program, but before Ed could even contemplate unemployment, Appalachian State hired him to head their nascent theatre program. It was 1969 and he almost took a teaching job at Fordham University in New York, where he was offered a position.

“When Appalachian called me, I had already told them at Fordham that I would take the job,” he remembered. However, due to a postal strike, he never received a contract from Fordham.

“It’s interesting how fate moved us here,” he said.

Amid all the transition, the Pilkingtons welcomed the birth of their second child, Brent.

After the Pilkingtons settled in Boone, their presence on the local arts scene became known quickly.

In 1971, Pat took a job singing with outdoor drama Horn in the West and Ed later worked as director and actor for the Horn for 20 years.

It was on the stage of Horn that their third child, Piper, perhaps caught the acting bug, portraying a village child at two years old. She would go on to act in Los Angeles in several TV shows and commercials.

At the time, the High Country region had no arts councils so Ed and Pat met with other local supporters and formed the Blue Ridge Creative Arts Council, which would later spin off into the respective councils in Ashe, Avery and Watauga counties as well as the Blue Ridge Community Theatre.

In 1974, Ed gave up his position as ASU's theatre director because he felt the tug of acting again.

"I'm not an administrator," he said, but did continue to teach for the college.

In 1991, he joined the new Blowing Rock Stage Company where he went on to direct and act in several projects over the next twenty years.

Later, he would collaborate as a writer with author Bob Inman to produce the musical "Crossroads" and the play "Dairy Queen Days."

When the Blowing Rock Stage Company disbanded a few years ago, Ed was devastated but continued to act. He said he is hopeful there will once again be live theatre in Blowing Rock and continues to work in the Triad and Charlotte.

"I'm been blessed to work with former students and others I know," he said.

Later, Ed would help found ASU's wildly successful An Appalachian Summer arts festival and served as its first director.

### ***A Double Tragedy***

In October 1990, Pat's parents, Al and Thelma Bowen, were brutally murdered by an intruder in their Goldsboro home.

Thirteen years later, using then-new DNA technology, police arrested Linwood Forte in the Bowens' murder case. Forte was convicted and currently sits on death row at Central Prison in Raleigh.

A year later Pat was diagnosed with terminal melanoma but said defiantly, "I'm still here."

Twelve years ago she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

While recovering from her various treatments, Pat decided she wanted to be a painter and enrolled in art classes.

Upon finding out, Ed quickly began buying Pat art supplies — an easel here and a canvas there.

“I knew he was going to hold my feet to the fire,” she said.

Her art was placed on hold when, in 2007, Ed was struck and seriously injured by a truck while cycling. She took time off to help him recuperate.

“We went through an incredible experience with God carrying us and allowing us to love each other,” Ed said of the trials that would test any faith.

“I’m so glad God allowed me to live long enough to find out what I’m going to be when I grow up,” she said.

Pat *grew up* to become one of the best-known artists in the region. Her work can be seen at Blowing Rock Frameworks and Gallery.

Today, the Pilkingtons continue to act, direct, sing, paint and just about everything in between.

They also spend time playing with several grandchildren.

Their oldest child, Jennifer Edwards is the mother of three and teaches art at a Christian school in Kernersville.

Their son, Brent followed in his mother’s footsteps and works at Samaritan’s Purse in logistics. He and his wife, Halley, have four children and are expecting a fifth.

Their youngest, Piper Collins is the mother of four and lives in California.

In contemplating their lives as artists, the Pilkingtons are philosophical.

“I’m always been wired to create things,” Pat said, pointing to some knitting she’s been creating.

“I was never driven by the idea of ‘get a job’ and I always enjoyed as a kid,” Ed said. “So, my life has always been creating



something I was not. What's important is to allow people to see their lives through me on stage."

"Both of our lives were changed by God," Pat added.

"That's what keeps us going."

***Jason Reagan is a longtime journalist and editor and freelance writer living in Boone.***

# Glenn Bolick

## *Mountain Renaissance Man*

By Jason Reagan  
The Mountain Times

In terms of the arts and sciences that have fueled human life in the western North Carolina mountains, Glenn Bolick defines a unique version of the Renaissance Man.

Whether it's Appalachian music, wood-fired pottery, storytelling or sawmilling, Bolick continues to preserve a unique brand of mountain living that echoes throughout a deep hollow that has been in his family for more than 100 years.

To round out his many interests, Bolick at 68 also pitches a mean softball in the Watauga County Recreation League and can still smack a few liners into right field.

### Down in the Valley

From his family home in the Bailey's Camp community, just south of Blowing Rock, Bolick — along with his wife, Lula — operates both a modern and rustic pottery ensconced in a collection of old-time buildings he has raised over the years to give the operation, Bolick and Traditions Pottery, a homey look. Every building is decorated with old farming implements and metal signs as well as a cornucopia of handmade bowls, mugs, pitchers and jugs. Festive orange, ceramic pumpkins leer at visitors to the pottery showroom — a one-story walk-up resembling an old country store.

Bolick's love of tradition even extends to the bathroom — he collects traditional outhouses. Three non-operational mountain latrines are lined up near the main buildings greeting the hundreds of visitors who visit Glenn and Lula's business every year.

In the middle of this “town” of mountain nostalgia, Bolick stands on a rock and dirt floor inside his workshop deftly cutting decorative holes into several unglazed pieces.

Bolick provides the wider community with a living history lesson with every story he tells and every piece of wood he cuts at his sawmill.

### Beginnings

Born in 1939, Bolick grew up in the midst of a 250-acre tract owned by his great-grandfather, Marcus Bolick.

Although the family land was eventually subdivided and sold among relatives, Glenn eventually bought back the family home and now lives in the 114-year-old main house. He would later add the workshops and public store.

Bolick remembers a childhood of labor and simple fun.

“We used to dig roots and herbs to buy our school clothes,” he said. The family would sell their finds Wilcox Pharmaceutical which now houses Wilcox Emporium in Boone.

Although he is now known for pottery, Bolick grew up in a sawmill family — that’s where he found his first work away from home.

“When I got big enough to work at the sawmill, that’s what I did,” he said — big enough meaning 10 years old. Traveling to Burke County where his father worked, Bolick “toted” water for his sister, who made a living cooking three meals a day for the sawmill workers.

He would later return to sawmilling as a hobby after a successful start to the pottery business.

In 1962, while working on a rock-crushing crew near Asheboro, N.C., Bolick first met Lula Owens at Tommy’s Drive-in and Grill.

“I met and married her in the same year. I only dated her about three months. I had traveled around for while and I’d already filled my wild oats. His marriage also helped cement his life’s work.

### Potter’s Tale

“Her daddy was one of the famous potters down in that area,” he said, referring to M.L. Owens of Seagrove — then known as the pottery capital of the Southeast and home to about 200 potters.

The couple decided to join in the family business. “I thought I try it awhile and see how I liked it,” Bolick said, “I was so fascinated when I first saw it.” Bolick began his career by stacking wood and finished product for Owen and taking care of three or four wood-fired kilns.

Although Bolick now uses an electric kiln, he still maintains a wood-fired one as well so “we don’t forget how to do it.”

Back in the 60s, he learned to make pottery in his spare time using a manual kick or treadle wheel.

They earned a set amount per item and could often earn \$30 a day at a time when most factories paid \$30 per week.

In 1973, the Bolicks opened their own pottery operation on the old family home place back in Watauga County where they raised a family and passed on the tradition — in fact, daughter Janet now operates Traditions pottery next door with her husband, Mike Calhoun as the sixth generation in the business.

The family also operates Bolick Pottery and Traditions Pottery in the Martin House on Main Street in downtown Blowing Rock.

On the last Saturday in June, the Bailey’s Camp site hosts Heritage Day and Wood Kiln Opening featuring various crafters, music, demonstrations in sawmilling, log splitting and corn grinding.

Although Bolick still loves his pottery, he admits he’s recently been focusing on a return to his first love, sawmilling.

He recently donated an antique sawmill to the Monroe Brothers Foundation in Rosine, Ky. in an effort to restore the childhood home of bluegrass legend Bill Monroe. He also continues to provide demonstrations locally.

#### Still Time for Music

In addition to his pottery business, Bolick finds time to attend festivals as well as hosting one every year at his home shop. His love of music dates back to childhood when he recalls absorbing song after song on his family’s battery-operated radio — electricity wouldn’t come to the house until later.

While attending Bailey’s Camp Baptist Church, Bolick was introduced to shape-note singing and three-part harmony.

Locally, Bolick can be seen playing at the Jones House in Boone on occasion and at various jam sessions — filling on the guitar and harmonica as well as the banjo.

On the second Sunday of each July through the last Sunday of September, Bolick hosts Mountain Music Jammin' from 2-5 p.m. (cloggers are also welcome).

#### A Story to Tell

Just as the radio sparked Bolick's interest in music, the pre-television airwaves also launched him into the world of storytelling.

"I learned a story from Tex Ritter off the radio. I told it at school in a talent show about a dog name Ole Shorty," Bolick said, adding the name "Shorty" stuck as his nickname for years.

With noted local storyteller Orville Hicks, Bolick continues to keep the tradition alive through regional workshops and festivals. In 1998, he was named as an honorary member of the N.C. Storytelling Guild and has won several folklore awards. Bolick's book "If That Ain't True, Grits Ain't Groceries" is currently on sale at the pottery stores.

For more information (subhed)

Bolick Pottery and Traditions Pottery are both located on Bolick Road just south of Blowing Rock off Blackberry Road as well as in downtown Blowing Rock. For more information, call (828) 295-3862 — e-mail at [sales@traditionspottery.com](mailto:sales@traditionspottery.com), on the Web at [www.traditionspottery.com](http://www.traditionspottery.com).

## Tony Cafaro Profile

### The Meatball Man's Legacy Lives On Story by Jason Reagan

With the sudden death of Tony Cafaro, Boone lost more than just the famed “Meatball Man” of Joe’s Italian Kitchen — they lost a friend, a smiling face, a local celebrity and an example of why they call his generation the Greatest.

A nine-year fixture at his son’s Italian bistro, Tony died on Nov. 7 at the age of 86, 20 days shy of his 87<sup>th</sup>.

Since 2001, Tony made the meatballs that have helped make Joe Cafaro’s restaurant a local mainstay. He also served as the restaurant’s handyman and probably its most eager employee.

“Dad did everything. He made garlic bread, he cut the garlic, he made peppers and onion and chopped the parsley,” Joe Cafaro said.

“Whatever we needed — if we needed a shelf built, he’d build a shelf. If we needed a faucet fixed, he’d fix the faucet.”

Fixing things, whether mechanical or culinary, was a guiding force in Tony’s life. Born in New York City in 1923, Tony began cooking as a 13-year-old in Little Italy.

Although cooking has always been a central occupation in the Cafaro family, Tony spent his working career as a member of the steam-fitters union at Rockefeller Center and was part of the building’s construction crew.

“Dad was a laborer his whole life,” Joe said.

“He was always fixing things. He like to tinker a lot. He retired but it didn't sit well with him,” he said.

In a 2003 local interview, Tony told how he learned a generations-old meatball recipe from his mother. “My mother came from Italy when she was just a little girl,” he recalled.

“It was her mother’s recipe.”

Although Joe learned most of his cooking from his mother, Helen, he credits his father with passing on the family meatball tradition.

In 2003, Tony said that his wife once gave him a choice years ago: ““You can take Joe to church every Sunday, or you can make the meatballs and gravy.””

Tony made the meatballs.

And, he passed that skill down to Joe and perhaps inspired him to get into the restaurant business.

Tony’s brother, Sam, owned a restaurant just around the corner from Macy’s in Manhattan. The Cafaro family would gather for holiday meals there and Joe fell in love with the business.

“I got introduced to the restaurant when I was young and I said ‘that’s what I want to do when I grow up — I want to be like Uncle Sammy,’” Joe said.

Although Joe had cooked in restaurants, he took a break from his childhood love and worked as a computer engineer before opening Joe’s Italian Kitchen in 2001.

Not only did Tony approve of the idea and would later become a key employee, he also helped fund the opening of Joe’s with his own money.

After Joe relocated to Boone from Charlotte several years ago, Tony and Helen decided to follow, which led to Tony’s second career. Before concerns about traffic and icy

sidewalks became an issue, Tony would walk to work every day — a natural habit for a native New Yorker.

Shortly after Tony began his culinary duties, he quickly made a splash in Boone after he was featured in Joe's local television commercials and in several media articles.

"In New York, nobody knew who he was; here everybody knew who he was," Joe said.

"He was the Meatball Man of Joe's," adding that people would often offer him rides to work when they saw him walking or stop him at a grocery store to say hello.

Tony was not only an eager employee, he served as Joe's top quality-control expert.

In 2003, Tony said: "If [Joe] was missing something or if it was no good, I would tell him."

Today, a wreath, a burning candle and a few photos stand in front of a deli case as a silent testament to Tony Cafaro's life and passion but life has to go on in a busy restaurant — people want to eat; the orders keep coming and now Joe faces business as usual minus one extraordinary man but endowed with a legacy and love of good food.

"I've been making the meatballs for the past week," Joe said through a few tears.

"I go back to his station where he worked and I just look up to heaven and ask him to look over on me and make sure I'm doing it okay."

Even though the Meatball Man of Joe's won't be coming back to his station anymore, it seems he's left it in capable hands and passed on a part of his spirit.

"Dad never got mad," Joe said.

"I fly off the handle pretty easily but now I think 'What would Dad do?'"

# Townsend Sues Shook

## *Ex-chief Deputy Alleges Harassment by Watauga Sheriff*

*By Jason Reagan*

*Editor*

*The Mountain Times*

*June 15, 2006*

Former Watauga County chief sheriff's deputy Paula Townsend filed a federal lawsuit on Tuesday against Sheriff Mark Shook and the county, claiming Shook sexually harassed her several times and subsequently fired her for refusing his advances.

Represented by Winston-Salem attorney Angela Gray, Townsend filed the suit in federal court in Statesville after going through a process of certifying the complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission — a process that has lasted almost a year.

The lawsuit claims Shook attempted to “engage in a personal relationship” with Townsend beginning on New Year’s Eve 2002.

Townsend said she rebuffed Shook then and on several other occasions and that he subsequently fired her in June 2005.

Between 2002 and 2005, Townsend claims Shook “touched her inappropriately in a sexual manner on several occasions” and “made sexual comments to her regarding his sexual fantasies and his past sexual experiences.”

The lawsuit alleges Townsend rejected Shook’s advances and “[advised] him that she felt his comments and conduct were inappropriate and unwelcome.”

The former chief deputy alleges Shook then became offended and that her rejection “negatively altered her work condition,” according to the lawsuit.

Ultimately, the suit contends that Shook fired Townsend “because of her gender and for refusing to comply with [his] sexual advances, requests and demands.”

Townsend initially filed a complaint in July 2005 with the EEOC. Under federal regulation, a complaint must go through a filing process in order to be certified as a civil-rights allegation. So, although many local people have known of Townsend’s intention to sue for almost a year, no public records existed to back up the complaint until Tuesday. EEOC refused to comment about the case or its existence.



When asked about the lawsuit Shook said:

“This is a politically motivated and totally unfounded lawsuit. It is telling that the plaintiff chose to file a lawsuit prior to the EEOC concluding its investigation. I am confident that the EEOC will find all the charges against me to be false. I am equally confident that the all of the plaintiff’s charges against me will be shown to be false in a court of law. I look forward to having the opportunity to defend my office and this administration in a court of law.”

Because the lawsuit claims Shook violated Townsend’s civil rights under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in his official capacity as sheriff, Watauga County has also been named as a defendant.

The suit claims the county “acted with reckless indifference to her constitutional and statutory right to work in an environment free from sexual harassment.”

Townsend also claims she told county officials of Shook’s harassment and was “advised that [Shook] was free to run his office as he pleased and that the county had no control over the office.”

Townsend began working for the sheriff’s office in 1986. During Republican James ‘Red’ Lyon’s tenure as sheriff, she was promoted to chief deputy in 1998 — during which time she supervised Shook. She remained in that position after Shook was elected in 2002.

On Monday, Townsend and Gray received a “Notice of Right to Sue” from the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division stating that Townsend had a right to sue under Title VII within 90 days.

Gray declined to state the amount of damages they would seek but the lawsuit states Townsend will seek compensatory damages for losses, “emotional pain and mental anguish,” along with attorneys’ fees, punitive damages and back pay. The total would exceed Townsend’s annual salary with the sheriff’s office, which Gray said was slightly more than \$50,000.

# Sith Lord on Aisle 15

*By Jason Reagan*

*Editor*

*The Mountain Times*

Spencer Garrison has not only watched every episode of the “Star Wars” saga — he’s lived it.

Sort of.

Garrison, a 31-year-old Watauga County resident, is one of the growing number of fans who not only collects a galaxy full of “Star Wars” merchandise, but also emulates movie characters by donning replica costumes.

After a hard day’s work at the Boone Wal-Mart, Garrison likes to slip into something less comfortable but more fun — a tailor-made Darth Vader costume complete with all the bells and whistles (and scary breathing) that have become the trademark of George Lucas’ galactic bad boy.

Garrison assembled the costume, which costs about \$1,700, by trading with other fans and trolling Internet stores like e-Bay.

Dressing for overlord success isn't a solitary hobby. Garrison belongs to the 501st Legion, described in its Web site as "the world's definitive Imperial ['Star Wars' bad guys] costuming organization.

The group is active in more than 21 countries and combines the playfulness of costuming with charity work — helping raise money for groups like the March of Dimes.

Garrison's love of "Star Wars" began at the age of four when Lucas released "Episode IV: A New Hope" (The first three "Star Wars" movies were actually the fourth-sixth in sequence.

Lucas later made Episodes I-III). Right away, Garrison was hooked. He began buying action figures, replica vehicles and anything else that caught his eye.

Eventually, his passion for collecting became more personal when he purchased and wore Vader and Stormtrooper costumes (Vader's Imperial soldiers).

Although the "Star War" series is set in a universe of alien races and faster-than-light spaceships, Garrison credits solid plotlines as the key to Lucas' success.

"It's good, old-fashioned story-telling. It's always got good vs. evil, heroes and villains," he said.

When the first few movies were released, Garrison didn't wear costumes because he saw his lack of quality Vader-wear as "too nerdy." With the recent release of the final "Star Wars: Episode III: Revenge of the Sith," Garrison said he might wear his improved outfit to celebrate the occasion.

The last chapter in the sci-fi epic obliterated box office records for a four-day opening this past week.

It earned \$158,449,700 Thursday through Sunday, playing on more than 9,400 screens in 3,661 theaters.

According to an Associated Press report, however: “The action-filled tale of heroic Jedi Knight Anakin Skywalker’s transformation into the villainous Darth Vader failed to slay one record — the Friday through Sunday take of \$114.8 million set by the original ‘Spider-Man’ flick in 2002.”

## **11/1/00: TELlico PLAINS TRIPLE MURDER, SUICIDE**

### **948 Words**

*The following article won Second Place "Best News Story" in the Tennessee Press Association's 2001 Newspaper Awards*

A brutal, triple murder followed by the murderer's dramatic suicide rocked the tranquillity of this tiny, mountain town Saturday.

According to police and eyewitness reports, Cleo Colvin, 60, shot his live-in girlfriend and three men who were helping her move out, just minutes before shooting and killing himself.

Colvin, who, according to a relative of the victim, had been told of the move, shot and killed Mary Ann Presley, 41; Garland Charles Stamey, 59; and Ronald Scott Guilliaems, 31 (also known by the last name Stamey).

The construction worker also shot and wounded Tommy Stamey, 30, who remains in serious condition at UT Medical Center.

Colvin came home around 4 p.m. Saturday and found the four loading Presley's belongings into a truck from a house on Scott Street.

Witnesses say Colvin immediately began shooting without warning. Apparently, Colvin knew about the move beforehand.

According to former Tellico Plains Mayor Sam Stamey, a relative of three of the victims, Presley had asked his brother, Charles, to help her move into a rented trailer. Charles later asked Guilliaems and Tommy Stamey to help.

According to Sam Stamey, his brother, Charles, had a conversation with Colvin earlier Saturday in which he told Colvin about Presley's plan to move out. When Colvin was asked if he had a problem with Charles helping with the move, Colvin said no. Tellico Plains police responded immediately after eyewitness Debra Deering called (see related story).

They arrived to a horrific scene.

"I noticed two people on the ground shot," Officer Chris Crowder said, who arrived first on the scene. Police Chief Arlie French arrived immediately afterward. After being shot, Presley managed to start and drive her car but crashed down the road, apparently succumbing to her fatal wounds.

Charles Stamey made it as far as a nearby truck but moved no further after being downed by Colvin's lethal fury.

After opening fire on his girlfriend and the movers, neighbors said Colvin ran 50 feet to the trailer of Virgil Bayless, one of Colvin's closest friends.

Colvin told Bayless to "take care of his guns" and announced he was going to kill himself, a comment which Bayless discounted as "carrying on." The killer left a 9 mm pistol with his friend and fled into the trailer while Bayless sat on his porch.

By the time Crowder and French ran to Bayless' front porch in pursuit of Colvin, it was too late.

Officers heard two shots ring out from a back bedroom.

The first bullet ricocheted out of the trailer grazing the patrol car of Officer Jason Garren, who had arrived as backup.

The second apparently tore into Colvin's skull, killing him instantly. The bullet continued out of the trailer narrowly missing Garren, who raced behind the trailer to cover the back exit.

"I could hear the air of the bullet pass by my head," Garren said. "Somebody was looking out for me."

French entered the trailer securing both the 9 mm and .45 caliber handguns.

Soon, red lights lit up the neighborhood as emergency personnel tried desperately to salvage what life they could from the massacre.

Police said one victim, Charles Stamey, was lying in a blue Chevrolet truck with several gunshot wounds. He was pronounced dead on the scene.

Tommy Stamey was found lying close to Colvin's house riddled with six gunshot wounds.

Police said Guillaems had stumbled to a next door neighbor's house and had collapsed on the porch.

Presley was found in her car, after she tried to escape, shot twice. Once in the leg and once in the upper body.

After Guillaems and Presley both went into cardiac arrest, medical personnel began a valiant but futile fight to save their lives.

Garren, Madisonville Police Officer Guy Johnson, EMT paramedic Julia Roberts and a former Monroe County Rescue Squad Member Bob Garren began working on Tommy Stamey.

Guilliaems and Presley were both loaded onto ambulances. Lacking an additional ambulance, Monroe County EMTs finally decided to load Tommy Stamey into the back of Bob Garren's pickup truck.

"We had to do what we had to do," Jason Garren said.

Tommy Stamey was rushed to a landing zone where he was picked up by Lifestar and transported to UT Medical Center. A relative told the Advocate Tuesday that he regained consciousness that morning.

Doctors have told the family that bone fragments are lodged in Stamey's lower spine and that it is possible he may never walk again.

Both Presley and Guilliaems were rushed to Sweetwater Hospital and were later pronounced dead.

Friends who knew the couple say there was no indication that Colvin had planned any violence. However, Colvin did have a record of petty crimes and a reputation of violence in years past.

One year ago, Colvin wrecked his car while under the influence of alcohol, according to Tellico Plains Police.

In July of 1998, Colvin was arrested for aggravated burglary. Sam Stamey, brother to Charles and cousins Ronald Guilliaems and Tommy Stamey, recalls an incident two years ago involving Colvin.

According to Stamey, an officer was dispatched to a Tellico Plains home after Colvin allegedly threatened to kill someone. When the officer arrived, Colvin allegedly leveled a shotgun blast through a door.

"I don't know how somebody like that gets guns," said Stamey.

Sam Stamey went on to say that he disagreed with some of the media's portrayal of the massacre.

"They made it look like a Western shoot-out," he said. "But in Western shoot-out's they're not shooting unarmed people.

"It was a gutless, cowardly act," he added.