

Park Paradox: Cash In Bank, Board On Spot

By JULIAN SCHEER
Charlotte News Staff Writer

Until two weeks ago the biggest gripe most citizens had against the Charlotte Park and Recreation Commission usually came when they couldn't get a tennis court at Freedom Park, when picnic tables were jammed at Bryant Park or when the water was too warm in Revolution Park swimming pool.

But suddenly there arose from musty old account books a fund labeled "plush," and the public took a second look at the commission.

Just as quickly, seven years of isolated complaints were stirred.

Since 1949 the commission has

been in and out of "trouble" in the fields of dramatics, arts, recreation and athletics.

And during the same period the commission's work has been used as an example of a good park system by recreation experts throughout the South.

Climax Wednesday

This paradoxical situation may reach a climax on Wednesday when the city council steps in to consider the matter.

But why the hue and cry all of a sudden?

The controversy burst into the open two weeks ago when the council met to discuss budgets for next year.

A \$476,340 item was the park commission's budget for the next fiscal year.

The money for the budget was born in 1949 when the people

voted for (1) a capital improvements bond issue of \$999,000 and (2) an increased tax levy.

The maximum amount the commission may receive under the tax levy is eight cents per \$100 valuation. In the last fiscal year they got that maximum amount. Prior to the special election, two cents levy carried the burden of the program.

The \$999,000 has gone into park improvements until there is only \$89,000 left in the bond fund.

When the budget came up a reporter digging into auditors' files which were always available to the public, city officials, commission members and others—

revealed a surplus estimated from \$350,000 to \$200,000. This surplus was not included in the park board's budget for 1956-57.

Excited and irritated council members quickly put a red pencil to the tax levy, cutting it from the board's request from six cents for fiscal 1956-57. This meant a reduction in park commission funds of \$76,000.

The park board was accused of squirreling away this "plush" fund while talking "poor mouth" to the Council, and inferentially, of holding out on the taxpayer.

The accusers neglected to point out that the board when it sat down to make its 1956-57 budget had the authority under a new state law, to hold back as much of the surplus as it wanted.

(The law, however, didn't apply to prior years when the surplus was also accumulating.)

Chairman Ernest Sifford, the other board members and Superintendent Marion Dill, who exercises administrative direction of the park program, nonetheless denied vociferously they knew the surplus existed.

However, a check of the audit shows that if Mr. Dill and Mr. Sifford didn't know the surplus existed they not only didn't dig into the audit reports, they didn't even read the auditor's cover letter accompanying the reports.

For instance, accountant James E. Bevis wrote Mr. Sifford on August 9, 1955:

"... There was a surplus of \$427,745.88 at June 30, 1955, as compared with a surplus of

See PARK on page 2-A

What's The Shouting All About?

Charlotte's crisis-ridden Park and Recreation Commission faces its most critical test.

Because of the current uproar over a surplus in park funds, the City Council appears of a mind to take some extreme action.

A series of newspaper articles—described even by bitter critics of the park board as one-sided and superficial—in pandering to the prejudices of a few individuals with gripes against the board cast more heat than light.

Are Charlotteans getting their money's worth in a park program?

Has the \$999,000 bond issue voted in 1949 been spent to the fullest advantage?

Is the present autonomous recreation system the most effective way to operate our parks?

What weaknesses have appeared in the system, and how can they be corrected?

In the belief that Charlotteans want some dispassionate answers to these and many other questions, The News begins today a series of articles examining the park program, the people who run it, and the way in which it's run.

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FINAL

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Birdbox And Thread: Ingenuity Brought Death To The Maple Tree.

The Sad Sparrow

A Sunny Day, A Bright Thread—And Death

By CHARLES KURLAT
Charlotte News Staff Writer

She scanned the ground from her perch beside the birdbox in Joe Ammon's maple tree.

She darted to the corner of the yard, came back with a tiny insect in her beak, chewed it up, and popped it into one of the three red, upraised mouths in the box.

Then she went back to her perch.

Everything was fine. The days were sunny, the insect-hunting was good, the perch was safe, the nest was well built.

SHE WAS PROUD of the nest, if sparrows can be said to be proud. At least, she was satisfied.

She was no mere straw-and-grass sparrow. Somewhere in the Diana Drive neighborhood of Joe Ammond, she had found a fine, long length of nylon thread.

With infinite skill and care, she had wound the nylon thread into her nest. It was like frosting on a cake, or the single red cherry atop a sundae, or the bright chrome strip of an automobile.

THE NYLON THREAD was something shiny and something extra, and it distinguished her nest from every sparrow nest in Sedgfield.

With the nest thus well built, she had taken turns with her mate sitting on the eggs, and when the three young sparrows had hatched, she spent hours in her search for food.

She was so busy with the search, she didn't notice when the thread began working itself loose. Or if she noticed, she decided the nest's usefulness was almost over anyway. Soon, the young birds would be making their first, awkward attempts to fly.

SHE CAME BACK to her perch yesterday to find the nylon thread caught around the neck of one of her young. It had strangled him.

A piece of straw or grass would have snapped under the

strain of the young bird's struggle. The thread, the fine white thread that she had laced into her nest, only tightened.

She could not have been expected to understand that.

SHE FLUTTERED about in the tree yesterday, flying down to the nest occasionally, a d then back to another limb.

Her mate stopped feeding the other two birds, and so did she. Today, she is gone.

The birdbox is empty, except for the three dead birds and the long, fine thread that made her nest different.

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Holiday Road Death Estimate Surpassed

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The nation's Fourth of July traffic deaths passed the pre-holiday estimate of 130 in fatalities today and appeared headed for even higher marks.

The nation also had one death attributed to a fireworks accident—the same as in 1955. This death occurred in Wyoming.

With scattered reports of fatalities still trickling in, the traffic toll for the thirty hour period starting at 6 p. m. local time Tuesday and ending last midnight was 131. There were 72 drownings and 39 deaths from miscellaneous causes for an overall total of 242.

Ned H. Dearborn, president of the National Safety Council, compared the toll with the 128 deaths in the recent two-plane air disaster in the Grand Canyon, saying:

"We can only hope the nation is half as excited and horrified over this catastrophe as it was over the single more dramatic accident, and that there is equal determination to see that such a needless holiday toll can never happen again."

"Bad as it was it would have been even worse if police agencies in general across the country had not gone all out to hold it down."

The number of traffic fatalities as well as the overall toll was far greater than that reported on Memorial Day (109 and 174) and compared with a normal traffic toll of 80 for a Wednesday in early July.

—What's Inside—

Story Of Unusual Marshal Chases Post-Holiday Blues

A TOWN MARSHAL without any town, a lawman who has a record of no arrests, Read of James Young and the vanished community of Otto, N. C., on Page 10A.

Evening Prayer

"O Lord, grant that my heart may be truly cleansed and filled with Thy Holy Spirit, and that I may arise to serve Thee and lie down to sleep in entire confidence in Thee... through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Amen."

Boiled At Forger's Woman Stabs Council

Barden Calls School Bill 'Objectionable'

Carolinian Quits As Floor Manager

WASHINGTON (AP)—The \$1,000,000 school aid bill was called back before the House today by Rep. Graham Barden (D-N.C.) who then denounced it as "obnoxious and objectionable" and withdrew as floor manager of the measure.

Barden was in charge of the bill as chairman of the House Education Committee. The job of shepherding it to final consideration was taken up by Rep. Kelly (D-Pa.), its author and second ranking committee Democrat.

The dramatic development came as the House recanvassed. Barden had told newsmen before the session that "I'm washing my hands of the bill because of Tuesday's House vote to include an amendment barring federal funds to states which continue race segregation in their schools."

Barden called the bill back to the floor for further consideration only on the strongest urging by Democratic House leaders. His personal decision was to bring it to a die by refusing to permit it for a final vote.

GAINS APPLAUSE

Barden's announcement to the House was applauded by Southern members.

"I am definitely convinced that the American people do not want this legislation," Barden said.

"Things have happened to the bill that make it very obnoxious and objectionable to the people I represent. This bill is objectionable to me."

"I cannot continue in the position of directing this bill... and no one need expect any assistance from me."

WALKS TO REAR

With that, Barden stepped from the seat reserved for the committee chairman charged with directing legislation through the House, and walked up the aisle to the rear of the chamber.

The anti-segregation rider was sponsored by Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Negro Democrat from New York City's Harlem district. It was put into the bill by a vote of 164-116.

After its adoption Tuesday, key backers considered the bill to be doomed.

Over the holiday, Democratic floor managers of the measure considered the possibility of permitting it to die without calling it up again for consideration.

A number of other proposed changes in the school bill remained to be disposed of before a final House vote.

'Good Men Are Hard To Find' Mayor Comes To Defense Of Park Board In Ruckus

By DICK YOUNG
Charlotte News Staff Writer

Public defense of the Charlotte Park and Recreation Commission was made today by Mayor Van Every.

In a prepared statement he criticized "excessive criticism" and pointed out that "unjust criticism" makes it more difficult to get good men to serve in public office.

This was the first word in support of park board members since the recent controversy over financial operations of the board.

While other members of the City Council have been advocating searching probes, explanations from the park board and even abolition of the board as an autonomous agency, Mayor Van Every had this to say:

"In the first place I want to emphasize there has been no loss. They have accumulated a surplus, which is a pretty good thing in business and government."

"We have an excellent park system in Charlotte. We are the envy of surrounding states, which frequently send representatives here to study

Police Seeking Baby, Kidnaper

WESTBURY, N. Y. (AP)—A huge police effort was staged today in the search for a Long Island suburban residential area to trap the kidnaper of four-week-old Peter Weinberger, son of a slain state legislator.

The kidnaper, who took the baby from a carriage at a home yesterday, demanded \$2,000 ransom under threat of death.

"I hate to do this to you but I am in great need," the kidnaper said.

The deadline was variously reported as 9:30 a.m. or noon today. Police kept tight-lipped as to their plans, but it was learned that a package contrived to look as if it contained the money had been put in an empty garage about a block from the Morris Weinberger home.

This apparently was in accord with the kidnaper's instructions. However, the package did not contain \$2,000, but a sheaf of paper slips cut in bill size with actual money on the outside only.

CASE DEVELOPMENT

There was a mystifying development at 9:35 a.m. when a man believed to be Weinberger left the fashionable home and placed a brown manila envelope at the base of a tree about 100 feet from the house.

Then the man walked around the block and returned to the house as he had left it, by way of the back door.

Up to 11:45 a.m. the envelope remained untouched under the tree.

It was learned that an area of approximately a mile around the Weinberger home had been combed for clues, and then cleared today of all but regular residents. Officers were stationed throughout, in homes and other places where they could watch.

The infant boy was temporarily housed at the time of his kidnapping.

It had been reported earlier that the well-to-do parents were prepared to comply with the ransom demand.

An effort was made at first to rush up the abduction. Neither police nor the family nor neighbors would discuss it. But word leaked out as the hunt spread.

Commented one policeman: "This work of an amateur and a badly mixed-up person."

Westbury is an old Long Island community, about 25 miles east of Times Square.

Killings Follow Discovery

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP)—A petite, 32-year-old wife of an Air Force major told sheriff's deputies today she stabbed her elderly husband, who took her to police when he checked forgery scheme abroad.

Deputies said Mrs. Blanche Jacobs, mother of three, spent three days trying to conceal the death of her "close" friend, then told her husband, who took her to police. Mrs. Jacobs walked into police headquarters last night and announced, "I want to report a double murder," police said.

She was accompanied by her husband, Maj. Eugene W. Jacobs, 74, and his wife, Maude, 72, side by side in the bathroom of their suburban Grovetown home. Their bodies showed multiple stab wounds.

L. Ellsworth P. Beck of the Franklin County sheriff's office said Mrs. Jacobs gave him a statement admitting she killed the couple last Monday when they learned she had forged a check against the Robinsons' bank account. That check and two others forged by Mrs. Jacobs totaled \$1,748, Beck said.

CLOSE FRIENDS

Mrs. Jacobs lived next door to the Robinsons. Jacobs, who is stationed at nearby Lockbourne AFB, described the Robinsons as "very close" friends.

Mrs. Jacobs' sobbed intermission as she told how she cleaned up the blood-spattered room the day after the killings and dragged the bodies into the bathroom, Beck said.

The lieutenant said Mrs. Jacobs tried to give neighbors the impression that the Robinsons had left town. When she realized she couldn't continue to conceal what had happened, she told her husband, Beck added.

Maj. Jacobs was not collapse when police told him they had found the bodies.

The Auburn-haired mother was held in county jail for investigations of the plane and was held today. This is the story, Beck said.

See WOMAN on page 2-A

Lone Gunman Grabs \$28,000

STARKE, Fla. (AP)—A gunman robbed the Florida National Bank today of \$28,000.

Sheriff P. D. Reddish and the FBI immediately began an investigation.

They said the robber appeared to be 21 years old, 5 feet 11 inches tall, weighed 165, had dark brown wavy hair, a small mustache and hazel eyes.

He took the money in bills from the vault and fled.

President S. L. Peck Jr. was one of those held up by the gunman. Park employees said the man appeared to be a stranger in this town of around 6,000 population some 40 miles west of Jacksonville.

Scouts Target Of Federal Suit

By JOHN BORCHERT
Charlotte News Staff Writer

A surplus Army bomber—sold to a Boy Scout group in 1947 for \$300 and later sold and resold until it fetched \$50,000—has Uncle Sam all up in the air.

The federal government filed a civil action in U. S. district court here against the Piedmont Boy Scouts of America, and eight other defendants for a total of \$90,000, interest and costs of court.

The government claims it had a contract with the Scout group under which the plane would only be sold as junk. The Pied-

Bomber Sale Lands In U. S. Court

mont council has its headquarters in Gastonia.

THE GOVERNMENT says the series of transactions occurred in 1951, after the Scouts had finished using it for its original purpose, as a ground trainer in their air-sea rescue training program.

The plane was sold—according to B. M. Schiele, executive director of the Council, for and as junk, with the purchaser having cleared with the War Assets Administration, the General Services Administration and the Civil Aeronautics Administration.

The government suit charges that the plane was sold in violation of the contract in February of 1951 to Frank J. Mott Jr. of Winston-Salem and Clarence Goodman of High Point for \$3,000 with the title to the plane being taken in the name of the Deluxe Saw and Tool Co., a business entity owned in whole or in part at that time" by Mr. Goodman.

THE SUIT also claims that at that time the airplane had not been made unfit and useless, and was not sold as scrap.

The suit says that the Council

Our Weather

Partly cloudy and continued warm and humid through Friday with widely scattered afternoon and evening thunder-showers.

Low this morning—69

Low tomorrow morning—70

High today—86

High yesterday—96

High tomorrow—95

Rainfall today 5.14 a.m.

Sunset today, 7:41 a.m.

More Weather Data on Page 2-A

Business	4-5A	Obituaries	12B
Classified	12-15A	Radio-TV	4A
Serials	15A	Sports	12-14A
Crossword Puzzle	6-7B	Theaters	13B
Editorials	6A	Women	6-8-11A
Features	10A		