

NEWS-PRESS

Charlotte

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Reports From Staff Writers,
Bureaus And Wire Services

Customs branch to open

By KAREN BAIR
News-Press Staff Writer

U.S. Customs opens its doors in Fort Myers Monday and will offer Southwest Florida residents services that travelers, whose only acquaintance with the agency may have been in a lengthy baggage inspection line, might not expect.

Although the primary purpose for establishing a local Customs office is to curb drug smuggling activities in the area, Customs employees will answer questions for persons traveling abroad and will enforce other federal laws relating to customs.

"I think we will be quite an asset to the area," says Robert Gonsalves, supervisor of the seven-man staff which has established temporary headquarters at the state attorney's office. "We will be able to supply other services in addition to customs."

The customs supervisor contends establishment of the local office will put a considerable dent into the quantity of drugs entering the country through Southwest Florida.

"We're going to clean up the area," Gonsalves says. "A smuggler, like anyone else, checks out an area."

"We showed a definite need for an office here based on the amount of contraband coming into the area," he says. "Previously it was impossible to get people down here where they could work with local law enforcement agencies. By having an office right here, we'll have people living in the community and right on the scene."

"They'll become really familiar with the area, backroads and waterways. We'll be making contacts with airport and marine operators and local citizens, developing information which may lead to the apprehension of many more of my people over five years in the service, and they'll be very well trained."

Another federal agency, the Drug Enforcement Administration, also is slated to open an office in Fort Myers.

Gonsalves says his men will be working both in uniform and in plainclothes, and they definitely will routinely inspect baggage. "Fort Myers is not a port of entry," says Gonsalves.

The Fort Myers headquarters, which will regularly cover Lee and Charlotte counties and sometimes Glades and DeSoto counties, will be staffed with customs personnel, he says.

"The customs patrol division is responsible for the enforcement of over 500 different laws," Gonsalves says. "Our primary function is to look for the individuals who are coming into the customs border area in its functional equivalent. We'll be working the airports and airports in both counties. We'll be patrolling the waterfront areas, becoming extremely familiar with vessels at commercial and private marinas and along the coast."

A five-year campaign by local Turn To CUSTOMS, Page 26



COLOR GUARD OF VETERANS MARCHES NEAR WATERFRONT ... parade started at Civic Center and ended at new recreational complex

Recreation complex dedicated during Veterans Day ceremony

By KAREN FELDMAN
News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — A new recreation complex was dedicated to a former mayor as townspeople, military equipment and troops marched through the streets of Punta Gorda in celebration of Veterans Day Saturday.

In a parade sponsored by the city and American Legion Post No. 111, the Fort Charlotte Junior High School band, officials from the city and county, Brewster, Curt Bonds, and veterans were joined by an armored personnel carrier, a towster and a missile carrier.

The 45-minute event began at the Civic Center and ended at the new municipal complex, now officially known as Bill Lashley Memorial Park.

Lashley, a city councilman for 12 years and mayor for six years, was killed in an automobile accident in 1975. The dedication of the park on Veterans Day was fitting because Lashley was a veteran, having

served in the Navy, according to City Manager Robert Halliday.

Betty Lashley, his widow, thanked city officials for the tribute to her husband who, she said, was an emotional man. "If he can see us from where he is, I'm sure there's a lot of joy in his eyes," Mrs. Lashley said.

Lashley's sons, Bruce, 22, and Larry, 23, unveiled the plaques bearing the name of the municipal park, which includes a two-story pavilion, fishing pier, boat slip, a barbecue pit, parking, landscaping, and sidewalks.

According to Mayor Charles Phipps, Lashley "did more than any other member of the community in attempting to build the marina complex, starting in 1961 and, until his death, continuing to keep the project alive."

The \$425,000 park, located on Nashli Street near the Municipal Trailer Park, was financed through a grant from the Economic Development Administration.

Killer will be found, police say

By KAREN FELDMAN
News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — The murderer of Linda Plautz will "definitely" be found, says the lawman heading the investigation.

Lt. William Clement, chief investigator for the Charlotte County Sheriff's Department, said there is "no doubt in my mind that we will definitely catch the killer."

Although he declined to comment further, the statement is the first of its kind to come from the sheriff's office in the month since 12-year-old Linda was abducted and burned to death in a field.

Clement said he plans to run a polygraph on another suspect during the next week after "a few problems" were straightened out. He would not say what those problems were.

In June, five persons have taken the polygraph — or lie detector — test in connection with the brutal slaying of the Port Charlotte girl Oct. 12.

All five, according to Clement, have received results which favor

those who took them. Although no one will be cleared until an arrest is made, he said, these five suspects are no longer directly involved. The five suspects are known to include a 13-year-old boy and one female.

No sign of sexual assault were noted in the medical examinations performed on a autopsy on the young girl but, Clement said, "Sexual frustration can bring out strange or violent behavior."

"Something in the background of this type of person can cause them to kill and it's usually sexual," Clement said. "Sexual frustration can bring out strange or violent behavior."

According to a psychological profile given to the sheriff's department by psychologists, the killer may have pushed the crime into his subconsciousness and forgotten about it.

Clement said he also believes the crime could be drug related, in that someone killed Linda might have been under the influence of drugs.

School construction needs to be topic

News-Press Bureau

PUNTA GORDA — Construction of the county's vocational-technical school and a special multi-handicapped center are expected to be named top priorities at Tuesday's school board meeting.

The Lenoir High School project has headed the list for some time but, according to Richard Walls, assistant superintendent of schools, it can now be lowered in priority since a contract for 80 percent of the work was awarded recently.

Architects have drawn preliminary designs for the vocational school, which will be built in an open campus style on Toledo Blade Boulevard in Manatee. These plans were approved by the school board last month and are presently being inspected by the state Department of Education.

According to Walls, the multi-handicapped center was to have been finished in time for the start of classes next year but is now tentatively scheduled to open in September 1980.

The board is also expected to consider a request by the Punta Gorda Career Center to use one of the school's buildings in the event of a disaster. A sanitation and safety inspection report, prepared by the Charlotte County Department of Health, will be submitted to the board for its information. The report found the schools to be in generally good condition with the exception of some worn out carpets at Charlotte High School and both Junior Highs.

The board will hold a public hearing prior to deciding whether to adopt a policy that would standardize certain sections of the contracts of all school personnel, Walls said. The meeting will be held at the board offices on Education Avenue at 7:30 p.m.

Inside Today's

B-Section

GOV.-ELECT Robert Graham talks about the art of leadership and how that plans to bring to the state's highest office for the next four years

Controlled growth

How one town solved its development problems

On Nov. 11 Sanibel Island voters will decide whether to enact a law limiting house building on the island to 148 dwellings a year. The News-Press sent environmental reporter Betty Price to Petaluma, Calif., and Boulder, Colo., to examine how those cities have employed such growth ordinances. This is the first of a four-part series.

By BETTY PRICE
News-Press Environment writer

PETALUMA, CALIF. — The northern California town of Petaluma might be mistaken for a rather unexciting little city, still peddling its old billing as the egg basket of the world, and not the originator of a revolutionary method to slow urban sprawl.

Twenty years ago Petaluma was a sleepy agricultural center. About 15 years later, Petaluma was experiencing an 18 percent annual growth rate. Schools were going on triple sessions while water and sewer treatment plants were in the aftermath of explosive growth.

Petaluma had a growth boom that would put the California gold rush to shame. Petaluma's problems started with the installation of a four-lane highway, making 40 miles to San Francisco an easy commute. Petaluma became a bedroom community as San Francisco workers sought a more

relaxed life style to the north. As the building surge melted uncontrollable downtown, Petaluma leaders looked at standard controls and found them lacking.

Then, in the spring of 1972, city officials developed a plan to limit how much housing could be built each year.

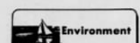
Development interests immediately filed suit and, in a stunning decision rendered almost three years later, the United States Supreme Court upheld the right of Petaluma to limit its rate of growth to about 500 dwellings annually.

Today Petaluma is the Emerald City, a mecca, of sorts. It's a place that has achieved international recognition and a town used as a role model and goal for countless other communities with the same problems.

Forget about the egg basket stuff. Petaluma now makes a lot of hay out of the new source in growth management directives.

Unlike the massive growth that has affected Sanibel Island the past three years, Petaluma's problems started about 22 years ago.

U.S. Highway 101, a straight, scenic artery connecting downtown Petaluma and San Francisco, was improved and relocated in 1958. As the San Francisco Bay area became overpopulated, people working in the city began looking for places less devel-



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oped yet close enough for commuting.

For many of them, Petaluma was the place between 1962 and 1965, tract housing developments mushroomed around the city. An economic decline slowed that growth until 1967, when building again picked up at an even more rapid rate.

In 1969 and 1970, Petaluma's population increased by 1,000 people a year. Between November 1969 and September 1970, the population nearly doubled.

"In the late 1960s, the planning department here Petaluma was in trouble," said Frank Gray, the city's planning director.

"We kept telling the city council that traffic problems with water, sewers, and schools would result if the town continued to grow as it had been doing. There was just no way for the city services to keep pace with the population," Gray said.

The city council, however, stalled. There was no public outcry over growth problems, despite warnings from Gray and other staff.

In fact, Gray said, a proposed sewer expansion in the late 60s was voted down by the citizens. "As long as everything was

going OK, the people didn't really notice the growth," he said.

The public quietly disappeared in 1970 when Petaluma's schools, already on double sessions, went to triple sessions.

"The double sessions were bad enough," said Gray, a father of two. "But when little Johnny came home from school one day with a note pinned to his jacket saying that triple sessions were starting, the people just blew up. About 200 people stormed a council meeting, protesting the rapid growth. The school issue went out to be the second catalyst for change."

With this incident plus, the council began work in January, 1971. It adopted a moratorium on all rezoning in the city and hired an outside planning consultant to help Petaluma officials, its citizens and consultants begin in June, 1971. One month later, the city made its decision to limit growth in Petaluma to 500 dwelling units a year.

The number was not picked from a hat. The reasons for using the 500 figure were twofold. It was close to the city's annual

average during the previous decade when growth occurred at a more normal rate. And, Gray said, 500 equaled about a 5 percent annual growth rate.

Today, the number of new houses built annually is based on five percent of the total housing. Consequently, the permitted number of new houses increases each year.

"When we drew the city's general 20-year plan in 1962, we wrote the prediction of the expectation of a 5 percent growth rate per year," he said. "By the late 60s, however, we were at an 18 percent growth rate. We wanted to avoid — to get back to the track outlined in our 20-year plan."

But the council did not end with the adoption of the ceiling. Since growth was taking place at 18 percent and the city wished to limit it to 5 percent, there had to be some way of deciding who got permission to build.

The allocation procedure took the city about four months to formulate. If numbers had been the only criteria, Gray said, the job would have been much easier. But the city saw certain responsibilities it should carry out in deciding who got to build what and where.

There was one particularly festering problem that needed solving.

When the freeway to San Francisco was built, it split Petaluma in half. The split soon became more than physical.