

Daily Press • Wednesday, February 12, 1986

Murder trial goes on

Case to go to jury today

By ANDY MCCORMICK Staff Writer LANCASTER — Five years to the day and the hour that a county couple was shot to death, two investigators visited Gary Logan Lankford in a state psychiatric hospital in an unsuccessful attempt to win a confession.

The visit, made on Feb. 27, 1981, came just after psychologists had found Lankford mentally incapable of standing trial for an unrelated offense. Their report cited behavior that was paranoid and schizophrenic. A 12-member jury is expected to decide today whether Lankford shot a United Airlines pilot and his wife to death on Feb. 27, 1976.

During the trial's second day Tuesday, Lankford, a county native, testified he had been upset by the deaths of Dale and Charlotte Rogers, and in a letter to their neighbors had wished that their killer be brought to justice. He disputed claims by former estimates that he had admitted to the slayings.

One of those estimates, Douglas A. Rivenbark, said he had met Lankford in the Lancaster County Jail in August. Rivenbark said Lankford described shooting the couple, and he demonstrated for jurors the way Lankford had sprawled on the floor, showing the position. Mrs. Rogers' body, he said Lankford had also drawn a picture on a window in the jail's dayroom with soap to show two graves, with "R.I.P." written on them.

Confusion in Lankford's statements and his allusions to "assimilate" pictures as well as verbal descriptions of the crime scene could have fostered a delusion that he had committed a crime. W. D. Spence, a special agent with the State Police assigned to the investigation in 1980 who accompanied Benson, said that while he did not think the hospital visit was a good idea, photos had not been shown to Lankford at that time. Benson died in 1981.

David M. Riley, special agent for the State Police who has been assigned to the case since October, said he will begin her duties here March 3.

Mrs. Carter, 32, has worked since October as an administrative secretary for programs to be coordinated between the community college and Suffolk public schools. Prior to that she headed the federally funded Title III program at the college, and was a part-time instructor.

She has a master's degree and a doctorate from Duke University, and has also done graduate work at the College of William and Mary. She has taught at Duke and North Carolina State University, and was an editor with the Suffolk News-Herald.

A native of Pennsylvania, the now lives in Suffolk. Her husband, Allen R. Carter, is a forester with the Dismal Swamp Wildlife Refuge. The fact that Mrs. Carter already lives here and knows the city is a big plus, said Daniel C. Frohman, chairman of the Suffolk Council of the regional chamber.

Mrs. Carter replaces Donna S. Morris, who left in January to join the Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Morris, who replaced Robert W. Hershberger, was in the job only three months. Hershberger came to Suffolk in January 1984, directing Charles F. Jennings. Hershberger left in September 1985 to become executive director of the Norfolk council of the regional chamber.

Fat Tuesday: The last hurrah



Members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church on 34th Street in Newport News marked the beginning of the Lenten season Tuesday night with a New Orleans-style Mardi Gras celebration. Christians in the Middle Ages observed Fat Tuesday, (which translates into French as Mardi Gras) as a day for feasts and celebrations before beginning their annual fast on Ash Wednesday. Church members kept the tradition alive by holding a supper and dancing to the music of the Sammy Cohen Band in the parish house. Bill Coover (above left) came to the festival dressed as a doctor and checked the heartbeat of fellow reveler Randy Charles. Meanwhile, Jac and Bill Robinson (right) danced cheek-to-cheek while showing off their costumes.

Psychologist Dr. William Lee said the Feb. 27, 1981, interrogation could have caused Lankford to "assimilate" pictures as well as verbal descriptions of the crime scene and could have fostered a delusion that he had committed a crime. W. D. Spence, a special agent with the State Police assigned to the investigation in 1980 who accompanied Benson, said that while he did not think the hospital visit was a good idea, photos had not been shown to Lankford at that time. Benson died in 1981.

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Planners favor 3 proposals for subdivisions

By STEVEN WINGFIELD Staff Writer ISLE OF WIGHT — Three residential developments that would add several hundred new building lots to the north end of the county were recommended for approval Tuesday by the Planning Commission. The largest rezoning request was submitted by Hugh B. Anderson III of Hampton. Anderson is seeking to have 406 acres rezoned for a golf course surrounded by about 250 single-family houses and 90 townhouses. The subdivision, called "Crown Creek," would be on both sides of Route 608 between Route 608 and Rescue. Anderson said the building lots will start off at about \$100,000 and the price will increase each year. He estimated the average house in the subdivision would be assessed at at least \$150,000 and townhouses will sell for \$80,000 to \$100,000. It will take about 10 years before all of the sites have homes built on them, he estimated. "We're not in a real hurry. We don't want to come in here like gangbusters," Anderson said he would be willing to improve Johnson

Commission thinks board ignores advice

By STEVEN WINGFIELD Staff Writer ISLE OF WIGHT — In November, the Planning Commission recommended the rezoning of a 144-acre residential subdivision, deny an application for a 144-acre residential subdivision, deny a rezoning of a home park and deny a rezoning for an automobile repair shop. In December, the supervisors voted to approve all three rezoning requests. Reacting to a voting pattern that has shown up more frequently in recent months, the commission directed that a letter be sent to supervisors expressing concern that their advice wasn't being followed. County Attorney Woodrow

Crook, who advises both bodies, sent a letter to the supervisors asking that when the board votes contrary to the recommendation of the commission, the board send a letter explaining the rationale for its vote.

When the supervisors receive new information or a major change in a rezoning application between the time it is heard by the commission and by the board, the commission asked that the application be referred back to the planners to consider the additional information. County Administrator W. J. Owen responded to Crook's letter last week at the request of the supervisors.

Dunford also has been sued by two former customers who contend he was supposed to be repairing their Mercedes-Benz automobiles, but instead returned them after several months, disassembled and with no repairs done.

In another recent Circuit Court case Raymond Sheppard Jr., 30, of the 800 block of Montgomery Court in Newport News, was convicted of possession of heroin. Sheppard was initially charged with possession of heroin with intent to distribute it.

He was arrested Aug. 7 by a police detective who stopped a car Sheppard was riding in after a package was thrown from the car. He will be sentenced Feb. 26.

Photo by BOB BARNES

Kathleen S. Carter takes over March 3

Gifts to shuttle fund bring total to \$13,473

So far, \$13,473 has been contributed to the Daily Press Shuttle Fund, a special drive to help the 11 children of the crew of the space shuttle Challenger. The two-week drive will run through Saturday. All money, a list of local donors and the amount contributed will be sent to the Space Shuttle Children's Fund being handled by American Security Bank in Washington. The Daily Press started the fund to allow readers to show their community ties to the space program. NASA's Langley Research Center was the site of the early days of the astronaut program in the 1950s. Langley continues to be involved with the space program. Checks should be made out to

Former car dealer makes restitution; charges dropped

By JANE HASKINS Staff Writer HAMPTON — Criminal charges have been dropped against a former car dealer accused of taking money for expensive foreign cars that were never delivered. Jerry L. Dunford was charged with three counts of obtaining money by false pretenses, but the charges were dropped after Dunford made full restitution to the three people he allegedly wronged, said Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Mark Sullivan. He said it would have been hard to prove that Dunford intended to cheat the customers. Witnesses testified at a preliminary hearing in October that Dunford, who operated European Auto Village on North Ar-

Table with 2 columns: Name, Amount. Lists donors and their contributions to the Shuttle Fund.

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