

Escape attempt foiled at county jail

An attempted jailbreak at the Nicholas County Jail was foiled early Sunday morning when local law enforcement officials surprised the escapee, Johnny Morris, 35, of St. Louis, Mo., as he was lowering himself from a second story escape route on a makeshift rope of blankets and bedclothes.

The break was first detected by new Jailor Lynn Bowles, who was appointed to the post four months ahead of schedule after the resignation of Charles Lenz. Bowles deflected Lenz in a recent election for May primary election. Bowles said that after he assessed the situation inside the cellblock, he and several other law enforcement officers waited outside the jail for the inmate to make his escape. When

Bowles saw Morris easing out of a hole he had dug in the wall just above the bulge, he fired a single shot in the air and Morris immediately dropped to the ground and surrendered.

Morris, who broke out of the local jail July 23, was sentenced on August 25 to serve one year and 90 days for the incident. He will now face an additional charge of escape in the second degree. Morris was originally lodged in the jail on a bench warrant issued for his failure to appear for sentencing after a conviction of operating a motor vehicle without a license and with no life insurance.

Ironically, Morris was scheduled to appear before Nicholas County District Judge U.S. Famularo Tuesday for a

hearing on a possible work release program, which could have allowed him to serve part of his sentence outside the local jail.

Bowles said that Morris apparently used a piece of pipe, a brick and a section of an old broom handle to dig the hole above the bulge. Bowles suspects the pipe had been hidden in the cellblock area since the violent night the jail's plumbing suffered considerable damage.

Bowles and his wife had been busy Saturday night hanging drapes and unpacking from their recent move to the jail, and he suspects that Morris used the noise created by his hanging curtain rods to cover the sounds of the

digging.

He did notice an unusual level of activity in the cellblock though, and upon further investigation he began to suspect that a break could be in progress.

Bowles said that he went outside to check all of the jail's exterior walls and that he placed an old plunger next to his ear and then placed the other end next to the wall. He said that he then could hear a very pronounced scratching sound.

Bowles then noticed a small shaft of light coming from a crack in the wall, and he proceeded to round up several police officers to wait outside the jail with him. Morris was caught in mid-escape around 1:15 a.m.

Perhaps the most disconcerting aspect of the attempted escape, says Bowles, lies in the fact that he was attempting to make the inmate's lives more comfortable. He no longer locked them in the bullpen every night, he had removed wires on the cellblock's lights that cut them off at 11:00 every evening and at 7:00 in the morning. He allowed them to watch TV whenever they liked, slept as late as they liked, make phone calls whenever they liked, and in fact, he had served them jello, strawberries and ice cream just a couple of hours before the attempted escape.

Bowles said the new attitude was accompanied by a warning — "If you try to break out, I'll be waiting for

you." "And I was," he said Monday morning.

But that new, more lenient attitude is now gone. All the prisoners are now "locked in the bullpen until the damage to the wall can be repaired, and Bowles says they may be in there even longer than that. Morris is being held in the upstairs cell usually reserved for women. In addition, he said Monday that there would be no visitors allowed until further notice. "I've tried to be good to them," he said, "but you can't."

Bowles took over duties as jailer September 1, finishing out the term of Charles Lenz, who recently resigned after losing to Bowles in the May

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Ambulance question on ballot

The Nicholas County Fiscal Court was presented with a petition at last Wednesday's meeting to have the question of an ambulance tax placed on the November ballot. The petition was signed by 21 registered county voters. After being presented with the petition, the court adopted a resolution to submit the question on the ballot in November's general election. Magistrate Bob Livingston abstained from voting on the resolution.

In accordance with the petition and the resolution, the question placed on the ballot will read: "Are you in favor of establishing an emergency ambulance service district for Nicholas County, Kentucky, which shall have the authority to impose a special ad valorem tax of ten cents (\$10) on each one hundred dollars (\$100.00) worth of property assessed for local taxation in the district for the maintenance and operation of the Nicholas County, Kentucky, emergency ambulance service district?"

The 10 cent tax is expected to generate somewhere in the neighborhood of \$90,000 for the ambulance service.

The court also discussed the possibility of getting a school set up locally in order to instruct persons who would be interested in becoming EMT's for the service. Councilman Frank Hughes said Tuesday that he had received a good response in his survey of the county for potential EMT's. He said he had 19 persons very interested, and that the number would rise if a school could be set up in the county.

In other action at the meeting, the court:

Learned that it had already expended its General Home Relief Fund, and was overdrawn in the account by \$85. The fund is used to buy prescription drugs for indigent countyans and to assist those persons with fuel costs in the winter.

The court had budgeted \$11,000 for the fund, although it spent \$4,822 in Home Relief Funds in the last fiscal year. The court transferred \$80 from the Hospital Care Fund to the General Home Relief Fund to cover the deficit for now, and will decide later on the status of requests earmarked for that fund.

Learned that repairs to the leader at the county quarry discussed at the last meeting cost more than was expected. The amount of the repair to the leader's engine totaled \$10,000, but the county did receive an \$1,000 credit for the block of the old engine.

Discussed necessary repairs to another leader at the quarry which is in need of new rollers and a track chain. An estimate on those repairs was set at around \$4,000.

Agreed to pay Mr. and Mrs. Huston Sparks for the labor involved in cutting down some bushes to assist county buses in turning around near their residence. The court paid them for eight hours total work at \$3.20 per hour.

—Voted to postpone indefinitely final decision on the proposed Bob Faulk video-tape the courthouse and county

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Occupational hazard

Nine-year-old Mike Gilvin was rubbing the seat of his pants while studying himself on a Main Street parking meter Monday, as he tried to soothe the sting of a tumble he had taken while skating down the sidewalk. — Mercury photo.

Nicholas handles Mason in 23-14 victory

A potentially explosive Mason County squad that had just returned from a

23-14 victory over Lawrence County in their season opener had their offense

by a determined Nicholas County

The Jackets mounted a 23-14 lead into the final quarter when a muffed Nicholas County punt attempt set up a Royal score by handing them the ball on the jacket 49-yard line. Then the Royals showed just how explosive they are as they burst 63 yards on a reverse and followed that with a touchdown pass for a second score.

Bluejackets Coach Ben Pumpfrey had nothing but good things to say about the performance of both teams Friday night. "They could play," he said of the Mason County squad. Pumpfrey said they had a fine football team, and pointed to quarterback Willie Feldhaus and receiver Kelly Middleton as top notch athletes.

For the Jackets, Pumpfrey said the win was a total team effort. An illustration of that total team effort came with 3:38 to go in the game when starting quarterback David McGuffey was forced out of the game with muscle cramps. In came back-up freshman Rocky Young, he pitched out to junior running back Keith Williams, and

Williams sprinted for a 29-yard gain. Sophomore Steve Anderson also provided some extra excitement for Nicholas County fans. Anderson scored a spectacular, seemingly-impossible catch in a crowd of Mason County

defenders at the beginning of the second quarter to put the Jackets on the board.

defense as the Bluejackets rolled to a 23-14 victory Friday night.

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Anderson then followed that up in the same period with an interception and knocked the football loose. Terry Leonard fell on the loose ball at the 14.

David McGuffey then capped the short scoring drive for the Jackets on a roll-out to his left. McGuffey then found Mike Woodley wide open in the end zone for the two point conversion.

In a strong show of team character, the Jackets staged an impressive goal-line stand at the beginning of the fourth quarter that held the Royals from scoring on three tries from inside their five yard line.

Nicholas took over with their backs very definitely against the wall, but on two keepers by McGuffey they burst out for a first down. That drive eventually stalled on the 30, and the ensuing punt attempt disaster set up Mason County's first score.

Statistically, the Bluejackets rolled to 239 yards in offense, 203 on the ground and 36 in the air. They punted four times for 183 yards and caused and covered four Royal fumbles.

Mason County had the advantage in first downs as they racked up 10 first downs to Nicholas' eight. With their final quarter explosion on offense, they boasted their game yardage to 163 rushing and 147 passing.

Individually, David McGuffey led the Jackets as he rushed for 77 yards and hit three of five passes for another 26. Keith Williams was close behind as he

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Nicholas County's sophomore sensation Steve Anderson (18) headed up the sideline on a 69-yard return after intercepting a pass in the

Bluejackets 23-14 win over Mason County Friday. — Mercury photo.