

RETURNING TO RALEIGH

By NANCY DAMRON
Staff Writer

After a 20-year absence, Fred Folger returns to the state Senate Wednesday and is readying himself for some big changes.

"From my being down there and discussing the present situation with various folks, I think there's right much change," Folger, a Mount Airy attorney, said in a recent interview.

The lanky, affable man sat among his disheveled office, part of the clean-up process before he begins his official duties in Raleigh.

It was in 1969, under the Democratic administration of Gov. Bob Scott, that Folger won his first two-year term in the state Senate. He was re-elected in 1971 and 1973, going to work with Gov. Jim Holshouser.

The lieutenant governor under the Republican governor was none other than current Gov. Jim Hunt.

NOW FOLGER, a Democrat who won the battle for the 12th District Senate seat vacated by Rockingham County's Bill Goldston in the November elections, is readying for his return and has learned that things in Raleigh were a lot less complicated then than they are now.

Folger quickly cited the use of computers and issues such as the environment and hazardous waste as examples "which 20 years ago were on the fringe, maybe, but hadn't gotten into full-blown needs."

The other major change Folger is looking at is the growth of the state's budget and the battle legislators now face in scaling it back, thus eliminating services and programs to Tar Heel citizens.

"Before, the budget was \$3 million to \$5 million for two years. Now, it's \$15 million to \$20 million, so they tell me.

"The other interesting thing to me," the attorney continued, "is that back in those terms, there was no money crunch. There was more money to do more things with. There was no worry over the deficit."

"Now, they worry where to spend it. It's no fun cutting corners."

That's a prospect Folger admits is worry him somewhat as he prepares for his duties. While he's pinpointed the issues close to his heart, he's keeping an open mind on how and where to make budget cuts until he learns which committee assignments he'll be given by the President Pro-Tem of the Senate.

"I've got to wait and see what monies are available and see where the needs are and the needs to be met right away," Folger said.

WHEN HE campaigned for the seat in November, Folger listed among as his top three concerns education, health insurance matters and the prison and court systems. Those are three of the areas of biggest concern facing the legislator in this session.

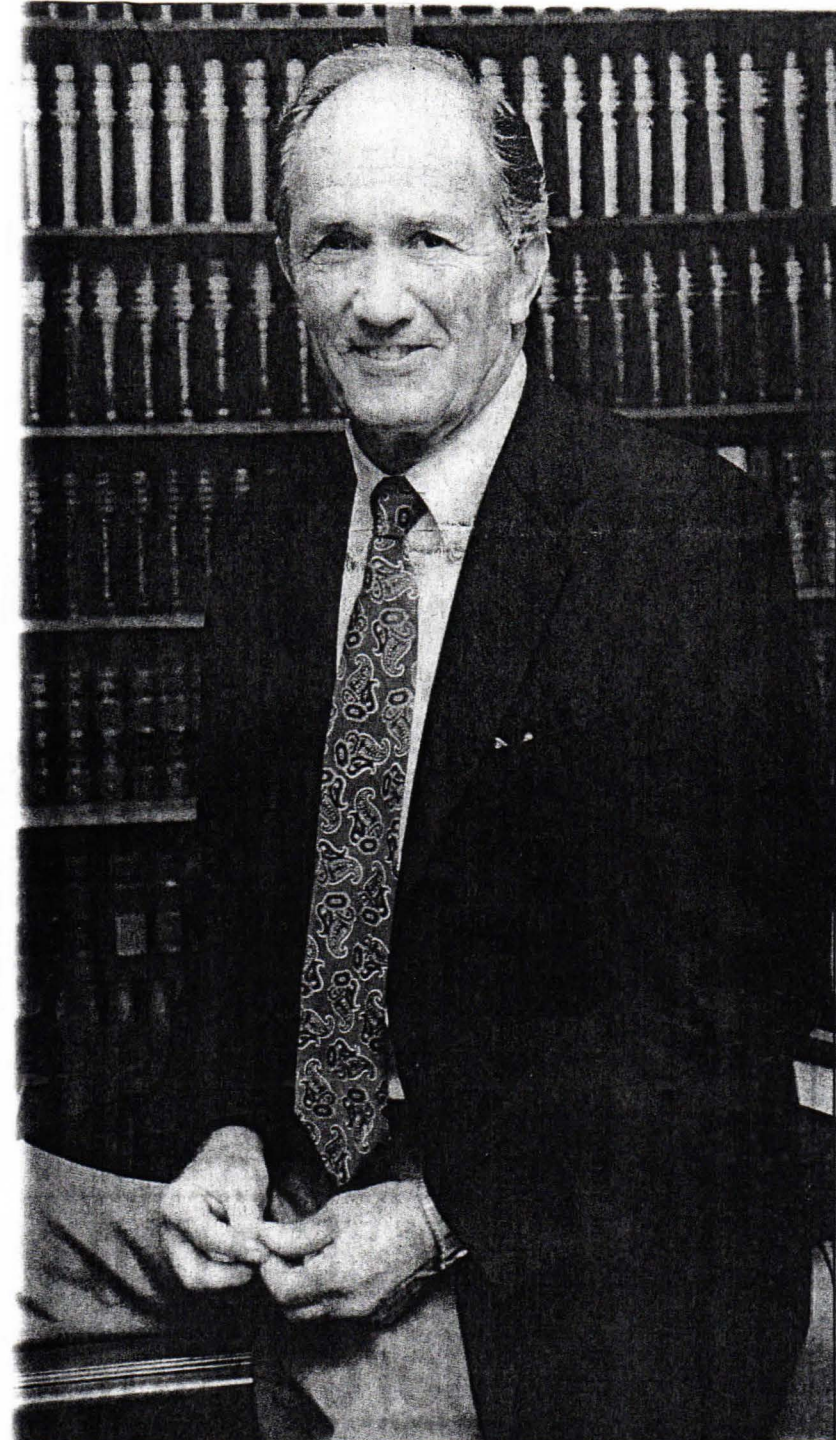
"Education is a big part of the budget," he said. "When you get into education, you've got to decide among public schools, private schools, the community college system and the university systems (competing for funds)."

Some 51 percent of the state's budget reportedly goes toward education.

The attorney has witnessed first-hand the effects of prison overcrowding where defendants sentenced to active prison terms are back on the streets before the paperwork gets to Raleigh.

"The problem with prison overcrowding is the limit on the number of (inmates) set by a federal court decision," Folger explained. "Unless it's changed, it will stay overcrowded."

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Tim Preston/The Mount Airy News

State Senator Fred Folger expects some surprises when he returns to Raleigh this week after 20 years outside of state politics.

Folger

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The only remedy is to alleviate the situation by building more prisons which Folger is hopeful will happen with the remaining bond monies approved by state voters some years ago.

Folger said judges, law enforcement officers and the public are demanding a solution to the problem and it must be dealt with.

"It's a problem that developed over many years and won't go away in one or two."

Folger will also take with him to the Senate a philosophy on those he has been elected to serve.

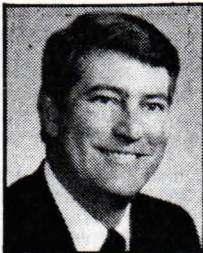
"I consider myself a representative of the state of North Carolina, elected by the people of the 12th District. But I don't just represent the people of the 12th District," he said.

THE 12th DISTRICT includes Surry, Ashe, Alleghany, Watauga, Stokes and Rockingham counties, as well as five precincts in northern Guilford County.

Folger said that while he will certainly be attentive to any legislation that would affect his district, he believes his job is to do what's best for the entire state, not just those back home in Surry County.

"You have to look at the whole area," he said.

Folger is hopeful that he will be assigned to committees covering his areas of interest, but won't know the



Sands

BUDGET: Raising and spending money won't be the only issues lawmakers will have to consider this week. **Page 9A**

outcome for some days.

Folger has served as the legal counsel for the county commissioners for many years and hopes he will be able to continue doing some of that work.

However, he pointed out that unlike his earlier terms in the Senate, his duties this time will not allow him to attend the commissioners' meetings, held the first and third Mondays of each month.

He plans to reassign those chores within his law firm and do county work between sessions when he is home.

While the attorney prepares to grapple with the pressing issues, he credited his co-colleague, Sen. A.P. "Sandy" Sands of Rockingham County, with making the transition easier.

"Sandy was a great friend and great help to me in the campaign. He supported me. We've discussed (matters) and been in touch with each other on issues."

And so, Folger is ready to return to Raleigh.

"I'm looking forward to it, with a little apprehension about the budget. The budget problems are the biggest problems. It takes money to do things needing to be done and people don't want their taxes raised. But most people realize (when it's needed) and the money is not being thrown away or wasted, they don't complain," Folger said.