THE DAILY CLIPS

January 7, 2008

News, commentary, and opinion
compiled by the East Carolina University News Bureau from:

The Greenville Daily Reflector
The Raleigh News & Observer
The New York Times
The Wall Street Journal
USA Today
The Charlotte Observer
The Fayetteville Observer
The Greensboro News & Record
Newsweek
U.S. News & World Report
Business Week
Time

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Dashiell entertains at club meeting

The Daily Reflector

Cypress Glen Retirement Community had an early Christmas experience during the recent ECU Club meeting, attended by about 100 residents and guests.

Nationally recognized jazz musician Carroll Dashiell, Jr. and his four-piece East Carolina University jazz ensemble entertained, playing some Duke Ellington jazz classics and some holiday favorites. Dashiell, director of Jazz Studies & Jazz Ensemble at ECU, has toured with Ray Charles & Jennifer Holliday. He is recognized for excellence in the music industry as a bassist, musical director and a composer/arranger.

David Rivera, a faculty member with ECU's Department of Hospitality Management, was the guest speaker at the meeting. ECU boasts the largest hospitality-management program in North Carolina and offers a unique opportunity for students to complete BS and MBA in five years.

"Our ECU program is growing to become one of the best programs in the country," said Rivera. "Students can specialize in a choice of three tracks — the Food & Beverage track, Lodging track or the Special Events Meeting Planning track." The program stresses the importance of understanding business concepts so all Hospitality Management students are required to have a business minor.

The Cypress Glen ECU Club is open to all residents and their guests who have an interest in East Carolina University.

Many Cypress Glen residents have close ties to the university and are either ECU graduates, family members of graduates or former employees of the university.

Cypress Glen is a continuing care retirement community located in Greenville about one mile from ECU. Cypress Glen is managed by The United Methodist Retirement Homes.
Cunanan Leadership Speaker Series features WorldCom whistleblower

Cooper is known for her role in uncovering corporate fraud at WorldCom – to date the largest corporate fraud in history. She was named one of Time Magazine’s 2002 Persons of the Year after detecting and reporting the fraud at WorldCom. She is president of a firm that provides consulting and training in internal audit, internal controls, governance and ethics.

“Ms. Cooper speaks on ethics and leadership from a very personal perspective, and we believe her presentation will help attendees recognize the impact that a single person may have on the members of his or her community,” Frederick Niswander, dean of the College of Business, said.

The College of Business at East Carolina University will host internal auditor and consultant Cynthia Cooper as its second speaker for the Cunanan Leadership Speaker Series at Hilton Greenville on Jan. 17 at 3:30 p.m.

Cooper’s presentation, titled “WorldCom Warnings: What Went Wrong and Corporate Governance Lessons Learned,” is free and open to the public.

The Cunanan Leadership Speaker Series is designed to bring distinguished leaders to Greenville, representing for-profit and non-profit firms, entrepreneurial activities, government, and public affairs. Topics highlight leadership, professional development, ethics and the role of business in modern society.

The College of Business at ECU was founded in 1936 and has been accredited by the AACSB since 1967. The college has more than 3,200 undergraduate students, 710 graduate students.
Brody professor was in Pakistan at the time of Bhutto's assassination

By T. Scott Batchelor
The Daily Reflector

Pakistan natives living in Greenville hold out hope for a democracy in that country despite last month's assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

M. Saeed Dar, a pharmacology professor at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, was in Pakistan visiting family Dec. 27 when the assassin struck.

Bhutto was killed in Rawalpindi, and Dar was in Lahore, about 170 miles south.

"I was in the mall when the news came, and everything was shut down within minutes," said Dar, who has lived in Greenville for about 30 years.

"It's a very tragic thing," he said of Bhutto's death, "because she was very popular and belonged to one of the major political parties."

Supporters of Bhutto and the Pakistan People's Party led were adamant that traffic stop and shops close in the wake of her death, Dar said.

They would throw rocks and sticks at shops and vehicles that didn't cease operation, he said. But he and observers were told that looting and other acts of violence were being perpetrated by "robbers, miscreants ... who took advantage of the situation."

One of Dar's colleagues and a fellow Pakistani native, Dr. Hyder Arastu said he was not a supporter of Bhutto, but the assassination "is obviously a very sad event" for the country he left nearly 30 years ago.

Arastu, a clinical professor in radiation oncology here, said he had "really no sympathy for (Bhutto) as a political leader, but that does not mean in any way I condone the assassination."

"It was wrong for whoever did that," Arastu said.

The "right thing ... would be for the government to allow the elections to go forward and she (to get) voted out," he said.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf isn't the right choice for a leader either, he said.

Musharraf has "clearly demonstrated himself to be an autocratic dictator."

Arastu served three years in the Pakistan army under compulsory service after graduating from medical school. He said "50 years of predominantly military rule" has hampered the emergence of viable democratic candidates to step forward and lead.

"Nobody was nurtured," Arastu said.

That Bhutto's 19-year-old son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, has taken over the party "is a joke," Arastu said. "He's not even fully grown up yet."

Dar said the son's ascendancy to leadership of the PPP "is symbolic in a way."

"Her son could not do much — he's only 19 years old," Dar said.

"In that part of the world, it's the name, it's not the person," he said. Benazir Bhutto's son gains popularity because of his mother's name, as she did "because of her father's name," Dar said. Her father, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, also served as the country's prime minister.

Arastu said his in-laws are still in Pakistan. "I go back there quite a lot."

"I still have a lot of sympathy for my ancestral country," Arastu said, expressing a belief that democracy will come.

"It's not going to happen overnight," he said.

In the meantime, he's not concerned that the reins of power will fall into the hands of extremists.

"Because most of the Pakistanis just can't stand them," he said.

Dar, who travels back to his native country about once a year, said he senses that the general population is eager for democracy. They demand "a free, fair, transparent election" to select their leader and will not tolerate Musharraf as an obstacle in that process, he said.

He believes Bhutto's alliance with other political parties made Musharraf "nervous" but would not say the government had a hand in her death. Instead, he said, he believes most Pakistanis suspect the current administration of complicity in the assassination.

T. Scott Batchelor can be contacted at sbatchelor@coxnc.com and 329-9667.
Kass to appear in court

East Carolina quarterback Robert Kass faces one count of driving while impaired and driving after consuming by a person under 21. The charges stem from an Aug. 25 incident.

The Daily Reflector

An East Carolina University quarterback is scheduled to appear in district court Monday morning on underage drinking and drunk driving charges.

Sophomore Robert Kass faces one count of driving while impaired and driving after consuming by a person under 21. The charges stem from an Aug. 25 police checkpoint where he registered a .19 blood alcohol content when stopped — more than twice the legal limit.

Kass originally was scheduled for a Nov. 13, 2007, court date but his attorney, Myron Hill Jr., had the trial postponed.

Following his arrest, Kass was suspended for the team's opening game of the season against Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Va. He shared time with fellow quarterback Patrick Pinkney.

Kass, a sophomore from Lakewood, Fla., started seven games for the Pirates in 2007 and participated in 10 games. He threw for 1,164 yards and nine touchdowns during the season.

Kass came on in relief of Pinkney in the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl and led the Pirates on the game-winning drive. ECU downed 24th-ranked Boise State on a Ben Hartman field goal as time expired.
Not job one

Jay Schalin's Point of View article on the report of the UNC Tomorrow commission ("Misguided agenda for universities, Jan. 1) is distressing and shortsighted, and not just because it fails to recognize the importance of education at every level for the future of our state. More troubling is an approach it shares with the commission and with many other recent reports on education — the view that the purpose of education is primarily, maybe even exclusively, "work force preparation."

Sure, that's important; but in today's world so are three other things: readiness to participate in a democracy, understanding of global context and, not least, ability to think broadly, critically, creatively.

For these purposes, the study of history, political institutions and practices, global societies, human values, literature and the arts is essential. Paradoxically, if we neglect them, we risk losing the creativity and adaptability that are our best hope for success as individuals and as a society.

W. Robert Connor
President, The Teagle Foundation
Hillsborough

The writer was formerly director of the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park.

Punishing the best

When Jay Schalin asserted in his Jan. 1 Point of View article "Misguided agenda for universities" that "the presence of disengaged students will only lessen a high school's ability to focus on students who are interested in learning," he skimmed over the larger problem of the falling educational standards caused by such policy initiatives.

When schools cater to business and popular demands to increase graduation rates and college attendance rates, they are forced to pass less intelligent and less productive students simply to meet the new quotas, usually by curving tests or lowering expectations for the same grade. This demeans and devalues a high school diploma or bachelor's degree in the job market due to the ease of obtaining one as well as the higher number of potential employees with such degrees. In such cases, the best students are punished, suffering through a dull curriculum for little payoff without postgraduate education.

The same principle applies to programs that attempt to correct for this thoughtless populism, such as AP classes: More and more unqualified students are admitted, expectations are lowered to pass a quota and the AP designation loses its value.

When will overzealous parents and politicians learn that when everyone is special, no one is?

Scott Daubenspeck
Raleigh
Fewer patients pick up infection

Triangle hospitals cut cases by half

By Jean P. Fisher
Staff Writer

Health-care workers once considered patient infections almost inevitable — a risk that went hand in hand with hospitalization. But over the past few years, hospitals have intensified their fight against infection. And it looks as though they are making progress.

Specific infection rates are not publicly reported in North Carolina, but many Triangle hospitals say they have seen serious infections such as ventilator-associated pneumonia fall by at least half in recent years.

“There’s been no other time that hospital employees have been more aware,” said Dr. Deverick Anderson, an infectious disease doctor at Duke Hospital in Durham.

Some of the improvement has come from low-tech solutions such as improving hand washing before and after contact with patients. Other gains have come from following proven infection control practices more consistently. For example, doctors and nurses use a powerful anti-microbial solution to clean a patient’s skin before inserting a central line catheter. Many now leave surgery patients’ skin unshaved to prevent nicks that let in bacteria.

“We have pretty much banned razors from the operating room,” said Dr. Meera Kelley, vice president for quality and patient safety for WakeMed.

Hospitals took a fresh look at infection control after the national Institute of Medicine, which advises the federal government on health care, published a landmark 1999 report. It found that up to 98,000 patients die each year because of preventable medical errors — including preventable infections.

SEE INFECTION, PAGE 10A

INFECTION
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Infection control

Many doctors and nurses have been guarded in their expectations for improvement, however, because even the cleanest hospital is a breeding ground for infection. Patients often come in sick. Then they are poked, pricked and cut open, giving various bugs a chance to infect them. Germs can spread from patient to patient on the hands or clothes of medical staff, or a visitor can carry them into a patient’s room.

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement has spurred the current zeal for infection control and has coordinated efforts among hospitals across the nation. In 2005, the Boston-based nonprofit challenged hospitals to save 100,000 lives by improving patients’ safety in six specific areas — three of them related to reducing infections. More than 3,000 hospitals, including all 100 in North Carolina, signed on to the effort.

One percent to 3 percent of patients develop infections, according to the most reliable national data. That translates into about 1.7 million infections, of which 99,000 result in deaths, according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates.

The institute’s campaign focused on three of the most common types of infection:

• Infections that form in patients with central line catheters.
• Surgical site infections.
• Pneumonia cases that develop in patients on mechanical ventilators.

Together, those three types of infection account for just over half of hospital infections, according to the CDC.

Encouraged by the response to its initial campaign, the institute launched a follow-up effort in December 2006 to prevent 5 million patients’ injuries associated with six causes. Just one cause is related to infection, but it’s a big one: drug-resistant staph.

Staph infections

Antibiotic-resistant staph was in the news in the fall after a Virginia teenager died from the bug. Many infectious disease specialists consider it the most dangerous infection in hospitals today.

“It makes you afraid to go into the hospital,” said Morris Weisfeld of Durham, a retired Duke mathematics professor who had heart surgery in October.

The recent media flurry over methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, turned Weisfeld from a cursory hand-rinser into a vigorous scrubber. It also made him vigilant in making sure that hospital staff washed their hands or put on fresh gloves.

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HOSPITAL INFECTIONS

About 1.7 million infections occur in American hospitals each year, according to the best national estimates. Here are the most common types.

Most common types of infections

- Bloodstream
- Urinary tract
- Pneumonia
- Surgical site

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The News & Observer

Katharine Turron, a registered nurse at WakeMed, washes her hands and arms for five minutes before surgery. New practices have cut the incidence of infections after surgery.

STAFF PHOTO BY LESLIE BARBOUR

STAMPING OUT INFECTION

The National Institute for Healthcare Improvement recommends the following steps to reduce risk of infections that occur in the hospitals. The best way for patients to know whether a hospital follows these recommendations is to ask.

CENTRAL-LINE BLOODSTREAM INFECTION

Prevention: Hand-washing; using gowns, gloves and other protective gear to prevent contamination during insertion; swabbing insertion site with chlorhexidine (a powerful antiseptic); inserting catheter in the chest or neck, as opposed to the groin, where more bacteria are present; assessing the line daily to encourage prompt removal.

VENTILATOR-ASSOCIATED PNEUMONIA

Prevention: Elevate the head of the patient’s bed between 30 and 45 degrees; briefly take patient off sedation daily to assess readiness to come off ventilator.

SURGICAL SITE INFECTION

Prevention: Administer antibiotics one hour prior to surgery and stop them within 24 hours; do not shave site of surgery; ensure patient’s blood glucose is controlled prior to surgery; keep patients at normal body temperature during surgery (patients whose body temperatures fall may be more likely to develop infection).

METHICILLIN-RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA)

Prevention: Hand-washing before and after contact; testing some or all admitted patients to find carriers of MRSA; decontaminating patient rooms and medical equipment; covering up with gowns and gloves before entering room of a carrier or infected patient and discarding upon leaving.

SOURCES: INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHCARE IMPROVEMENT; N9O RESEARCH

Increasingly, hospitals encourage patients to check hospital staff’s compliance with hand-washing.

“If anything wasn’t right, I would have asked about it,” said Weisfeld, 82, who recovered well from his surgery.

The latest infection control campaign also recommends screening patients for MRSA bacteria. People can harbor the bacteria in their nasal passages without becoming sick; the bacteria must enter the body through broken skin to cause infection.

Some hospitals already seek out carriers in intensive-care units and other high-risk areas, but only a handful nationally are checking all patients for MRSA.

Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville is one of them. In November, hospital infection control officials said its program has cut MRSA infections by more than 60 percent.

Leaders at Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem plan to require screening of all patients for MRSA this year, but leaders at other hospitals aren’t convinced that the costly process of testing every person is necessary, especially if MRSA isn’t prevalent in all parts of their facilities.

Most hospitals were already following some or all of the steps the institute’s campaign recommends, and many were doing far more. What hospitals weren’t doing, however, was measuring how often staff followed the right preventive steps for the right types of patients. The 100,000 lives campaign required hospitals to track that, making it possible to get staff back in compliance.

Checking to make sure

“Most of the people most of the time were probably doing the right stuff,” said Anderson, the Duke infection control specialist. “Now we are actually checking to make sure.”

Patients may not understand why hospital staff members wouldn’t do all they could to prevent infection. But consider hand-washing.

Public health experts know cleaning hands is the best way to keep germs from spreading. Yet, according to multiple national surveys, average compliance for hand-washing is about 40 percent in American hospitals.

Dr. David J. Weber, an infectious disease doctor at UNC-Chapel Hill and director of infection control at UNC Hospitals, said skipping on hand-washing is an easy shortcut for harried clinical staff.

“They’re busy, they have to do hundreds of times a day, and they don’t see an immediate downside to not doing it,” Weber said.

It’s hard to say what specific piece of infection control is working, but progress is evident.

WakeMed marked a 50 percent drop in central line-related bloodstream infections after joining the 100,000 lives campaign and measuring compliance.

Robin L. Carver, a registered nurse and WakeMed’s director of infection prevention and control, said hospital administrators and staff were amazed. She said the dramatic drop in bloodstream infections, which occurred between the 2005 and 2006 budget years, made staff even more vigilant about following infection-control practices. Cases of ventilator-associated pneumonia dropped by half over the same period.

WakeMed now posts signs indicating the number of days each unit has gone without infections. One unit has gone more than 18 months without, and several are closing in on one year.

“It’s been hugely motivating,” Carver said.

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A suspect is cleared in UNC sex assault

BY JESSE JAMES DECONTO
STAFF WRITER

HILLSBOROUGH – Three suspects became two after a judge found no evidence to show a 29-year-old mother of eight robbed and sexually assaulted UNC-Chapel Hill football players last month.

District Court Judge Alonzo Coleman dismissed seven felony charges Friday against T'Nikia Washington, including one accusing her of plotting with Monique Taylor of Greenville and Michael Troy Lewis of Durham to rob three football players in a Chapel Hill apartment.

District Attorney Jim Woodall said a grand jury could still indict Washington when it meets Feb. 4 after his office interviews the only player who did not testify at a probable cause hearing Thursday. That player is the one who witnesses said had some sort of sexual contact with Washington. For now, though, Washington is free.

Woodall said he was not surprised that Coleman threw out several charges.

"If a judge or a magistrate doesn't find probable cause in a case, you've got to really examine it closely," he said. "That's got a big influence on how we indict a case."

Tar Heel center Lowell Dyer and another player testified Thursday that they and a third player went out drinking just before midnight Dec. 16. At the East End Martini Bar on Franklin Street in Chapel Hill, the third player drifted away from them.

"It's not uncommon for [that player] to wander off whenever we go out," Dyer said. "Anytime [that player] goes out, he goes out pretty hard, and he's usually the most intoxicated person."

The third player later called by cell phone to say he had returned to his and Dyer's apartment. Lewis told police the third player had offered the women money for sex and invited them to the apartment.

When Dyer and his teammate, who lives elsewhere, returned to the apartment about 3 a.m., Dyer went right to bed, he said. His teammate said he found Lewis and the third football player in a bedroom with the two women.

The teammate who had returned with Dyer testified he was curious and went into the room.

That player testified Thursday that Taylor removed his shirt, pushed him onto a bed and bound his hands while a naked Lewis put a knife to his throat. Taylor fondled him while Lewis collected home electronics to steal, he said. That player testified also that Washington was in the room "hooking up" with the player whose room it was.

Lewis remains jailed in lieu of $500,000 bail on charges that he kidnapped two of the players, conspired to kidnap, rob and sexually assault one, and attempted to steal from all three. Coleman also found enough evidence to hold Lewis on charges that he robbed Dyer with a kitchen knife.

At Thursday's probable cause hearing, Dyer testified that he had not been sexually assaulted but had his wallet stolen by a man police identify as Lewis. Dyer said the man demanded his bank machine identification number at knifepoint.

Taylor posted $50,000 bail last month. Coleman found probable cause Friday to charge him with kidnapping and sexually assaulting one player, and conspiring with Lewis to kidnap, rob and assault the player.

SEE ASSAULT, PAGE 20A

ASSAULT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

IDENTIFYING VICTIMS

The News & Observer generally does not identify people who report sex crimes. Here is how the newspaper's policy applies to each player.

LOWELL DYER: The News & Observer is identifying him because he testified Thursday that he was not sexually assaulted.

PLAYER NO. 2: The News & Observer is not identifying him because he is the reported victim of a first-degree sex offense.

PLAYER NO. 3: The News & Observer is not identifying him because he initially claimed to be a victim of a sexual assault and did not appear in court this week or otherwise alter that claim.

'Truth will come out'

Washington declined to comment on Lewis' claim that she was trading sex for money. She has no prior criminal record.

"Right now, I can't say anything. My lawyer said I can't," she said. "The truth will come out when all is said and done."

Her attorney, Susan Seahorn, declined to comment this week.

Washington said it wasn't fair that her name and photograph have been publicized, while her accusers remain anonymous.

She and her husband are raising eight children in their home in northeast Durham. For most of her nearly three weeks in jail, the children have been on holiday break and traveling to visit relatives all over the Southeast.

"I just want my babies," she told her mother via cell phone outside the jail "I just want my life back."

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