LESLEY HOLLAND GARNER

Leslie Holland Garner, 89, of Greenville, died Monday, Feb. 23, 2009, from injuries sustained in a fall. He was born April 26, 1919, in Newport, the son of Lila and Howard Claus Garner. The funeral service will be conducted Friday at 11 a.m. in the Christian Life Ministry Center at St. James United Methodist Church. Burial will follow in Pinewood Memorial Park with Masonic Rites. Les dearly loved his family and was extremely proud of his children and grandchildren. He reserved a place in his heart for children with special needs. He had a wide circle of friends in Greenville, Pitt County and across the state and nation, who he loved as an extended family. Throughout his long life, he freely and generously gave of himself as he worked to make this a better world for everyone. Les Garner served his country in World War II and received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his 51 missions in the Army Air Corps. He was a successful businessman, a founding partner of Garner Wynne Manning, Inc., President of Garner Wholesale Merchandisers, president of the North Carolina Wholesalers Association and board chairman of the national Toiletries Merchandising Association. He was a Charter Member of St. James United Methodist Church. An active member of the United Methodist Men and the Men's Sunday School Class, he chaired the church's Advisory Board and Finance Committee. In the Greenville community he was an active supporter of the Salvation Army, a life member and past chair of its Advisory Board. He enthusiastically led the Salvation Army's Christmas Fund Drive for more than 40 years. He was a member of the Masonic Order since 1946. He was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina in 1976 and achieved the 33rd Honorary Degree, the highest degree in masonry. He was a member of Crown Point Lodge #708 and a Shriner of the Sudan Temple. He was a board member of Oxford Orphanage for 9 years, serving as Chairman and President. Les Garner was an active member of Kiwanis for more than 40 years. He was Kiwanian of the Year of the Greenville Club in 1971 and Kiwanian of the Year of the University City Club in 1990. He was both Lieutenant Governor and Governor of the Carolinas District. During his leadership of Kiwanis, he helped organize more than 50 clubs, including the first Golden K Club and the first all-female club in Kiwanis International. He was instrumental in the success of the University City Kiwanis Peanut Project, which now annually raises more than $50,000 for the benefit of local charities. Les Garner was the second President of the East Carolina University Pirate Club and an active supporter and fan of ECU athletics. In recent years, one of his greatest joys was leading the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" during the seventh inning stretch at all home Pirate baseball games. In 1975, he was named the Citizen of the Year by the Greenville Area Chamber of Commerce. He served as Mayor of Greenville from 1966-1987. He received the Boy Scouts of America Distinguished Service Award in 1995. He played an instrumental role in the Scales-Aldridge Golf Tournament for the benefit of J. H. Rose High School which last year was renamed the Scales-Aldridge-Garner Golf Tournament in his honor. Just last month he was honored by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce as the second recipient of the Legends Award for his decades of community service. The Legends Award recognized Leslie Garner's "outstanding character and his commitment to his community and to all of the people in it." Les had a zest for life that was evident to all who knew him. He remained active and involved until his last days. This past Saturday before the fall that injured both Les and his friend Gladys Chianello, he led the singing of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" at an ECU baseball game, and that evening escorted Gladys to a formal charity event. He was predeceased by his parents, his wife of 47 years, Evelyn Griffin Garner; his brothers, Walter Glenn, Leroy, Leland, and Arnold; and his sister Madeline Rivers. He is survived by his son, Leslie H. Garner Jr. and wife, Katrina Jolly Garner, of Mt. Vernon, Iowa; daughter, Elaine Garner Denton and husband, Wayland Denton, of Greenville; son William Griffin "Griff" Garner and wife, Christie Priestley Garner, of Greenville; his foster daughter, Gail Lynch Manning and husband, Mac Manning, of Greenville; and his foster son Barry Lynch of King. He is also survived by grandchildren who adored him, Brantly and William Garner of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Derek Denton of Greenville, Scott Denton of Albermarle, Brad Garner and wife, Emily, of Greenville, Amie Garner Miles and husband, Jeremy, of Leon, Nicaragua, Ashley Garner of Chapel Hill, Gray Garner of Greenville; and a step-granddaughter, Frances Manning of Greenville. He is also survived by his sisters-in-law Anna Garner, Louise Griffin Hill and husband Frank, and Peggy Griffin; brother-in-law, Billy Green; and
by his many loving nephews and nieces. The family will receive friends at Wilkerson Funeral Home Thursday from 4 to 7 p.m. and other times at the home of Griff and Christie Garner, 4104 Hardwick Court. Memorial contributions may be made to the Les and Evelyn Garner Scholarship Fund, c/o St. James United Methodist Church, 2000 E. 6th St., Greenville, NC 27858, the University City Kiwanis Endowment Fund, c/o Todd Brown, 600 Lyndale Court, Suite D, Greenville, NC 27858, or the Salvation Army, P. O. Box 113, Greenville, NC 27835. On-line condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.

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Les Garner remembered for positive attitude, charity work

By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

A former Greenville mayor and community leader was remembered Tuesday for his friendship and devotion to community.

Les Garner, 89, died at Pitt County Memorial Hospital on Monday after suffering a fall Saturday night. He owned a wholesale distribution company, was a longtime supporter of East Carolina University's Pirate Club, an officer in Kiwanis and a supporter of numerous community charities.

Ed Daughtry knew Garner for about 40 years.

"He was a very successful businessman, and he just liked to share his success, especially when it came to helping children, especially children who were less fortunate than the rest of us. He was a workaholic when it came to charity-type events," Daughtry said.

Daughtry became Garner's partner and eventually took over operation of the peanut-pecan sale that raises money for Kiwanis charities. It started with placing bags of nuts in local supermarkets and convenience stores. Garner applied his acumen for wholesaling, and the number of stores selling nuts grew, Daughtry said.

"He got real excited when we were doing things," Daughtry said. "He loved to sell. When we went to a Piggly Wiggly (wholesale convention) a few years ago, and about 70 stores were there, and we sold to every one.

"He was so excited about the sale, and he was driving ... well, I had to get him to stop the car and let me drive because he was too excited to drive," Daughtry said.

Garner fell on some brick steps at the home of a friend after attending the annual Service League Charity Ball on Saturday night and an East Carolina University baseball game earlier in the day, according to friends. He suffered a head injury.

Garner sang "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" at many ECU baseball games and did so again on Saturday.

He started his singing stint in 2005 after leading a Kiwanis group in a rendition of the song when former baseball coach Randy Mazey spoke. The coach was so impressed he invited Garner to sing at a home game, said Mark Wharton, the Pirate Club's executive director.

"It developed into a tradition, and being in the press box for most games he just brought a lot of positive energy. He was a positive person," he said.

ECU will remember Garner on Thursday when the Pirates play Oklahoma State. A moment of silence will be held before the bottom of the seventh inning, and the audience will then be invited to sing along with a videotape of Garner's performance, said Jimmy Bass, ECU senior associate director of athletics.

"He meant an awful lot to Pirate baseball over the years, and this is a small tribute from us to him," Bass said.

Garner also served as mayor of Greenville from 1986-87. He was honored by the Greenville-Pitt County Chamber of Commerce as its Citizen of the Year in 1976 and in January was named its second Legends Award recipient. Known as "Mr. Kiwanis," he helped organize more than 50 clubs and served as governor of the Carolinas District.
A native of Newport, Garner graduated from Greenville High School in 1937. He was a World War II veteran, honored for distinguished service as a radio operator and nose gunner on B-24s. He flew 51 missions over Europe and was awarded four air medals and two presidential unit citations.

Garner married the former Evelyn Griffin of Williamston and raised five children, including two foster children. He was a founding partner in Garner Wynne Manning, from which he retired in 1990.

Contact Ginger Livingston at glivingstosn@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9573.
Former ECU professor named state health director

The Associated Press

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

RALEIGH, N.C. — Dr. Jeffery P. Engel has been named state health director, succeeding Dr. Leah Devlin, effective March 2. Engel is a former ECU faculty member.

Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Lanier Cansler announced the appointment on Tuesday.

Devlin retired as state health director in January but has continued to serve in an interim capacity.

Since 2002, Engel has served as the state epidemiologist. In 2006, he was named chief of the epidemiology section of the division. From 1988 through 2002, he was on the faculty at the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, where he attained the rank of professor of medicine, served as chief of the division of infectious diseases, and medical director of hospital infection control for Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Engel received his undergraduate and medical degrees from Johns Hopkins University.

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NCCU endowments lost more than $4 million in 2008

ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer
Comment on this story

DURHAM - N.C. Central University's three endowments -- two that invest money for professorships and a third that manages scholarship funds -- collectively took a 21.4 percent nosedive in 2008, a loss in real numbers of more than $4 million.

"That compares to a market that's down about 50 percent from a year ago," Alan Robertson, NCCU's vice chancellor for administration and finance, said Tuesday. "I know it's pretty sad, but they are outperforming the market."

Robertson's comments came during committee meetings of NCCU's Board of Trustees and were indicative of the conversations finance staffers are having at universities across the country.

State funding is in peril, endowment values are sinking fast, and private donations are slowing.

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Staff writer Jesse James DeConto; Staff writer Eric Ferreri

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N.C. A&T losing its chancellor

The Associated Press
Comment on this story

GREENSBORO - North Carolina A&T State University Chancellor Stanley Battle says he will resign for family and personal reasons.

The News & Record of Greensboro reported Tuesday that Battle's resignation takes effect June 30. He began his job at the university on July 1, 2007.

UNC President Erskine Bowles said in a statement that he is grateful for Battle's commitment to strengthening A&T both fiscally and academically.

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Tracy starting over

Former ECU star has new perspective after blood clot

BOB BAUM, The Associated Press
Comment on this story

TUCSON, ARIZ. - Finally, Chad Tracy is having a routine spring training.

The knee surgery that sidelined him, and the subsequent blood clot that threatened his life, are history.

Tracy, a former East Carolina star, enters the 2009 season healthy as the Arizona Diamondbacks’ projected starter at first base, and for that he is grateful.

"These guys have let me try to get back to my form and haven't given up on me, which I appreciate," Tracy said after the team’s workout Tuesday. "Hopefully, I don’t let them down."

Arizona manager Bob Melvin called it "a big year" for Tracy. The muscular 28-year-old who once started at third base and played a bit in right field is in the final season of a three-year, $13.25 million contract. The club has an option to pay him $7 million for next season, and he is out to show his worth.

"He wants to be here," Melvin said.

Given Tracy’s injury-plagued recent past, it’s easy to forget that this left-handed hitting redhead was once considered the young foundation of the Diamondbacks’ offense. He hit .305 with 27 home runs in 2005, warming up in the last 25 games to bat .375 with seven doubles, seven homers, two triples and 25 RBIs. In 2006, he hit .281 with 20 homers and a career-best 80 RBIs.
He was struggling at the plate, trying too much to be a power hitter, in 2006, then came the problems with his right knee in 2007. In September of that year, Tracy underwent microfracture surgery. Later, doctors discovered a blood clot that, had it moved up from his leg, could have threatened his life. It was a jolt that changed Tracy forever.

"Baseball was put on the back burner," he said. "It was more about trying not to let the thing move and pretty much fighting for your life. ... It's scary, not to mention I had a wife and kid to think about."

Blood-thinning medication eventually resolved the problem, but Tracy's rehabilitation was set back significantly.

In May 2008, Tracy finally returned from the disabled list, but he was on the bench, primarily used as a pinch hitter.

Tracy appeared in 88 games last season, batting .267 with eight homers and 39 RBIs. His future with the Diamondbacks did not look bright.

Arizona chose not to try to re-sign Adam Dunn, and banked on the idea that a full off-season of rehabilitation work would restore Tracy to good health and productivity. He says he's confident he can return to the form that made him a good singles and doubles hitter, with an occasional home run thrown in.

His long, difficult return to the game, he said, gives him "a new perspective."

"All the stress that you put on yourself -- every night beating yourself up for those 0-for-4s or leaving that guy on third with less than two [outs]," he said, "you can take a step back and look at things in the big picture, and tell yourself how fortunate you are to be in a situation like that."

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In hard times, college fundraisers soft-sell

JUSTIN POPE, The Associated Press

Comment on this story

The legions of fundraisers colleges hired during the boom years have a new mission for these tough economic times: Go easy on the hard sell. Talk about financial aid, not shiny new buildings. If prospects can't give now, lay the groundwork for when the economy recovers.

Victoria Gorrell, the head fundraiser at Kalamazoo College in Michigan, recently visited a Chicago lawyer who had been a generous supporter, hoping to persuade him to keep up his $5,000 annual gifts. He cut back to $1,000 instead.

"But I know he cares, and he'll continue to give as he's able; and someday when things improve that will [go up] again," Gorrell said. She's optimistic but admits more people are telling her, "Gosh, you must have a really hard job."

A survey released Wednesday shows colleges raised a record $31.6 billion in the fiscal year ending June 30, an apparent sign the massive fundraising engine of American higher education was revving even as the economy slowed.

But nearly 27 percent of that went to just 20 institutions, led by Stanford ($785 million), Harvard ($650 million) and Columbia ($495 million). Taking out those 20, fundraising fell 4 percent last year.

And now, to many colleges trying to replenish drained endowments, even that modest decline feels like a painfully out-of-date postcard from a now-departed golden era of college philanthropy. This year's numbers will almost certainly be worse, as colleges postpone big campaigns to avoid watching them fall short, and renegotiate some pledges to spread them over more years.

One sign of the drop: In the last six months of calendar 2008, Indiana University's Center on Philanthropy identified 444 announced gifts of $1 million or more to higher education -- 14 percent fewer than the same period in 2007. The combined value of those gifts was $3.5 billion -- down 40 percent from the year before.

No sugarcoating

"There's no sugarcoating the fact that it's not going to be a good period," said Ann Kaplan, who directs the annual Voluntary Support of Education survey for the New York-based Council for Aid to Education. Informally, colleges have reported to her that donations "hit a wall" last month.

Historically, college giving holds up well in recessions that last less than 8 months. But this one is 15 months long and counting. And long bear markets not only hurt donors' wealth but lessen the tax incentive to donate appreciated securities. Stocks were at six-year lows this week.

For college fundraisers -- a profession that has grown exponentially -- the economic
meltdown means a delicate balancing act. Their institutions are facing urgent budget shortfalls. But long-term, they can't afford to alienate donors by looking greedy.

"The first thing we do when we sit down with people is we acknowledge we know times are tough," said Michael Stitsworth, vice president for advancement and college relations at St. Olaf College in Minnesota. These days, his pitch is, "I'd like to have dinner with you, and I promise I won't ask you for any money."

St. Olaf's annual fund is down a modest 5 percent compared with last year, Stitsworth said. Luckily, the school is between campaigns. It's focused on engaging more alumni in college life, hoping they'll donate later. One project brings alumni in business to campus to work with students in a finance club. While visiting, they have lunch with the president and meet faculty.

Recession-hammered donors have less to give, so schools lay the groundwork for a recovery and try not to appear greedy.

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IN NORTH CAROLINA

Among the top 20 fundraising colleges and universities were:

* Duke University, at No. 13, with $385.67 million
* UNC-Chapel Hill, at No. 19, with $292.39 million

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