THE DAILY CLIPS

July 1, 2009

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

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Suspect identified in drive-by that killed student, manager

By Michael Abramowitz
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Police are searching for a man after a dispute in a downtown bar led to a drive-by shooting that killed two men outside early Tuesday, police said.

Two warrants have been issued for the arrest of the alleged killer, James Earl Richardson, 32, of 1905-5 Kennedy Circle, police chief William Anderson said at an afternoon news conference.

Edgar Landon Blackley, 21, an East Carolina University student, and Charles Andrew “Drew” Kirby, 27, manager of Michaelangelo’s Pizza across the street from the bar, died from their wounds.

The two men were apparently shot in the upper body, police spokesman Cpl. Kip Gaskins said. One died en route to Pitt County Memorial Hospital, the other at the hospital, Gaskins said.

The problem started inside The Other Place at 207 E. Fifth St., between Cotanche Street and Reade Circle, about 2 a.m., Anderson said.

Richardson reportedly was intimidating patrons in the bar, leading to an altercation between him and staff members, who escorted him out.

He then allegedly drove by, or was driven by the nightclub in a late-model, white BMW and opened fire on the club, Anderson said. The possibility of other suspects being involved in the shooting is being investigated, he said.

The two victims were not involved in the incident and were standing apart on the sidewalk outside when the shots were fired from the gunman, the police chief said.

Investigators located the BMW at 11 a.m. parked on McDowell Street, he said.

The chief also said surveillance cameras mounted on poles on the street might have recorded the vehicle driving from the scene, but investigators were reviewing the footage on Tuesday.

Jeff Deering, Michaelangelo’s owner, confirmed his employee was killed by the gunfire. Kirby was off duty and with his girlfriend, who was standing next to him outside the bar when he was shot, Deering said. She was not hit.

“We’re closed Sundays and Mondays, and Drew’s night to have fun was Mondays,” Deering said.

Deering received condolences from friends and customers who stopped in and called him at his restaurant throughout the morning.

“These are people (the shooter) who just don’t care about human life. The loss of innocent lives is horrible. It drives me crazy,” Deering said.

The city of Greenville will lend full support to the police department in its effort to work the case, City Manager Wayne Bowers said.

“It’s unfortunate when we have an event like this happen downtown,” Bowers said. “We’re concerned any time there’s a shooting, especially when innocent bystanders are involved.”
Bowers and Gaskins said Greenville residents should always take precautions and be aware of their surroundings, but they should not be afraid to go out.

"The streets are safe," Gaskins said. "Our city is like any other city. We have our share of violent crime like any other city, and walking the streets here is as safe as walking the streets anywhere if you take normal precautions, live your life normally, but be observant and a good witness."

Anderson said people should use common sense when choosing to head to downtown nightclubs late at night where alcohol is consumed, but said that all residents have the right to go anywhere they choose at any time in the city and feel safe.

Patrols will be increased according to the established policing plan that the department follows, the chief said.

Blackley lived at North Campus Crossing apartments and was majoring in industrial distribution and logistics and business administration.

ECU campus orientation began this week, and visitors were told about the shooting, university spokesman John Durham said.

"We've already made people coming to campus aware that a homicide has happened ... and that one of them was an ECU student," Durham said.

The university has several approaches to prepare students for the downtown and off-campus experience, Durham said.

"We're not unaware of the violence in modern American society," he said. I don't think anybody is (unaware).

"We encourage (students) to take care and be vigilant, to take precautions. We will probably increase some of the crime prevention classes that we offer. We run a safe-ride program that encourages them to call us if they need a ride home from the downtown area," Durham said.

The shooting is one of several recently in the city:

On March 31 a man exchanged gunfire with Greenville police officers outside 402 Paris Ave. after 11:30 p.m. Two officers confronted the man, saw he had a handgun and asked him to drop the weapon. Instead, the man fired at the officers, and they both returned fire. Raefael Quinnie Davis Jr., 23, was wanted in connection with the shooting.

On April 14, a gunman shot Joe Van Holden, 26, in the leg during a fight inside Buffalo Wild Wings, 426-B Arlington Blvd., shortly after 10:30 p.m. No arrest has been made.

On June 6, a shooting killed William Joseph Powell III, 28, outside the Greenville Stop One, 514 Watauga Ave. Police charged David Terrell McLawhorn, 17, of 600 Apt. E. W. 14th St., with one count of murder in connection with the death. They also filed charges against McLawhorn in connection with a May armed robbery.

On June 14, a woman was struck by a stray bullet fired from a nearby apartment at Woodlands apartments on Frontgate Drive off of Southwest Greenville Boulevard. The woman was shot before 11:30 a.m. after a dispute at the neighboring apartment. No arrest has been made.

Tuesday's was not the first drive-by incident downtown, either. Two men were treated for gunshot wounds after a man in a black vehicle fired on them Nov. 4, 2001, in front of what was then Buffalo Wild Wings and Wrongway Corrigans on Fifth Street.

Bowers said violent crime is a serious ongoing issue. "It's an issue confronting our entire country. The solution will involve a long-term strategy. ... I think that people should always be careful of their surroundings, but they should not be fearful of the streets."

Anyone with information concerning this case is urged to contact the Greenville Police Department at 329-4317 or Pitt-Greenville Crime Stoppers at 755-7777.

Bobby Burns and Kelley Kirk contributed to this report.

Contact Michael Abramowitz at mabramowitz@coxnc.com or (252) 329-9571.

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News reverberates through ECU campus

By Josh Humphries
The Daily Reflector The Associated Press

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

A drive-by shooting that killed two men downtown early Tuesday was the talk of Greenville much of the day.

East Carolina University's campus was full of families checking out the school for orientation Tuesday afternoon.

Prospective students and their parents heard about the shooting from ECU Police officers at orientation Tuesday morning.

Incoming freshman Victoria Palermo, of Hickory, was in Greenville with her parents, Beth and Joe, when she heard about the shooting.

"It doesn't make me nervous being here," she said.

"I'm still looking forward to coming to school here."

Beth Palermo said that the family will continue to discuss safety before her daughter starts classes in the fall.

"We've had a few discussions before and we will have more before she starts school," Beth Palermo said.

Officers explained the shooting to visiting parents and how the victims were bystanders.

"We asked the police officers a million questions, and we definitely feel better after talking to them," Beth Palermo said.

Stewart Wooten and Sarah Starbuck, both of Raleigh, also were visiting campus Tuesday afternoon.

"It's a little scary," Wooten said.

"We were walking around downtown, and it happened about an hour after we left."

Starbuck said incidents like this happen everywhere, but people should be cautious wherever you go.

"When something like this happens, it makes you realize that there are times when you are not safe," she said.

"But stuff like that happens all the time, and it doesn't make me nervous, just more aware of my surroundings."

Starbuck's mother, Michelle, said that the incident will bring home lessons she is trying to teach her daughter before school starts.

"It makes it real when we tell them to be aware of their surroundings," she said.

"When we tell them that something might happen, it might really happen."

Michelle Starbuck said she is confident in the ECU Police Department and its efforts to keep campus safe. She said the talk from officers to parents made her feel better.

"They gave us all the info we needed to feel better," Michelle Starbuck said.

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ABC NEWS

Campus Chatter

Scoops, discoveries and quirky observations.

Drive-By Shooting Near ECU Campus Leaves Two Dead

June 30, 2009 5:34 PM

ABC News On Campus reporter Nadine Mauser blogs:

An East Carolina University student and local restaurant manager were killed in a drive-by shooting early Tuesday after a dispute outside a bar in downtown Greenville, N.C., police said.

Greenville Police identified the victims as Landon Blackley, a rising senior at ECU, and Andrew Kirby, a manager at Michaelangelo's, a restaurant in the downtown area. Police believe Blackley and Kirby were innocent bystanders.

At a 2 p.m. press conference, Greenville Police Chief William Anderson said investigators were still searching for the suspect, James Earl Richardson, 32, and another man who may be involved.

According to witnesses and police, a fight broke out at approximately 2 a.m., in front of The Other Place, a popular bar in downtown Greenville. The Other Place, also known as The OP, is located near the intersection of Fifth and Read Streets.

ECU senior Daniel Granzyk, who works as a bouncer at a bar near The OP, was working the Monday night shift when the shooting occurred.

"Some people ran into the bar I work at," he said. "They were yelling and screaming that there was a drive-by."

Granzyk and others heard the gunshots and walked over to The OP to see what was going on. "I saw two bodies lying on the ground," he said. "I couldn't believe what I saw last night and still can't believe it today."

The victims were taken to Pitt County Memorial Hospital. One victim died shortly after the shooting. The second victim died around 6 a.m., Tuesday morning, police said.

An emergency alert was sent out to ECU students describing the suspects as two black males.

"The first suspect is described as having light skin, being tall, and wearing a white t-shirt," the alert read. "The other suspect is described as being tall, wearing a white v-neck shirt and wearing a red hat." The suspects were last seen traveling west, away from campus, in a late-1980s model BMW.

Investigators blocked off the crime scene Tuesday morning, but have since re-opened the traffic area. The police are continuing their investigation of the shooting.

John Durham, a spokesman for ECU, a college of about 20,000 undergrads, said the university was offering grief counseling to students.

"We have a number of the victim's friends meeting with counselors as we speak," Durham said.

June 30, 2009 | Permalink | User Comments (0)
No sexual assault charges in ECU dorm case

The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, July 01, 2009

No sexual assault charges will be brought against three men accused of stealing electronics from an East Carolina University student in March, according to a Pitt County prosecutor.

The Wake County woman, who was 18 at the time, told assistant district attorney Kimberly Robb earlier this month she didn't want to pursue the sexual assault charges.

Robb and Penny Warren, victim/witness coordinator with the Pitt County District Attorney's office, met with the woman and her family at her Wake County home on June 10.

"After talking with her and her family, we have determined it is not in her best interest to pursue additional charges," Robb said.

The woman, now 19, plans to return to ECU for the fall semester and wants to concentrate on her studies, Robb said.

The woman reported on March 28 that three men had stolen a laptop, a desktop computer, a printer, a calculator, an Adidas bag and a North Face bag from her Clement Hall dorm room. After further investigation, it was reported a sexual assault took place when the suspects were in the room, according to ECU police.

The woman told police she met the men the previous night at Charles Boulevard and 11th Street when they stopped to ask directions to the Tar River area.

In mid-April, ECU police released images of three male suspects. Within a week, university police, working with the Jones County Sheriff's Office and Havelock Police Department, arrested Matthew Anthony Fortergill, 18, of Pollocksville; David Ray Harvell, 20, of Havelock; and Warren James Ford Jr., 21, of Havelock and charged them with felony larceny and felony conspiracy to commit larceny.

Robb said the larceny case is expected to be presented to the Pitt County grand jury later this summer.
Shooting prompts mixed reaction from businesses

By Kathryn Kennedy
The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, June 30, 2009

Downtown business owners say they will continue operating in the wake of Tuesday's double homicide, which many deemed a horrible but isolated incident.

The Other Place, a nightclub in front of which the shooting occurred, planned to be open Tuesday night to hold a gathering to remember the victims, co-owner Matt Blackman said in an e-mail.

"We will only be open for those close to the victims or whoever would like to show respects or share stories of good times." The email said flowers or memorabilia may be brought and placed outside where a designated area will be set up.

Blackman said witnesses and staff at the club spent the night and much of the day Tuesday helping the Greenville Police Department "find these ruthless and outright evil people that participated in last night's tragic, needless, thoughtless and horrible acts. They have made great steps in the investigation and these guys' time is limited."

He said he hopes to address downtown issues and security measures at his business in the near future.

Mayor Pat Dunn has a similar agenda.

"First of all my heart goes out to the families of these two young men. It was a senseless act. We need to prevent this from happening again."

She said Tuesday afternoon she instructed city staff to arrange a meeting of bar owners, GPD and East Carolina University police.

The latter two have a good relationship, she said, especially providing protection on weekends and for special events.

Dunn said no date has been set for discussions, but it will include downtown bars, and may be expanded to include similar establishments citywide.

"I'm going to work to make that happen," she said.

Michelangelo's Pizza owner Jeff Deering said he wasn't sure if he would keep the newest Fifth Street location open because of downtown violence. He employed victim Andrew Kirby as a manager at that restaurant.

"I'd like to see more of a police presence at that time of night," Deering said. "Before that time, if three or four walk around, that's all right. But if it's 2 a.m. and it's closing time and there are 12 cops available, get all 12 down here... Everyone's going out to the streets. It's common sense.

"These kids are not leaving these clubs sober. They're leaving drunk and mad. That's when the cops need to be here."

Other business owners said the police are doing all they can.

"I've been in business 21 years," Jay Long, owner of East Fifth Street's Stop Shop Convenience Store, said. "In all that time, I've had one robbery, and the police caught the guy within five minutes. Show me a convenience store in the county with a record like that."
Denise Walsh is executive director of Uptown Greenville, which advocates for the revitalization of the downtown area. She said she spoke with several downtown business owners following the shootings.

"Most of them feel there is a good police presence overall," she said. "The police department does have a downtown plan. A few (business owners) said it could be a little better after dark on Monday and Tuesday. There's higher visibility (of law enforcement) Wednesday through Saturday.

"In urban downtowns you always have a concern for safety ... especially after dark," she said. "A lot of people know there's a difference between business as usual during daylight hours and late night."

Areas with bars, she noted, combine alcohol with late hours, sometimes with a negative effect.

"I work here every day," Walsh said. "I feel safe. I feel safe bringing friends and family to the district at night. As tragic, as unfortunate as this is, it is a singular incident."

She admitted that in the eyes of those working to bring more business and residents downtown regularly, the event and media coverage of it "could set us back a bit."

Unk's Restaurant owner Jeremy Spengeman recently has bulked up security measures at his Jarvis Street establishment — at the direction of the special-use permit he now needs to operate.

"Business owners could do more things," he said, though he was quick to add that those improvements shouldn't be mandated as his were.

He said hiring off-duty officers from the Pitt County Sheriff's Office has brought "a lot of positives" including what he boasts is "the safest parking lot in Greenville." He also suggested scanning wands for bars that want to tighten security at the door.

Regardless of what changes may occur, Spengeman said there's no single group that should carry the blame for Tuesday's deaths.

"Is it the bar owner's fault?" he asked. "No. Is it the police department's fault? No. Is it society run amok? Yes."

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Editorial: A city's threat - Turn outrage to action on safety

Wednesday, July 01, 2009

Simmering outrage over violent crime in Greenville turned to a full boil on Tuesday morning when two men were killed in the heart of the city. They were victims of an apparent drive-by shooting on Fifth Street, innocent bystanders on a sidewalk when they were senselessly gunned down.

While the lives of those lost should be solemnly remembered, this community should not let a minute pass before recognizing the threat this incident poses to the city's viability. Hollow promises and aimless talk must be replaced by firm strategies that restore confidence in the safety of Greenville residents.

Landon Blackley, 21, was an East Carolina University student and Andrew "Drew" Kirby, 27, managed a downtown pizza parlor. Both were standing on the Fifth Street sidewalk after 2 a.m. when shots were fired from a white BMW toward a night club, according to the Greenville Police Department. Investigators are looking for James Earl Richardson, a 32-year-old Greenville man who had an altercation at the club prior to the shooting.

This community should be sorrowful for two promising lives abruptly cut short. It is right to thirst for justice on behalf of the victims' loved ones and to demonstrate that the rule of law is absolute.

But for those young men, for the health and welfare of this community's future, this incident demands serious discussion and swift action.

Greenville has its share of violent crime. Several shootings last month left one man dead and several others wounded. The city witnessed gun play in a restaurant as recently as April. And in November 2001, a drive-by shooting on Fifth Street injured two men as they stood on the sidewalk.

But never before has Greenville seen this type of violence at the very heart of the downtown district, an act that threatens the social and economic viability of the city.

Accountability is needed. If leadership at any level or in any office cannot meet citizens' expectations, then replacement should be strongly considered. The standard for performance has been raised, and officials' actions should reflect that urgency.

However, public officials with the city or the police department cannot fight violent crime by themselves. From East Carolina Chancellor Steve Ballard to the Uptown Greenville merchants association to the living room of every city resident, all must recognize that the city cannot sustain itself or grow unless citizen safety is assured.

That means all options should be considered, from new police tactics to earlier closing times for the bars and restaurants or increased, if not mandated, security measures. Actions must reflect the seriousness of the problem.

Greenville streets are safe, a police spokesman contended on Tuesday. But the tragic shooting deaths of two bystanders on a downtown city street has shaken residents' confidence in that assertion. If left unaddressed at this critical hour, that doubt will fester throughout the city and beyond.

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Scandal spooks NCSU donors

Some decline to open checkbooks

BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer

For three decades, James Arthur was perfectly pleased to send an annual donation to N.C. State, the university that granted him three degrees.

But last year he began reading about Mary Easley, her pay raise and the university’s handling of the matter.

And he put the checkbook away.

"If NCSU can afford to give Mary Easley an $80,000 salary increase, it no longer needs my support," he wrote in an e-mail early this year to the head of NCSU’s annual giving initiative. "That the chancellor of NCSU would give such a rich reward to the wife of a sitting governor has lowered my respect for the chancellor and, sadly, for the school as well."

Arthur isn’t the only alum displeased with NCSU’s handling of the Mary Easley affair. University administrators have gotten an earful from graduates, creating a dicey situation for development officials who have scrambled to repair relationships and keep the money flowing.

By some measures, NCSU is still doing fine. The university received cash donations of about $74 million in the fiscal year that ended Tuesday, almost exactly the same as last year’s take. Donations to the annual fund, those $50 and $100 gifts, are up 15 percent from a year ago, said Nevin Kessler, NCSU’s vice chancellor for university advancement.

But new commitments, gifts pledged but not yet actually paid, are down 22 percent from a year ago. Kessler thinks the decline is due more to the weak economy than the Easley situation.

"There’s really no way to measure cause and effect," Kessler said, referring to the Easley saga and its potential impact on fundraising. "That isn’t to say we don’t have an issue and have to rebuild confidence and trust."

One wealthy donor displeased with the Easley situation has withdrawn plans for a gift in the $10,000 to $25,000 neighborhood, Kessler said. Others have called to complain, or they vent when a student working the development office phone bank calls asking for $50 or $100. In that situation, students are instructed to remind donors that their money can be designated for whatever use they choose.

Small checks matter

Although a university loves the big gift, it also puts a lot of resources into keeping the slow-and-steady donors happy. Arthur, now 76 and retired, received two bachelor’s degrees and a master’s degree from NCSU in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Though he moved to South Carolina, NCSU never left his heart.
But when he read of Easley's raise, he did the only thing he could think of to send a message.

"I thought about the amount of money I'd given to the school over a long period of time, and it paled in comparison to what they were giving her as a raise, so I figured, if you need money, go ask her," Arthur said. "It's the only way I can make a statement."

Even if donors such as Arthur ease up on donations, the damage to the university likely will be brief, said Rae Goldsmith, vice president for advancement resources for the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, a membership organization for fundraisers.

"If there's a blip, it's a short-lived blip," Goldsmith said. "As long as people feel the institution is moving forward and getting past it, their connection to the institution tends to outlive their anger."

Jim Pomeranz chooses to see the bigger picture. He is an NCSU alum and a member of the Wolfpack Club since 1977.

Pomeranz gives to athletics and academics and was outraged by the university's handling of the Easley issue. He wrote e-mails and made phone calls to complain, but he continues to write checks.

"People who say they're not going to give anymore, they need to go the other way," said Pomeranz, who lives in Cary. "They need to continue giving, and say 'act better!'"

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Get it all with convenient home delivery of The News & Observer.
Peals of joy mark NCCU's 100th year

The bell takes center stage as the university's alumni, students and faculty celebrate Charter Day.

BY ERIC FERRERI, Staff Writer

DURHAM - As an undergraduate at N.C. Central University half a century ago, Timothy McIntosh had an entire campus counting on him.

McIntosh was the campus bell-ringer. Five times a day, seven days a week, for four years, McIntosh would pull the rope on the old bell that stands in the center of campus, signaling to
students that it was time to wake, eat or go to class.

For that, he earned $60 a month.

"It was a good job; it got me through college," McIntosh said Tuesday. "That was my main source of income."

McIntosh came to NCCU from Wilson, where he grew up. He studied mathematics and went on to a career doing civilian financial work for the Army.

Now 69, retired and living in Maryland, McIntosh was among scores of proud NCCU alumni who returned to campus this week to commemorate their alma mater's Charter Day, the 100th anniversary of its incorporation.

McIntosh kicked off the event -- and a year of planned activities celebrating NCCU's centennial -- with one more ring of the bell.

"At six in the morning, he was none too popular with the folks in the residence halls nearest the bell," quipped NCCU Chancellor Charlie Nelms, who presided Tuesday and spoke at length of the importance that bell played in the life of the campus.

NCCU founder James Shepard had a particular fondness for the bell, old-timers recounted Tuesday. He disliked tardiness and wanted everyone in class on time.

"The community depended on this bell for the correct time; they set their watches by it," said alumnus Robert Lawson, the longtime university photographer. "If we won a game, they'd ring it, too. You knew if we lost a football game because the bell didn't sound."

The event Tuesday also included speeches and proclamations from local dignitaries as well as a re-enactment of the signing of the charter. The role-playing was done by descendants of many of the original signers.

In its century of life, NCCU has had a few name changes and a couple of different missions. It was conceived by Shepard and a small group of Durham businessmen who wanted a religious school for blacks. So at its founding, the institution was called the National Religious Training School and Chautauqua for the Colored Race.

The school relied on donations, which waned when World War I arrived. It couldn't pay its bills and was eventually turned over to the state, which in 1923 turned it into a teacher training school for blacks. Shepard became its principal.

But two years later, Shepard lobbied and received state money to turn it into a liberal arts college, and it became the North Carolina College for Negroes, the nation's first liberal arts college for blacks.

Dudley Flood, an alumnus, career educator and member of the UNC system's Board of Governors, recalled that along with the academic education he received while a student at NCCU, he learned some lessons about life -- how to speak, dress and carry himself properly.

"We didn't have a written dress code, ... but if you didn't have a coat and a necktie [during meals], you didn't eat. We were taught decorum," he told a rapt audience at B.N. Duke Auditorium. "I will tell you right now, it matters how you present yourself."

NCCU has centennial events planned throughout the next year, culminating in the spring with an academic symposium examining the future of historically black colleges and universities. With state budget cuts looming, university administrators and alumni association officials plan to lean heavily on private donors to raise money for centennial events.

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Letter: Medical profession of yore is here no more

Wednesday, July 01, 2009

In his farewell address to the nation in 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower warned Americans of the threat of the military-industrial complex. Today, it is the medical-industrial complex that we need to fear.

First described in 1971, the medical-industrial complex is a $2 trillion industry dominated by investor-owned businesses whose primary goal is maximization of profit. When I entered medical school in 1978, the field of medicine was a highly respected profession that, for the most part, placed the needs of the patient above any personal gain. Over the years, the scientific and technologic advances in medicine have opened the door to the commercialization of medicine.

A visit to the doctor has become an odyssey of tests (CT scans, cardiac catheterizations, endoscopies, MRIs), all of which are expensive. Ironically, the use (and overuse) of these expensive tests has not been shown to improve the health of patients. This country has highly skilled (and highly paid) technicians (cardiologists, surgeons, radiologists, gastroenterologists) who are businessmen (and businesswomen), but who are no longer part of the profession of medicine.

The medical profession (as I thought I knew it) has ceased to exist. The medical establishment has had the chance to resist the commercialization of medicine, but reluctance to regulate its profession has been the hallmark of the American Medical Association over the past 50 years. The cost of the unregulated medical-industrial complex is now unaffordable to a growing number of Americans.

A recent CBS/New York Times poll indicated that 72 percent of Americans support the idea of a government-administered health insurance plan. Unless the medical establishment stops acting like a business and remembers that it is supposed to be a profession (with the needs of its patients as its priority), the chances of any substantive changes to our broken system are unlikely.

Whither the medical profession?

PAUL COOK
Greenville_SpgB

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