THE DAILY CLIPS

August 8, 2012

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The Greenville Daily Reflector
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ECU alumni part of Mars Exploration team

BY LYNSEY HORN  
The Daily Reflector

He graduated from ECU in 1992 with a bachelor of arts degree in English and a bachelor of science degree in computer science. He also has a master of computer science degree from the University of Illinois.

"He was enthusiastic, and he enjoyed doing the work. He enjoyed all of it," former computer science professor Bob Fainter said.

Maxwell depicts his life as a superhero saga on the NASA website. In it, he describes his dislike for Baldwin and calls ECU "an obscure East Coast university."

"Oh, and in case you can't tell, Scott hates writing about himself," he concludes.

When Maxwell was working on his undergraduate degrees, he survived Hodgkin's lymphoma. Fainter said his illness only made him want to work harder.

"He just wanted to learn anything he could," he said.

See MARS, A3

MARS

Continued from B1

Maxwell has gone on to pursue a version of his childhood dream to be an astronaut.

Curiosity weighs about one ton, and the mission cost about $2.5 billion.

The rover will be hunting for basic ingredients of life like carbon-based compounds, nitrogen, phosphorus, sulfur and oxygen and minerals that might provide clues about possible energy sources. It carries 10 instruments, including a rock-zapping laser and a mobile organic chemistry lab.

Maxwell and the rest of the Mars exploration team operate from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., where he has lived in the same neighborhood for 18 years.

"When I think of Scott, it has been 20 years, I've remembered him and wanted to find out what he was doing," Fainter said. "What he's doing now, it's a thrill."

Contact Lynsey Horn at 329-9574 or Lhorn@reflector.com.
Rocky Mount native has hands-on role in NASA's Mars mission

PASADENA, Calif.—One of the driving forces – literally – behind NASA's Mars rover Curiosity, which began a two-year mission Monday to explore the Red Planet, is Scott Maxwell.

Maxwell grew up in Rocky Mount and studied at East Carolina University, where he double-majored in English and computer science.

After graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, he eventually took his software-writing skills to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif., where he was hired to write software for Mars missions projects.

Eventually, he landed the job as a rover driver and several years ago controlled other exploration rovers on Mars.

He's doing it again with Curiosity.

"I was able to turn my job writing software to drive rovers around into a job of driving rovers around with that software," Maxwell said Tuesday in a Skype interview with WRAL News.

So, how did he get a job like that? He calls it luck.

"It was my enthusiasm that they responded to," he said. "That was what they were looking for. They wanted someone coming in who was just excited to meet the people who do this."

Driving the Mars rover might conjure up mental images of something similar to a remote control toy, but it's nothing like that.

"That would make my life really simple," Maxwell said.

In the absolute best scenario, in which Earth and Mars would be aligned with one another, it would take four minutes for a signal from Earth to reach the rover, and another four minutes to receive a signal from the device.
In the worst case scenario, when Mars is on the opposite side of the sun, it would take 20 minutes each way.

Maxwell likens it to trying to drive a car on a delay.

"We can't possibly drive the rovers interactively that way," he said. "The rover goes to sleep at night, and while it's sleeping on Mars, we're planning out its entire next day. Then, the rover wakes up, we send out all the commands, and it clocks out its whole day."

And he isn't working 9 to 5.

In fact, life these days is anything but normal for Maxwell and his team.

"The rover cares about when the sun is up in the Martian sky," he said. "It doesn't care when the sun is up in the Earth sky, so you have to operate according to the Martian clock."

That means driving into work at 1:30 a.m. local time. And because Martian days are 40 minutes longer than Earth's, he'll go to work 40 minutes later Wednesday.

"Basically, we'll be living according to the schedule of another planet. For me, this is one of those things that is really super fun," he said. "It wreaks havoc in your life, but it emphasizes the uniqueness and the specialness of what we're doing. We're the only people in the world who are living according to the clock of another planet."

In addition to Curiosity landing on Mars this week, it's also the anniversary of another major milestone in Maxwell's life. He was successfully treated for Hodgkin's lymphoma in 1992.

Twenty years later, Maxwell says, he's loving his job.

In addition to learning about the history of the planet, he's able to post photos from Mars almost immediately on the Jet Propulsion Laboratory's Mars Science Laboratory website. Maxwell is also tweeting regularly about his experience on Twitter at @marsroverdriver.

"I like it that I get to drive a rover around on Mars. It's really fun to do," he said. "But the most fun for me is that we can take everybody in the world along in the back seat."

Reporter: Brian Shrader
Photographer: Edward Wilson
Web Editor: Kelly Gardner
Greenville connects to Amtrak
By Wesley Brown
Wednesday, August 8, 2012

Starting this fall, Amtrak shuttle buses will come to Greenville to connect eastern North Carolina with high-speed passenger rail service nationwide, the federal train operator announced Monday.

The newly dedicated motor coach line, dubbed “Thruway Service,” will establish two eastern North Carolina routes, one connecting Greenville, New Bern, Havelock and Morehead City, and the other Goldsboro, Kinston, Jacksonville and Wilmington.

Both routes will take passengers to an Amtrak station in Wilson that serves the Palmetto train, a twice-daily rail line that stops at 20 stations between New York and Savannah, Ga. It also provides access to the Amtrak national network of more than 500 stations in 46 states, the District of Columbia and three Canadian provinces.

An official schedule, start date and pricing for the shuttle buses have not been finalized, according to a news release. The City Council on Monday gave Amtrak permission to load and unload at the Greenville Area Transit (GREAT) transfer point on Reade Street.

“Using safe, modern, clean and comfortable intercity motor coach equipment, Amtrak Thruway Service will provide easy, convenient coordinated train/motor coach connections,” Christina Leeds, media relations manager for Amtrak’s press office, said. “Based on successful models in many other states, the eastern North Carolina expansion will work well to serve these diverse communities and destinations.”
The effort to extend Amtrak’s network into Greenville dates back to 2009, during Pat Dunn’s tenure as mayor.

It gained steam this year with the backing of the City Council and mayors from four cities and towns in southeastern Pitt County, including Greenville’s new mayor, Allen Thomas.

Connection to Amtrak’s rail network was seen as a key to economic growth, according to resolutions passed in the past two months by the Greenville Metropolitan Planning Organization and the City Council.

Metropolitan planners believe that a connecting service will help relieve highway congestion and reduce fuel emissions in and around Greenville, while serving as a “vital” link between local communities and larger coastal cities up and down the Eastern Seaboard.

The City Council agreed, saying “there is a vital need to provide passenger rail transportation to Greenville’s regional medical health centers and hospital, and to East Carolina University, a major state university with more than 30,000 students, faculty and staff.”

Leeds said the Thruway Service will connect colleges and universities, major military installations, and a number of cities and communities that have limited intercity public transportation options.

Amtrak operates the Thruway bus connections nationwide, including one that connects Winston-Salem and High Point with the train station in Greensboro.

A one-way bus ticket from Winston-Salem to Greensboro costs $5.50 and departs at 7 a.m., noon and 5:15 p.m. on weekdays, according to Amtrak schedules.

Contact Wesley Brown at 252-329-9579 or wbrown@reflector.com. Follow him on Twitter @CityWatchdog.
Letter: More renters per house no solution

“The answer is expanding the number of professionals and families seeking to first rent, then purchase, homes in the university neighborhood by addressing the issues that affect such decisions.”

Wednesday, August 8, 2012

There has been a great deal of rhetoric about the “three-unrelated” rule. Opponents of the ordinance have argued that making rental properties in the university neighborhood more affordable (by expanding the number of renters allowed in a single family home) would attract more students back to the area, thus allowing landlords to spend the additional income on maintaining and upgrading these properties.

This ignores many well documented facts, including that high rental rates are associated with higher crime rates and lower property values (and assumes that all the landlords will behave responsibly and maintain their properties to a high standard).

This position also ignores a basic economic issue, that expanding even by one person the number of renters allowed per property would have a negative effect on rental rates.

Currently, Greenville has a 13.6 percent vacancy rate in housing units offered for rent (source: city of Greenville). There is a fixed number of student renters (as ECU has limited growth due to state budget cuts), and allowing more per home means fewer homes and apartments will be rented, having a negative effect on many landlords across Greenville as they struggle to fill their vacancies.

The answer is expanding the number of professionals and families seeking to first rent, then purchase, homes in the university neighborhood by addressing the issues that affect such decisions. We need to continue efforts to expand economic opportunities, to revitalize the downtown (beginning by addressing the crime issues that plague that area), to follow through on the neighborhood plan recently passed by the city council and we need stronger code enforcement.

The Tar River-University Neighborhood Association welcomes discussion of the intriguing ideas proposed during the last few months for revitalizing our neighborhood, but expanding the number of renters allowed in a single family home is not the answer.

ANDREW MOREHEAD, Greenville
UNC profs: Af-Am courses exceeded norm

In May, an internal investigation at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill revealed unauthorized grades, forged signatures and other irregularities in 54 courses in the Department of African and Afro-American Studies.

The probe started in September 2011 following published reports that claimed plagiarism and other discrepancies on a course paper written by former Tar Heels football player Michael McAdoo. The paper, submitted to professor Julius Nyang’oro, was revealed to be largely reproduced from other sources.

Of the 54 courses in question from the start of the summer session in 2007 to the end of the summer session in 2011, Nyang’oro taught 43, and many of the students enrolled were athletes.

Athletes enrolled in independent study

The UNC internal report, however, only covered lecture courses. WRAL News looked at data about independent study courses offered by the department and found additional red flags – lots of athletes with the potential for earning twice the credit offered by other departments for similar work.

An independent study is defined as a class in which a student is doing in-depth work outside of the classroom with supervision from a faculty member. UNC's review did mention a problem with how independent studies were tracked in the African and Afro-American Studies Department, but it didn't go in-depth about those issues.

In the first summer session of 2010, six students were registered for an independent study course in the department. All were members of the UNC football or men's basketball team. In the second session, an independent study of 11 students had eight football or men's basketball players.

WRAL identified nine courses over four years where enrollment seemed out of the ordinary:
AFAM 396 Summer 2nd session 2007: 7 total students enrolled; 0 current or former football and/or men’s basketball players
AFRI 396 Summer 2nd session 2007: 16 total students enrolled, 8 current or former football and/or men’s basketball players
AFAM 396 Summer 1st session 2008: 4 total students enrolled; 1 current or former football and/or men’s basketball players
AFRI 396 Summer 2nd session 2008: 13 total students enrolled; 2 current or former football and/or men’s basketball players
AFRI 396 Summer 1st session 2009: 4 total students enrolled; 3 current or former football and/or men’s basketball players
AFAM 396 Summer 2nd session 2010: 11 total students enrolled; 8 current or former football and/or men’s basketball players

Lloyd Kramer, chairman of the UNC History Department, said the number of enrollees alone would be cause for concern. "That would be very unusual in our department. That would raise red flags," he said.

"Typically, there would be one or, at most, two students doing an independent course with a faculty member. At least in our department that's the usual course arrangement," Kramer said.

The numbers also seemed high to Jay Smith, a professor in the history department. I more than 20 years at UNC, Smith said he has only taught two independent study courses with one student each.

Smith also raised concerns about the number of athletes in some of the courses.

"You wonder how those athletes wound up in that course, what they were doing when they got there, what purpose that particular course was serving in their own academic schedules," he said.

It appears at least some players were taking independent studies courses outside of their major.
The UNC football media guide lists only five members of the 2012 team as majors in African and Afro-American Studies. Three had switched into that department after their junior year.

WRAL News was unable to reach any of the former players to ask if they had taken the independent studies classes.

Both Kramer and Smith say it's not terribly common for students to take independent study courses outside of their major, but it does happen if a student has a particular interest.

"That in itself is not unusual, provided there is a good intellectual reason," Smith said.

**Course credit double the norm**

Students in independent study classes offered through the Department of African and Afro-American Studies could earn up to six credit hours, double the normal amount offered by most departments.

In the nine courses WRAL News looked into, 72 students were enrolled; 43 percent (31 students) were football players and one was a basketball player. Twelve students got more than three credit hours for their work. The school says five of those 12 were current or former football players. The basketball player got the more standard three credit hours.

UNC has blamed problems in the department on Nyang'oro, the former chairman who retired in July, and his former administrative assistant. Neither has been available to answer questions about the courses.

Apparently, the department listed multiple independent studies students under a single instructor, even if other instructors actually supervised the students. That makes it difficult to determine which instructors were involved with independent study courses. WRAL News tried to contact the instructors listed as having taught the courses, including the new chairman of African and Afro-American Studies but did not hear back from them.

"I'm anxious to know a lot more about what happened in these courses," Smith said. "What kind of work was performed, how the university even knows the work was turned in."

UNC leaders have repeatedly said they don't believe questionable classes in the department were set up specifically to help athletes because non-athletes were also enrolled.
Amid the questions about how and why the department managed the course, the university has added policies regarding independent studies to try and keep this from happening again. Now, faculty members are no longer allowed to supervise more than two independent study students per term. An independent study now requires a contract to detail what is expected from the student and instructor.

Kramer said he is concerned the lingering questions hurt the credibility of hard-working faculty at UNC and classes intended to be some of the most rigorous.

"I feel like the fallout from these abuses could undermine something that is a legitimate and valuable part of the intellectual experience of many students," he said.

Reporter: Erin Hartness
Web Editor: Jodi Leese Glusco
Dads can affect child's health at birth, study finds

By Kerstin Nordstrom - knordstrom@newsobserver.com

It’s long been known that the behavior and environment of the mother during pregnancy can affect a newborn’s health.

But new research suggests that a father’s behavior is important, too.

Scientists at UNC-Chapel Hill have found that different parental occupations may bring increased risk of birth defects.

For example, photographers seem to have a greater risk of having a child with eye defects. The children of landscapers have a greater risk for gastrointestinal defects.

Yet Tania Desrosiers, an epidemiologist at UNC’s Gillings School of Global Public Health and the lead author of the study, cautioned that the heightened risks are still small.

“Dads shouldn’t worry or change jobs,” she said.

Birth defects are rare conditions. For example, only 1 in about 700 births results in a baby with a heart defect. Still, birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality, and those who live with defects struggle.

The causes of about 70 percent of birth defects are still unknown.

The UNC scientists looked at more than 60 different jobs and 60 different defects, using data from 10,000 pregnancies with defects (not all pregnancies made it to term) and 4,000 live births without defects. The paper was published in Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

Although the study establishes a correlation between jobs and defects, it does not establish the cause.

It could be that DNA in the father’s sperm is damaged by chemical or radiation exposure. A chemical could be carried on a sperm into the uterus, or there could be “take-home exposure,” such as pesticide residue on clothes, Desrosiers said.

“If you suspect you work with toxic chemicals, use personal protective equipment, which you should be using anyway,” she said.

Different occupations have exposure to different chemicals. Janitors are around cleaning products, and photographers are exposed to developing
solvents. Drivers are near diesel fumes, while landscapers are around pesticides.

But chemical exposure may not be the whole story. Some surprising jobs, such as mathematicians and computer scientists, had elevated risks for certain defects. Desrosiers said the simple act of sitting might raise the temperature in the genitals and cause changes in sperm.

No matter what the cause of the defects, the implication of the study is clear. “Dads do play a role in the health of their unborn child,” Desrosiers said. “The next set of studies will try to figure out why.”

Nordstrom: 919-829-8983
College students step into the field to help improve conditions for migrant farmworkers

By Sarah Mansur - smansur@newsobserver.com

DURHAM—In past summers, Christina Vazquez harvested mint and sugar beets in Idaho.

The fields didn’t have drinking water, she said. She and the other farmworkers would carry jugs, which they quickly drained in the summer heat.

The workers didn’t have toilets either.

“I would hold it in for eight hours or go behind a bush,” said the 20-year-old student at the University of Idaho.

This summer, Vazquez experienced farm work from a different perspective, as one of 27 interns from 22 colleges selected by Student Action with Farmworkers, a nonprofit that works to improve the conditions of migrant farmworkers.

SAF will celebrate the organization’s 20th anniversary Saturday night outside its offices at 1317 W. Pettigrew St. in Durham.

In the fields

Like Vazquez, Alma Hernandez has spent summers in the fields, working on New Mexico farms since she was 16.

This summer, SAF placed her at the N.C. Justice Center, while Vazquez worked in the Legal Aid of North Carolina-Farmworker Unit. Both offices are in the same building in downtown Raleigh.

During the day, Vazquez and Hernandez did paperwork and updated databases. Three times a week, they visited farmworker camps to help with issues such as working conditions or wage theft.

Vazquez said the Legal Aid group typically arrived as the workers were returning from the fields a few miles away.

“You can always see in their faces how tired they are,” she said.

The trailers or dilapidated shacks offer little relief from the heat, she said.

N.C. Department of Labor laws don’t require air conditioning or fans.
Pedro Garcia, 47, worked in construction for 25 years before he was laid off. He is adjusting to his life as a migrant farmworker.

Garcia, who is from Florida, said he earned up to $1,000 a week as a construction foreman, but now makes as little as $100 a week.

“The biggest difference is not being able to provide for my family the way I used to,” said Garcia, who lives with his family in Clinton.

In the evening, Garcia and the other workers play horseshoes and dominoes beneath the trees in the dirt yard.

“When you are in need, you struggle,” he said. “You accept whatever comes to you.”

There are 150,000 farmworkers in North Carolina, and 2 million to 3 million in the U.S., according to the SAF website.

About 53 percent lacked documents to work in the United States, while 46 percent were U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, the Department of Labor reported in a 2005 survey.

The average farmworker made $11,000, and only 13 percent had completed high school, the survey also found.

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 excludes farmworkers from overtime pay and sets the minimum age for farmworkers at 12 instead of 16, the minimum for most jobs

**Dangers in the field**

Altha Cravey, a UNC-Chapel Hill geography professor, said she witnessed the lack of child labor protections while researching the migration of Latinos to North Carolina.

“I observed firsthand places that had small children exposed to dangerous chemicals,” she said. “It’s a deep tragedy to have this go on just so that we can have cheap food.”

**Child labor dangers**

U.S. Rep. David Price has sponsored legislation to help farmworkers earn legal residency and praised SAF’s work.

“We all know food doesn’t magically appear in our supermarkets,” Price said in an email. “Often it gets there because seasonal workers work long hours for low wages in often hazardous conditions.”
For 20 years, SAF has helped these workers pursue dignity and justice through collaborative, community-based programs.”

The organization has also worked on state legislation, helping to amend the Migrant Housing Act of North Carolina and guarantee each worker a bed with a mattress, among other measures.

After 20 years, SAF has reached 700 young people and 80,000 farmworkers, executive director Melinda Higgins said.

The changes she sees in people’s lives are sometimes as rewarding as the changes in legislation, she added.

“I’ve seen so many young people get involved and take a stance, and I’ve seen more workers want to share their story.”

Mansur: 919-932-2008

If you go

Student Action with Farmworkers invites the public to its End of Summer Celebration, featuring stories from this year's interns, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Saturday outside the SAF offices at The Center for Documentary Studies, 1317 W. Pettigrew St. Visit www.saf-unite.org to register. Suggested donation is $20.
Noor Siddiqui

**Jumping off the college track**

By Jessica Goldstein

Noor Siddiqui doesn’t want to go to college yet.

She seems the very model of a college-bound student. The Clifton resident graduated from Robinson Secondary School in June with a stellar grade-point average of 4.5. She helped start a nonprofit organization that coordinates fundraisers and volunteers with various charities, as well as a scholarship for Afghan girls that funds schooling for a 13-year-old in a Kabul suburb.

Siddiqui, 18, was accepted to several universities. But she turned them all down. Siddiqui is a Thiel Fellow.

The Thiel Fellowship was named for founder and funder Peter Thiel (co-founder of PayPal, early investor in Facebook, billionaire). The program, in its second year, works like this: 20 teenage winners each get a $100,000 grant to pursue a project of his or her own design. For two years, Siddiqui can devote herself to her ambitious, if not exactly original, goal — to end poverty. There’s just one catch. Until the end of the fellowship, no college allowed.
Siddiqui hasn’t decided what she’ll do when her stint is over. “People want my opinion on higher education,” she said, but she has no interest in chiming in. “The truth is, this is just something I wanted to do.”

Her choice raises the very question Siddiqui won’t answer: Is college worth it?

That challenge is at odds with the widely held belief that a college degree is a prerequisite for success. But with tuition rising faster than inflation and many recent college grads facing massive debt as they struggle to find a job, the value of a college education is coming under scrutiny.

Siddiqui’s parents are Pakistani natives who moved to the United States to study at George Washington University. “That was their biggest ambition for us,” said Siddiqui. “Attending university, earning advanced degrees.” Her parents were so opposed to the fellowship that they told her not to apply.

Uzair Siddiqui, Noor’s father, disagreed with the Thiel method.

“You choose these kids,” he said. “They have no idea what their lives will be like. And you offer them all this money? My initial reaction was: It’s a terrible idea. Kids need to be in school.”

Undeterred, Siddiqui applied in secret and won her parents over once she’d been selected as a finalist. She plans to intern, speak at conferences, and write a book chronicling her efforts to “connect marginalized populations in the underdeveloped world to employers in the West.” Basically, she wants to match poor people with jobs.

Uzair Siddiqui and his wife, Rubina, have come around. The father is not worried about academics anymore. “Once she’s through with the fellowship, it will allow her to go wherever she wants,” he said.

Now, he is worried about boys.

His daughter is considering housing options. “There’s TheGlint,” she said, a live-work community in San Francisco. “My parents hated that.”

“It’s coed by bed!” her father said. “Her roommate could be a boy! I was not okay with that.”

Many fellows, like Siddiqui, move to Silicon Valley, but they’re allowed to live anywhere. Fellows are assigned mentors and convene throughout the year to compare notes, but the program is, essentially, that there is no program. “It parallels adult life,” Siddiqui said. “There’s more freedom, but there's also more responsibility.”
Some say teenagers need college to prepare for adulthood. But the Thiel Fellowship is fueled, in part, by a sense of urgency: The world can’t wait for the innovations the fellows could be building.

“I don’t think that to make a difference in the world, you have to have a college degree,” said Danielle Strachman, the fellowship’s program director. “If you have some ideas of where to start and the means to do it, we want you to be able to do that now.”

Strachman was impressed by Siddiqui’s ability to put her ideas into practice. There was the Hollow Trunk, the nonprofit group that Siddiqui and other students created. And there was the Advancement of Afghan Women’s Scholarship, which Strachman called telling. “It wasn’t that she wanted to do this scholarship,” she said. “It’s that she got it off the ground.”

At home, Siddiqui has carved out a sanctuary for work and study. “I call this my cave,” she said, opening the door to a small room in the basement.

In the cave, the two sides of Siddiqui’s personality literally intersect. One wall is plastered with magazine tear sheets, the kind of collage that graces the inside of many a teen girl’s locker. On the adjacent wall, which is coated with black chalkboard paint, Siddiqui has scrawled inspirational quotes in Crayola sidewalk chalk: Abraham Lincoln, Paulo Coelho, George Bernard Shaw, Coco Chanel.

Siddiqui does wonder about the college path. “There’s definitely a sense of what could have been.” But she believes many rites of passage are overrated. She skipped the prom and Beach Week, when seniors head to the coast for one last class hurrah. Nor is she concerned about missing undergrad scenes — cheering at homecoming games, pulling all-nighters, subsisting on pizza, ramen and beer.

“The biggest aspect of the college experience is networking with like-minded peers,” she said. She’s confident she’ll do that with other fellows.

Still Siddiqui, who has never spent more than a week away from home by herself, is not without reservations. “I think what I’m most worried about is, what if I do all this work and get what I want, and I’m not satisfied by it? That’s probably the scariest thing.”

She laughed. “But I don’t think that will happen.”

Siddiqui said fanfare about her fellowship is “sort of embarrassing. I haven’t really done anything yet.”

“This is just the beginning,” she said. “This is opening a door.”