THE DAILY CLIPS

October 9, 2008

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MALENE GRANT IRONS

Malene Grant Irons Dr. Malene Grant Irons died at Cypress Glen Retirement Community on Oct. 8, 2008. A memorial service will be conducted Friday, Oct. 10, at 2 p.m. at Jarvis Memorial United Methodist Church. The family will receive friends after the service. Dr. Malene and her identical twin, Isa Costen Grant, were born in Gates County, on April 18, 1915. Their mother died of complications of childbirth, and their upbringing was shared by their grandparents, father, and stepmother. The twins enrolled at East Carolina Teachers' College with the career goal of becoming nurses, but their father, a Methodist minister, encouraged them to pursue medicine. They completed their ECTC studies and graduated in three years. After teaching school in Pitt County for one year to earn tuition and expense money, they enrolled at Duke for pre-medical courses not offered at East Carolina. The two completed their studies with distinction and were enrolled in the Medical College of Virginia. It was there that Malene met the classmate who would become her husband, Cary Frederick Irons Jr., in 1939. During the war years, while he served an extended combat tour, she and her sister completed training in pediatrics and worked in a number of public hospitals and clinics in the Richmond area. Upon his return in 1945, they chose to set up their practices in Greenville, where they remained for the remainder of their lives. Her devoted twin died in June of 1981, and a second sister, Ruby Grant Bennett, in 2006. She and Dr. Fred continued their lives hand in hand until his death on March 8, 2008. From the day she opened her practice as the first pediatrician and female physician in eastern N.C., she humbly served every patient, regardless of race, social, or economic status. A deeply committed Christian, she considered herself above all a servant. She and her husband raised all three of their sons while in full-time practice, and she became widely known and highly regarded as an advocate for social justice. In 1949 she was awarded the ECTC Outstanding Alumni Achievement Award, the first of a career-long series of awards and honors. In 1965, she was appointed as first director of the newly formed Developmental Evaluation Clinic. The clinic building on the ECU campus was dedicated as the Malene G. Irons Building in 1974. The City of Greenville presents annually the Best-Irons Humanitarian Award, named in honor of Dr. Malene and the late Dr. Andrew Best. She is survived by her three sons and wives, Thomas G. Irons and wife, Carol, and Ben G. Irons II and wife, Susan, of Greenville, and C. Fred Irons III and wife, Susan, of Chapel Hill; grandchildren Thomas G. Irons Jr., Sarah I. Marques, James F. Irons, Gib Irons, Laura Malene I. Johnson, Charles F. Irons, Costen H. Irons, Creighton M. Irons; great-grandchildren Grant Irons, Janie Irons, Sam Marques, Katie Marques, and Caroline Irons; and brother-in-law, Ben Gibson Irons and wife, Mary Ellen, of Santa Cruz, Calif. Memorials to the Malene G. Irons Scholarship, ECU Medical Foundation, 525 Moye Blvd, Greenville, 27834 or the Cypress Glen Benevolent Fund, 600 Hickory St., Greenville, 27834 or Jarvis Memorial United Methodist Church, 510 S. Washington St., Greenville, NC 27834. Online condolences at www.wilkersonfuneralhome.com.

Published in The Daily Reflector on 10/9/2008
New surgeries promise faster recovery, fewer scars

ECU News Bureau

Thursday, October 09, 2008

When Cheryl Taylor needed a common follow-up procedure to her gastric-bypass surgery, she learned about a new procedure that would not involve cutting through her skin.

Instead, surgeons would operate on her stomach through her mouth.

"I thought, 'Well, if it works, it will be great,'" she said. "I was cut open with the first procedure, and it was tough."

Taylor's operation went smoothly, and she returned home to Goldsboro the same evening.

"Easiest way to go," she said. "I'm very pleased with it. I'm glad I did it."

Called natural-orifice surgery, it's one of three new techniques East Carolina University surgeons are offering that promise less scarring and faster, easier recovery for common surgeries such as gall bladder removal. Surgeons operate through the mouth or other body opening. Dr. Curtis Bower, a clinical assistant professor of surgery, performed Taylor's operation.

"Potential advantages of natural orifice surgery may include decreased pain or even painless surgery, improved cosmetic results from having no incisions made on the body, and faster recovery and return to work," Bower said. As technology improves, he added, so will the potential for this type of surgery.

Another technique is called single-incision laparoscopic surgery. In traditional laparoscopic surgery, surgeons make multiple small incisions to insert surgical devices and cameras to allow them to see what they were doing. As the name implies, SILS reduces the number of incisions to one, often the navel, which further camouflages the scar. New instruments and techniques allow surgeons to insert and manipulate the tools through the same opening.

Dr. William Rucker, an ECU clinical assistant professor who operates at Lenoir Memorial Hospital in Kinston, said patients' desires for less scarring as well as surgical advances led to SILS. He began doing the procedures in June. Many people prefer one scar in the belly-button area over multiple scars on their abdomen, and the smaller, more versatile tools surgeons have today make these surgeries possible, he said.

Bower also began offering this procedure recently. "I am very excited about this advancement of laparoscopic surgery," he said. "We are taking a very common procedure and making it virtually scar-free. I had a patient come back to see me recently and neither of us could find her scar."

Bower wants to expand this technique into other procedures such as hernia repairs. "This is very exciting to be a part of this next wave of minimally invasive surgery," he said.

A third minimally invasive technique is video-assisted thyroidectomy for patients who have certain types of thyroid nodules. By using an incision of less than an inch and a video camera, surgeons can remove part or all of the thyroid with minimal scarring. Many patients can go home the same day.

"The main challenge is working in a small area with the camera, a retractor and several instruments," said Dr. Walter Pofahl, an associate professor and chief of advanced laparoscopic, gastrointestinal and endocrine surgery at ECU. "The incision and anatomy are the same as conventional thyroid surgery."

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Dole praises PCMH in Wednesday visit

By Ginger Livingston
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, October 08, 2008

U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., praised Pitt County Memorial Hospital and its parent corporation Wednesday morning for delivering state-of-the-art health care to eastern North Carolina.

Dole, who is completing her first term in the U.S. Senate, toured University Health Systems Children’s Hospital on the PCMH campus the day after participating in a rally with Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

“It’s so impressive to me what they are doing with the neonatal unit,” Dole said. “These folks are visionary.”

Saying the event was part of her senatorial duties, and not a campaign stop, Dole touted her vote to stop legislation that would have stopped providing extra Medicaid funding to hospitals that have large patient bases that cannot pay for medical care. Stopping the legislation allowed University Health Systems to keep $11.6 million in Medicaid funding, including $7 million for PCMH, spokesman Jimmy Ryals said.

Dole went on to tout the Republican Party’s health-care proposal that would give tax credits to people that could be used for medical care.

She also toured the Heart Center’s six-story, $150 million patient care tower. The 120-bed structure is scheduled to open early next year.

The Children’s Hospital had 6,513 inpatient admissions in fiscal year 2008. The hospital, which services as a teaching institution for the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, operates a pediatric outpatient center that cares for nearly 52,000 patients annually.

Hospital administrators want to expand the existing facility, which has 50 beds.

Palin enjoys Greenville hospitality

Following her Tuesday night rally before 8,000 supporters at Minges Coliseum Republican vice presidential nominee Sarah Palin enjoyed Greenville’s hospitality.

Palin and several supporters gathered at Boll’s on the Boulevard to watch the second presidential debate, according to reports. She, her campaign staff, the national media and Secret Service then spent the night at the Hilton Greenville.

Palin is the third person participating in this year’s presidential election to be hosted by the Hilton, general manager John Van Coutren said. New York Sen. Hillary Clinton and former President Bill Clinton spent time at the hotel earlier this spring when making separate campaign stops in Greenville.

“It’s an honor. Just to know that they travel all over the world and to know they trust us to provide everything they need when they are in town … that’s a huge compliment to us and our team,” Van Coutren said. “When we exceed their expectations for getting this done, it only enhances our reputation with future campaigns.”

He said he hopes a positive experience will lead to Greenville being a regular stop for future national candidates.

Eighty-five people associated with the Palin event stayed at the hotel Tuesday night, he said. The campaign rented two entire floors and several rooms on two others, Van Coutren said. Combined with other bookings, the 141-room facility was sold out. Two previously registered guests had to be moved to other
accommodations, at the Hilton's expense, Van Coutren said.

Van Coutren said Palin was very gracious to the hotel's staff and guests. She took time Tuesday night to talk with guests in the lobby and lounge and pose for photographs with campaign volunteers.

Wednesday morning, Palin had a breakfast of fruits and grains, he said.

"Governor Palin is very health conscious and eats very healthy and she ran in Westhaven (a nearby neighborhood) with the Secret Service," he said.

As the Palin entourage prepared to leave Wednesday, Van Coutren said the comments from her staff and the traveling press corps filled him with pride not only for his business, but the Greenville community.

"The comments they made were the people in this town are so nice and so accommodating," Van Coutren said. "They said they wished they would run into the people they ran into in Greenville in the other cities they have worked in."

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ECU's Bryant suspended

By Nathan Summers
The Daily Reflector

Wednesday, October 08, 2008

Jamar Bryant was suspended indefinitely Wednesday from the East Carolina football program for a violation of team rules.

Head coach Skip Holtz said losing Bryant was painful, but the suspension was the result of the coach's obligation to the program.

"There are expectations for everybody to adhere to in order to be a part of this program," Holtz said regarding Bryant, the Pirates' second leading receiver who spent the day working out with the scout team. "Jamar is a great young man. He made a mistake, and he's assured me he wants to work hard to do whatever he's got to do to remain a part of this program."

It is not certain if Bryant will return this year.

Junior Alex Taylor, who reeled in his first career touchdown against West Virginia earlier this season, has moved from the Z receiver spot to the X to replace Bryant. The return of senior T.J. Lee from a foot fracture will also pad the loss, but Holtz said the pressure will be on junior Reyn Willis, redshirts Darryl Freeney and D.J. McFadden and true freshman Joe Womack.

Bryant is second on the Pirates in receiving behind sophomore Dwayne Harris, amassing 19 catches for 216 yards and three touchdowns.

"It's painful, but you've got the obligation to do what's in the best interest of the program first," Holtz said. "We're not going to try to sell this program down the river for a win. We're going to build this thing on a solid foundation."

Third downer

The recent offensive results for ECU have led to a sudden surge in one national statistic: Pirate punter Matt Dodge has booted himself to fifth in the nation in punting average and his team into 11th in net punting.

It seems like he's been getting lots of practice.

While the Pirates aren't necessarily kicking the ball away at a record rate, they also aren't staying on the field on third down in recent games.

As they stare down a Virginia team that clicked along steadily in a 31-0 rout of Maryland last week, the 3-2 Pirates are trying to relocate their own chain-moving rhythm.

Holtz said the team's struggles to convert and keep drives moving have been a collective effort, something the team spent a good deal of its bye week trying to address.

"There are some things that we can do as a coaching staff that we've evaluated, as far as the calls we're making," said Holtz, whose Pirates kick off at noon Saturday against the 2-3 Cavaliers in Charlottesville. "It's not one problem. It's not that the quarterback's not hitting it, or the receiver didn't get open or the lineman didn't make the block. There's enough blame to go around. If it was one problem, it would be an easy cure."

Mostly, it seems to be the ever-changing defensive schemes on third downs that have had the Pirates' number this year.

Nickel packages and blitzes have been effective in stalling ECU drives.
Combined with some dropped passes, a few misreads and some turnovers, it's taken its toll.

"You don't get their traditional base defense when it's third down," Holtz said. "That's when they give you the wrinkles and that's where some of the inexperience comes in."

The Pirates are chugging along at 35.9 percent, 83rd in the nation, on third downs. Not surprisingly, the results are true to the trend. In their early season victories over Virginia Tech and West Virginia, the Pirates were solid at 53.9 percent and 50 percent, respectively. From the tight victory over Tulane (30 percent), to losses to N.C. State (33.3) and Houston (7.7), third down success had dwindled for ECU.

ECU has also been a slow starter in its first five games, converting just twice all season on third downs during the first quarter. The numbers jump to 47.4 percent in the second quarter.

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Blood test finds coronary disease

Genetic markers show coronary artery disease, Duke doctors say

THOMAS GOLDSMITH, Staff Writer

Comment on this story

A simple blood test could soon replace expensive and invasive exams to detect coronary artery disease.

The test, announced Wednesday by doctors at Duke, is being developed after the discovery of genetic markers that show the presence and intensity of blockage in coronary artery disease, said a Duke cardiologist who co-authored research on the link.

Such a blood test could save millions of dollars annually by allowing some patients to avoid risky procedures in which catheters are inserted into patients' arteries.

"I think it is a big deal," Dr. William E. Kraus, a Duke cardiologist, said in an interview Wednesday. "What we want is a test that tells us the status of your disease today and if what you have is heart disease." Kraus' research was published in the medical journal Circulation: Cardiovascular Genetics.

Current detection of the disease -- the leading cause of death in the United States and a top killer in North Carolina, with 23,610 deaths in 2006 -- can require expensive tests such as echocardiograms, stress tests and imaging techniques that use radiation.

"A blood-based test to diagnose coronary artery disease would be less invasive and risky and would prevent patients from [receiving] radiation exposure," Kraus said in a statement.

Raleigh retiree Robert Sharpe said going directly from a blood test to having a catheter inserted would have been an improvement over what he went through before two recent heart surgeries.

"It would have been a whole lot easier," said Sharpe, 74, who now stays in shape at the Institute of Lifestyle & Weight Management in Raleigh. "I had a stress test and all of that."

The finding that 14 specific genes tend to accompany the narrowing of arteries arose from research by Duke and CardioDx, a molecular-diagnostics company in California that helped fund the study. It's based on the examination of genes in 41 heart patients, some from Germany and some from Duke.

Together, the 14 genes form a "signature" that indicates the presence of coronary artery disease, but may not be a cause or effect of the disease, researchers said.

Two Triangle cardiologists not involved in the research said it looks promising, but noted the small number of cases involved. Patients from a variety of backgrounds will be tested in larger trials under way at 28 sites across the United States.

"If these findings hold for this broad group of population, the test could prove to be a
valuable supplement in our management and treatment of patients with coronary heart disease," said Dr. Sidney Smith, a UNC-Chapel Hill cardiologist.

Dr. Joe Falsone, an invasive cardiologist at Wake Heart & Vascular Associates, called the discovery "potentially exciting news."

"We could probably use this as a screening tool for patients we thought were at high risk," Falsone said.

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No freeze on science

Comment on this story

On Oct. 6 scientists all over the world joined the Nobel Prize Committee in recognizing the achievements of two French scientists and one German scientist for discovering the viruses that lead to AIDS and to cancer of the cervix of the uterus. Discoveries of such importance take years of dedicated effort and require uninterrupted financial support to sustain long periods of difficult research.

Citizens of North Carolina and our state government have shown great foresight in developing an infrastructure that supports a world-class endeavor in biotechnology. The Research Triangle is a well recognized example of this leadership of which we can all be proud. We need to have the same quality of leadership at a national level.

The prospects of our country depend on our ability to push the envelope of science and technology. We cannot rest on past successes. Nor can we allow our current severe and very real financial problems to interrupt or postpone the basic research needed for our future financial well-being and the health of ourselves and our children. Innovation and new ideas are our future.

Statements made by the two major candidates for president allow us to see who will support the needed research. Sen. Barack Obama says "I will increase funding for basic research, physical and life sciences, mathematics and engineering at a rate that would double basic research budgets over the next decade." Sen. John McCain says "I will impose a one-year spending freeze on every agency of the federal government, excepting only national defense, the care of our veterans, and a few critical priorities."

The future will not wait a year to be funded.

Oliver Smithies

Chapel Hill

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The writer, a co-recipient of the Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine for 2007, is Excellence professor of pathology and laboratory medicine at UNC-Chapel Hill.
Blue and green

Comment on this story

Less than a year after successfully finishing a $2.38 billion fundraising campaign, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is planning a $4 billion effort to further raise its endowment. It is a breathtaking figure, to be sure, and the timing -- in the midst of a national economic downturn -- is interesting, but not necessarily misplaced.

The university's alumni, after all, are legion. And it's estimated that more than 18,000 prospective donors would be good for gifts in excess of $25,000. Corporate donors also will be targeted. Some will do more, and that's an understatement. UNC-CH anticipates it may receive a $250 million gift and three $100 million gifts from this campaign.

It's perhaps a sad comment, but the time has long since passed when public universities could rely on state funding for the entirety of their support that's not derived from tuition and fees. Campuses have boomed in size and scope. Funds from donors are virtually a necessity, and a smart university presents to alumni the chance to help an institution that gave them the education they needed to succeed, prosper and contribute something worthwhile to society.

UNC-Chapel Hill has a new chancellor, Holden Thorp, who is himself a product of the campus. To this fundraising campaign he can bring a home-state perspective, mindful of the extraordinary value his university provides to students and the public.

One reminder to state lawmakers, however. The other 15 campuses of the University of North Carolina system do not share the large and sometimes affluent alumni base that the Chapel Hill campus has, and are more dependent upon public funding. Legislators must continue to make higher education a priority for those institutions (and Chapel Hill as well) as more North Carolina young people seek to attend college.

Other campuses might use the ambitious goal in Chapel Hill to remind their own alumni of the need for support Any gift counts -- assuming that there are not too many people with an extra $250 million lying around.

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A subsidiary of The McClatchy Company
Palin meets Eastern N.C. folks at pizza parlor

After Tuesday night's rally at East Carolina University, Sarah Palin stopped at Boli's on the Boulevard restaurant in Greenville.

Joining her to eat pizza and watch the presidential debate: U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Dole, Republican gubernatorial candidate Pat McCrory and Sen. Richard Burr and his wife, Brooke.

The politicos drank from two pitchers of Budweiser while they watched the debate on Fox News.

Reporters were not allowed to get close, but McCrory and Burr answered a few questions. McCrory said Palin was "extremely down to earth" and was having fun on the campaign trail.

"I'm having pizza with the future vice president," he said. "Is that not an experience for what?"

Palin had said she wanted to watch the debate in Greenville with "a whole lot of real Americans, hard-working folks."

Chris Credle, 29, a sales rep for Behr paint, went to the restaurant for some pizza and beer after work with a friend, expecting to watch sports and hang out.

He first sensed something was up when he saw the owner getting checked by security guards with a wand. Then his buddy pointed out that Palin was walking in.

Credle, a Republican, said he has been impressed with Palin's independence and honesty. He got the chance to chat with her at the pizza restaurant. Then he called up his cousin, who had gone to the rally.

"I said, 'we're here with Sarah Palin'," he said. "He's like, 'Get out!' "
Buses get snug for Wolfline riders

JOSH SHAFFER, Staff Writer

RALEIGH - On a Thursday morning at 9:53, riding a Wolfline bus feels like a trip on a New York subway after a Yankees game. Quarters are close enough on the standing-room-only ride to gaze deeply into your neighbor's ear.

N.C. State University students say their free transit has never been so crowded. It is common for a rider to find 35 people waiting at a single Gorman Street corner -- and to watch helplessly while a packed bus rolls by without stopping.

Riders cite dozens of reasons for full buses in a city that normally shuns public transportation: Gas sells at prices few students can afford; more of them work part-time jobs and favor classes that wrap up by noon; only 8,500 students live on a campus that teaches 33,000, and commuters spill out of apartments to form long queues.

"They're like a blob," said senior Riley Zeller-Townson. "There's some elbows thrown and a lot of angry stares."

The campus in many ways mirrors Raleigh's challenge as it spreads farther from its core and -- to many student's minds -- falls short of students' transit needs.

"I frequently observe late students blaming transportation issues," writes graduate student Osman Gulseven in the campus forum section of the Technician, N.C. State's student newspaper. "Once you miss the bus, you have to drive to school and find a precious parking spot, which is another frustrating experience. It is not only loss of time but a horrible way to start your day."

In the first two weeks of school, the Wolfl ine toted 138,130 passengers -- up 42 percent over last year. Over that same time, the Wolfline counted 407 buses at maximum capacity, nearly
half of them along the Greek Village route that snakes through a maze of apartments and fraternity houses south of campus.

N.C. State is not the only Triangle university with soaring bus ridership. Bus supervisors at Duke University say they carry 9,000 students a week, compared with 6,000 last year.

But Duke is smaller and more compact. Its buses stick to campus. Wolfline routes cover much of Raleigh's western half: from the Bell Tower to Blue Ridge Road, from Hillsborough Street down Avent Ferry Road nearly to Lake Johnson.

**Buses roll by**

The Greek Village route inspires the most late-to-class stories.

There, senior Alex Hanes said she gets passed by full buses at least two or three times a week. She resorts to walking backward along the route, further from campus, to snare a seat at the early stops.

"It's horrible," she said, carrying a bug net for biology class. "If you don't get on before Kaplan Drive, you're not getting on."

Wolfline buses have always been crowded when the semester starts. But by now, students say, they usually sift out riders who drop classes or find a routine that avoids the peak hours.

Anyone can ride the Wolfline, not just students. Buses are clean, free and run every 12 minutes during peak times. Students can also use free passes on Raleigh's Capital Area Transit buses, an alternative that officials said is also on the rise.

Roughly 80 percent of the Wolfline and CAT pass cost is covered by a $130 per-student fee, and the Wolfline's Web site warns that the fee would increase if new buses are added. The rest of the Wolfline's cost gets paid through campus parking permits.

That money also allows students to see exactly where buses are along the routes, using either their computers or cell phones.

To Wolfline Director Tom Kendig, there isn't trouble with crowding so much as with peak times.

This year, Wolfline has been running a "tripper" bus along the Greek Village route -- an extra, nonscheduled bus picks up at the busiest streets during the heaviest hours.

That, Kendig said, has been a big help. But it's tricky with more students taking classes before noon.

The Wolfline also started a reverse route running counter-clockwise this year, but officials acknowledge it often means a longer ride.

"That whole Gorman Street stretch, I think we're kind of seeing a perfect storm of sorts," said Student Body President Jay Dawkins. "Student housing grows in that area, early-morning classes, having to work, gas prices."

Back on the Greek Village line, students groan when another half-dozen climb aboard a bus that already has riders standing just behind the driver.

But one of them shrugs and says he can't complain. It beats $3.80 gas.

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