THE DAILY CLIPS

November 4, 2009

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

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Police: Student was not sexually assaulted

The Daily Reflector

Tuesday, November 03, 2009

East Carolina University police arrested a student Monday on charges of filing a false police report in connection with an alleged sexual assault on campus last summer, university officials said.

Shadia Antoinette Moore, 21, told ECU police on June 24 that she had been sexually assaulted in a stall in a first floor rest room in the Austin Building on campus, a department spokesman said in a news release issued Tuesday.

An extensive investigation, including laboratory analysis of evidence by the State Bureau of Investigation, established that there was no assault, police said.

Moore was arrested Monday on a misdemeanor charge of filing a false police report. She was released from the Pitt County Detention Center on $1,000 unsecured bond.

“Our primary concern is the safety of the ECU community — students, faculty, staff and visitors,” ECU Police Chief Scott Shelton said in the release. “We take every reported crime seriously, but at the same time, we must be vigilant for false reports that ... cause unnecessary concern and worry on the campus.”

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At the ready: Eyes turn to ECU on Thursday night

Wednesday, November 04, 2009

While forecasters have called for clear skies on Thursday night, expect electricity in the air as East Carolina University welcomes Virginia Tech and a national television audience to town for the most anticipated football game of the year. The excitement is already palpable and should reach a fevered pitch by the time the teams take the field.

This moment represents a tremendous opportunity for East Carolina, for Greenville and for all of eastern North Carolina to show its best face to the nation. So get to the stadium early, welcome our guests, be loud and show the country what Pirate pride is all about on Thursday.

Under a blazing Charlotte sun last year, East Carolina began its football season with an upset of Virginia Tech, knocking off the No. 17 Hokies 27-22. The improbable win captured the nation's attention and set in motion a memorable year that would end in a Conference USA championship for the Pirates.

Circumstances are different this year. The venue will be the friendly confines of Dowdy-Ficklen Stadium, under the lights for a national television audience. And a year that began with promise for both teams have seen stumbles, as the squads bring identical 5-3 records into the Thursday night contest.

What remains, however, is the opportunity for the winner of this game to make an important statement.

For the Hokies, pursuit of a possible national championship and dreams of an Atlantic Coast Conference title sputtered against Georgia Tech on Oct. 17 and were extinguished against North Carolina one week ago. However, the Pirates remain in the hunt for a division title and a shot at the conference championship. Last week's win against Memphis was a crucial step toward that goal and defeating Virginia Tech would provide needed momentum for the rest of the season.

This is the first time the Hokies have been here since 2000, and the first time since the emotional 2007 season opener that saw East Carolina give $100,000 to the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund after the shooting deaths of 32 students and faculty that year. As Virginia Tech will not soon forget the generosity on display in its time of need, East Carolina fans should be proud to welcome the next chapter in this growing rivalry.

A national broadcast audience will be watching on Thursday, and it is an opportunity for this region to savor. Raise the sails, batten the hatches and get ready for battle, Pirates.
Hokies have pride

In a span of 12 humbling days, Virginia Tech went from riding high at No. 4 with thoughts of playing for the national championship to barely being in the Top 25 and hopes for a third consecutive Atlantic Coast Conference title all but gone.

What remains, the No. 22 Hokies said Tuesday, is pride and a chance to finish the season with a flourish.

"The national championship, the talk is done, and I feel like guys can relax a little more and go out and have fun and play the game for how it's supposed to be played," cornerback Rashad Carmichael said, looking ahead to Thursday night's game at East Carolina. "Put it on us and we can make the rest of the season out to be whatever we want it to be."

The Hokies (5-3) can't attain the top goals they started the season with, but they still can finish with at least 10 wins for the sixth consecutive year. To do that, they must win their remaining games, reach their 17th consecutive bowl game - and win that also.

Only Southern California and Texas have also won 10 or more games the last five years.

More importantly to the players, though, is giving a better accounting of themselves than they did in losing 28-23 to No. 10 Georgia Tech two Saturdays ago, or in losing 20-17 to North Carolina on a field goal as time expired last Thursday night at Lane Stadium.

"It's definitely pride now," linebacker Cody Grimm said of the team's motivation moving into November. "We just want to come out and show everyone what type of team we can be.

"If we play the way we're capable of, I don't think we'll lose."

The Pirates (5-3) have won two in a row, and coach Skip Holtz this week has prepared his team to face the perennial defensive powerhouse that he has seen on occasion this season.

If all that isn't motivation enough, the Hokies also have this: last season, they led 22-20 against the Pirates in Charlotte in the season opener with 2 minutes to play.

But T.J. Lee blocked a Virginia Tech punt and returned it 27 yards for a touchdown with 1:52 to play, completing a comeback from a 22-13 deficit in the Pirates' 27-22 victory.

Coach Frank Beamer has had his team watch the play at least a dozen times since.

"That's always a sore point for us," tight end Andre Smith said. "To lose like that in the last few minutes of the game was just a feeling that we never want to feel again."
NC public TV network spotlights changing economy

HICKORY, N.C. -- The manufacturing and furniture industries that built up the Hickory area have been hit hard in this recession, so the community is talking through what to do next.

Local experts gather Wednesday to discuss western North Carolina's economic challenges and opportunities during a town hall meeting in Hickory.

The discussion involving business and academic leaders is sponsored by statewide public television network UNC-TV, which broadcast the discussion live.

The television network said it's out to find out about the economic changes North Carolina residents are seeing wash across the state.

A fourth town hall televised by UNC-TV is in two weeks at East Carolina University. Two earlier events were at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke and Western Carolina University.
Swine flu shot? They're taking a pass.

College students jaywalk, pound energy drinks, forgo sleep -- and sniff at the H1N1 virus.

By Ian Shapira
Washington Post Staff Writer
Wednesday, November 4, 2009

One night inside a George Washington University fraternity, a sky-diving, weight-lifting, energy-drink-swalling group of brothers gathered around a pool table, boasting about how no matter what their college, government and parents might say, they don't need any swine flu vaccine, thanks very much.

The men of Sigma Phi Epsilon, 30 of whom share 16 bathrooms and 15 bedrooms in a house on 23rd Street NW in Washington, don't buy the idea that their lair is a perfect petri dish for spreading the flu.

They view the virus's threat as a media-concocted sensation. They fend off their parents' -- and even their girlfriends' parents' -- worries, much as they do concerns about any other risky behavior, such as parachuting out of an airplane for an upcoming frat event.

Their mind-set: They'll be fine. Even if they get the bug, they'll still be fine.

"I don't need it," said Sal Marchesano, 21, a senior, as macho laughter ripples across the recreation room, which is adorned with a replica of a human skull and a mostly full bottle of hand sanitizer. "They would have to come here to give me the shot. No. They would have to come to my room. When I'm free."

Although college-age people are among the most susceptible of all age groups for contracting swine flu, that distinction is not scaring most into taking precautions, according to a recent Washington Post-ABC News poll.

Nearly seven out of 10 people in the 18-to-29 age group said they did not plan to heed warnings to get vaccinated, the poll found. (About 62 percent of those 30 to 64 and 53 percent of those 65 and older also said they planned to skip the vaccine.)

At the frat house, many brothers said they think of swine flu mainly as fodder for punch lines. Some have taken to taunting one of their members -- who since September has been infected twice with a flulike illness -- with the nickname Fruityfly. (Fruityfly doesn't much care for the moniker.)

The Sigma Phi Epsilon brothers see forgoing the vaccine as no riskier than many of their other behaviors. "I text and call while I am driving," said Marchesano, sitting in the rec room with Matt Stratton, 20, and another fraternity brother, Justin Fiorilli, 20.

Stratton, a junior who said he wants to be a doctor, lives by a classic collegiate dictum -- carpe diem, or seize the day. "There are any number of things I do," he said. "I cross the street when the light's not
green. We're talking about going skydiving."

That sense of invincibility might be one reason why, according to the nonprofit Commonwealth Fund, nearly 30 percent of adults 19 to 29 go without health insurance, and more than two-thirds of unintentional deaths among 18- to 22-year-olds involve a motor vehicle accident, according to federal data.

Puzzled experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said they are so concerned about young people's lack of concern about swine flu that they are conducting surveys to tease out the basis for the blasé attitudes. Many young adults' belief in the seriousness of the outbreak is diminished by what they deem hyperbolic media coverage, said Kristine Sheedy, a CDC spokeswoman.

"I think it's been blown up to a bigger deal by the media," Stratton said.

Fiorilli asked: "Did you notice there was a seasonal flu shot offered at GW? I wasn't in that line."

"My mom was pressing me to go and get it," Marchesano said. "She said if they offer it, 'You better be the first in line,' and I told her I had class. I mean, she found times when I'd be able to wait in line. I was just like, 'No. I am busy. I am fine. I'm getting enough sleep.'"

Knowing laughs give way to sighs. "My mom has said the same things," Stratton said. He also said his father urged him to buy a mask -- he did, and promptly stuffed it in a drawer.

"I've never gotten a seasonal flu shot in my life," Fiorilli said. "I roll the dice every year, and I am going to roll the dice this year. I mean, we're constantly interacting with people here. There's no way to get around it."

(For the record, Fiorilli caved and got the flu shot while visiting his parents in Florida last weekend.)

Influenza-like illnesses are spreading on college campuses with efficient swiftness. Since August, nearly 56,000 students out of more than 3 million have been infected, according to the American College Health Association.

GWU has 600 flu cases; in a non-swine autumn, that number would be zero, school officials said. At the University of Virginia, health officials have diagnosed 540 cases.

"The vast majority of students don't worry about this at all," said James Turner, president of the college health group and director of U-Va.'s student health department. In a survey at the Charlottesville campus, he said, "only 54 percent -- maybe this is good -- say they never share a Solo cup or smoking material, which means there's 46 percent who continue sharing and smoking hookah pipes and cigarettes."

Fiorilli said he faces greater risks every day. "We're in the middle of exams. I may sleep two hours a day. I live on energy drinks. You talk to a doctor about our lifestyle, and they're going to say, 'Don't worry about swine flu; you need to worry about a heart attack.'"

"I pound the Mountain Dews," Marchesano said.

"I pound the Monster" energy drink, Fiorilli said. "And 5-Hour Energy. I had a bad experience with that. It was a friend's birthday. I guarantee that 20 years from now, they're going to say this stuff kills ya."
Meanwhile, Stratton's girlfriend and her mother have been nudging him.

The girlfriend, Sara Goldschmidt, a 20-year-old junior, said she "was in Matt's room the other day, and a couple guys walk in, and they nonchalantly were laughing and saying, 'So-and-so has the swine flu. Isn't that funny?' I stood right up and got my bag. I didn't touch anything on the way out. I didn't touch the banisters."

Sara's mother, Karen Goldschmidt, 51, of Westchester County, N.Y., saw Stratton recently and "asked him if he was planning on getting the swine flu shot, and he said, 'No.' I said, 'Wait a minute... I have a vested interest.'"

Despite the resistance, GWU officials are pushing. They requested more than 14,000 swine flu vaccine doses that they hope to receive by mid-November. They've posted ads in newspapers, made announcements on Twitter and Facebook, distributed hand sanitizers to dorms and tacked up posters listing prevention tips.

Still, kids get sick. When they report flu symptoms, they are generally urged to quarantine themselves in their rooms. But staying home might mean the inevitable for their roommates.

At the frat house, Fiorilli cheerfully makes a visiting reporter an offer: "My roommate is sick. Want to see him? He comatose himself with NyQuil."

Fiorilli doesn't seem a bit worried about catching the flu from the roommate, junior Jed Fluxman, 20. Fiorilli had pink eye recently, and Fluxman was cool about being in such close quarters.

In the darkness of Room 401, which is decorated with a poster depicting John Belushi chugging a bottle of whiskey and another that reads "BEER: Helping White Guys Dance Since 1847," lies Fluxman, half-naked under his bedspread, watching TNT.

He has nearly $100 worth of supplies to do battle with his misery: two bags of Halls cough drops, a homeopathic remedy called Oscillococcinum and, yes, NyQuil.

"Now that I have [swine flu], what's the point in getting the shot?" Fluxman asked.

"Yeah," Fiorilli said. "It's too late."

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NC hospital segregates flu victims in outdoor tent

The Associated Press

Wednesday, November 04, 2009

GREENSBORO, N.C. — A major North Carolina hospital is pitching tents to battle the spread of swine flu.

The Greensboro News&Record reported Wednesday that two tents in the Moses Cone Hospital parking lot are the first stop for patients seeking treatment for flu symptoms.

The idea is to cut the spread of the H1N1 flu virus by keeping those infected isolated and take the load off the hospital's emergency room.

Hospital officials say the tents are heated and cooled and would be filled with medical equipment and emergency room staff. Patients will be evaluated there and admitted to the hospital if necessary.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates more than 1 million Americans have been infected with swine flu, with many suffering mild cases never reported.


Nov 04, 2009 - 09:25 a.m. EDT

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Bones reveal victim's name

RALEIGH -- It was a copy of a 2002 CAT scan that finally put a name, a face to the bones and mummified remains found eight months ago among the decaying leaves in a thicket of woods north of Rocky Mount, where six women have been murdered.

Elizabeth Jane Smallwood, 33, of Rocky Mount was no longer a lost person, thanks to a world renowned expert and a program at N.C. State University that is pioneering the use of forensic science in crime scene investigations. Using specialized computer software, forensic anthropologist Ann Ross was able to match the unique features of the weathered skull to Smallwood's old CAT scan - a three-dimensional X-ray.

Smallwood's body was one of six found since 2005 in the rural, swamplike corner of Edgecombe County about 60 miles northeast of Raleigh. The first five already had been identified as poor African-American women. Flummoxed by the lack of clues and suspecting a possible serial killer, Rocky Mount police requested a task force to be formed in June to assist in investigating the deaths. But June wasn't the first time they had called in experts to help.

They had called the North Carolina Program for Forensic Sciences on Feb. 13, when Smallwood's body was found. Ross and veteran archaeologist Billy Oliver, who co-direct the program at N.C. State, as well as forensic photographer Gary Knight responded. Their job was to collect and protect evidence that could be critical in identifying the victim, determining a cause of death and possibly prosecuting a killer.

The remains were mostly skeletal, having been scavenged by animals. There were clothes nearby, but the team was not sure if they belonged to the victim. The lower extremities of the remains were partially mummified, which Ross attributed to the trees that shaded the body, thus preventing complete decomposition.

Knight, a retired SBI agent, thoroughly photographed the crime scene. Oliver studied the leaves under the body and determined the victim had been at that site only one season, meaning she was killed in late summer or early fall.

The team carefully gathered the remains. The bones were turned over to the state medical examiner's office. The vegetation and soil samples were submitted to the SBI for further testing and analysis.

Ross is a giant in the forensics field -- internationally respected for her work abroad.

She traveled to Bosnia as a doctoral student in 1997 to help identify the remains of genocide victims. She has been traveling to Panama since 2001 to help identify the remains of those who disappeared during the 1970s and 1980s regimes of Manuel Noriega and Omar Torrijos, commander of the Panamanian National Guard.

In 2007 and 2008, she traveled to Chile - her mother's homeland - to help identify the victims dumped into mass graves during the Augusto Pinochet administration in the 1970s and 1980s. She developed a
formula, using the humerus and femur bones among the remains found in Chile, to help forensic scientists determine the height and sex of the victims. Ross presented her findings last week at a conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Preparing a profile

So it was no surprise on March 10, when the state medical examiner's office sent the remains back to Ross and her lab at N.C. State. Her task: prepare a biological profile that would help medical and law enforcement officials determine who they had found on that bed of decaying leaves.

She studied the pelvic bones to determine sex. She studied the pubic bone and any degenerative bone issues to estimate her age. She studied the long bones of the legs to determine height, and facial structure of the skull to determine ancestry.

The bones told her the victim was an African-American woman in her mid-30s or early 40s, who stood between 5 feet, 4 inches and 5 feet, 7 inches tall.

Smallwood also had what Ross described as genetic anomalies. "She had an extra vertebra and an extra rib," Ross said. "She probably didn't know she had it."

Look for a match

Ross returned the bones and her finding to the medical examiner's office. Police investigators went to work looking for a match among African-American women reported missing from the Rocky Mount area.

The dental records of one woman were analyzed. "It was not her," Ross said.

Then, about a month ago, an associate medical examiner returned the skull, along with a CAT scan of Smallwood's head.

Ross decided to give it a go. She knew that everyone has a unique skull pattern that gives distinct shape to the face and the shape of the head and the cranial vault that houses the brain.

At first, Ross was disappointed because the CAT scan did not clearly show the facial region. Nonetheless, Ross thought a reference X-ray sent along with the CAT scan had potential for identification.

She superimposed a digital X-ray of the victim's skull over the reference X-ray and found "very distinct areas of concordance." There was a pronounced front tooth that matched along with the other front teeth. The lower jaw lined up perfectly. The facial regions were in sync. She outlined the cranial vaults. "They were a match," Ross said.

Excited, but not completely satisfied, Ross did more testing with specialized computer software that detected no significant differences in the shapes of the cranial vault or in the facial shape.

Is she positive of the match?

"Without a doubt," she said.

A multi-agency task force was formed in June to investigate the Edgecombe County slayings. A suspect
has been arrested and charged with one woman's murder. Smallwood's death, however, remains unsolved.

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ANN H. ROSS

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Education:
- Ph.D. in Physical Anthropology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- MA Anthropology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville
- BA Anthropology, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Fla.
- BA Latin American Studies, Rollins College, Winter Park, Fla.

Age: 41 Personal: Of British and Chilean descent; grew up in Panama; came to U.S. in late 1980s for college; married, 5-year-old son.

Last book read: “Hija de la fortuna,” (Daughter of Fortune) by Isabel Allende

Her opinion of TV's “CSI” series: The work of an actual forensic scientist is minimized while giving the impression that problems are solved in minutes, while most of the work is done by electronics with one person simply pushing a button. It doesn't happen that way, she said. "There's a lot of research, and a lot of people are involved," Ross said. "It's not a one-person show."

NORTH CAROLINA PROGRAM FOR FORENSIC SCIENCES

A world leader in its field, the North Carolina Program for Forensic Sciences has been called upon by the United States military to develop new technology that would find underground graves in Iraq. Back home, it has been called upon to assist in 60 homicide cases across the state.

"I can't tell you everything that we do," said veteran archaeologist Billy Oliver, who co-directs the program with Ross. "But I can tell you that we are on the leading edge of the new technology."

The program was launched in 2005 after receiving $8,000 in start-up funds from N.C. State. The staff all have jobs outside the program, donating their time to the forensics program. Most are members of the N.C. State faculty.

At the core of the program's workers are Ross, Oliver, and Gary Knight, a retired SBI agent and an expert crime scene photographer. Other members include Ron Crowson, a geophysicist who works closely with Oliver, David Hinks, who is trained in the analysis of textiles, colors and fibers, and Dr. Wes Watson, an entomologist, who studies insects to determine how long remains have been at death scenes.

"There are 30 other faculty members involved in one way or the other," Ross said.

The program has worked to develop new standards in areas such as identification, archaeological discovery and recovery and forensic chemistry in the analysis of hair and fiber evidence. Ross also is leading a team that received a $464,078 federal grant to develop a multimedia course that law enforcement and forensics personnel would use to train within their departments.