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Friday has slight heart attack

Ex-chief of UNC system recovering

BY ERIC FERRERI
STAFF WRITER

CHAPEL HILL - UNC President Emeritus William Friday, 88, is recovering at home after suffering a minor heart attack last week.

Friday, who presided over the university system from 1956 to 1986 and still keeps a busy schedule, was hospitalized for two days last week, said Virginia Taylor, his special assistant.

“He’s home and resting and doing well,” Taylor said in an interview Monday.

Taylor said Friday asked her to share some details about his condition because word has been going around that he had fallen ill and some folks had received bad information.

For example, he did not have a stroke, as Taylor said one person had suggested to her. And he did not need surgery, she said.

Taylor said Friday would likely spend the next month or two relaxing and recovering and will be scaling back his many activities.

Friday works about four days a week, often from his office in the Johnston Center for Undergraduate Excellence on McCorkle Place.

He meets with students, fields phone calls and acts as an all-purpose adviser for everyone from politicians to journalists to UNC administrators. He still tapes his weekly “North Carolina People” show, which airs on UNC-TV.

“He’s making some lifestyle changes, one of which is not working quite so much,” Taylor said.

Bill Friday, 88, spent 2 days in hospital.
On speech, let rejection, not bans, rule

By Jack Betts

The last thing the University of North Carolina system needs is a speech code.

It once had a speaker code, and it was a disaster. It was the Speaker Ban, enacted by the General Assembly in a fit of hasty pique in 1963. It made the state a laughingstock.

The university's accreditation was put in jeopardy. Its reputation for academic freedom was tarnished. And it put the students in the curious position of being shielded from something from which they needed no protection.

Harold Martin, chairman of the UNC Study Commission to Review Student Codes of Conduct as They Relate to Hate Crimes, and UNC general counsel Laura Lugar do not doubt fully understand this. So does UNC President Erskine Bowles, who was a student at UNC-Chapel Hill shortly after the legislature passed the Speaker Ban Law.

They're not about to repeat the mistake of the 1963 legislature. It prohibited anyone who was a member of the Communist Party, or who had used the Fifth Amendment to avoid answering questions in a legal setting, from speaking on a university campus.

It was adopted during a time when civil rights protesters were picketing in Raleigh, angering lawmakers who rammed the Speaker Ban through the legislature in its closing hours, an act of legislative expedience that would haunt the state for years. It didn't stop the civil rights movement.

Federal courts later declared the Speaker Ban an unconstitutional abridgement of the right to free speech. The legislature finally repealed the last toothless elements of that ill-considered law in 1995.

What brought UNC's study commission together last week was an incident in November at N.C. State University's Free Expression Tunnel. A few students painted bigoted messages on the wall there after the election — including "Hang Obama by a Noose" and "Shoot that n— in the head."

The Rev. William Barber, head of the state NAACP, demanded the students' dismissal. Federal and state authorities investigated, concluding no crime had been committed.

What happened on campus was encouraging. Hundreds of students took exception to the hateful speech and organized a campus meeting to protest the language used. It was just the sort of response that should have occurred. That it was spontaneous and from the students themselves indicates that the rantings of a few were dismissed by the many as inappropriate speech in a civil society.

Bowles was right to ask the commission to look at whether the UNC campuses' codes of conduct are adequate to handle hate crimes — and to explore whether hateful speech is a crime. It's a timely topic to explore — especially as a teaching tool as to what free speech is really all about, as opposed to conduct. Is free speech dangerous? When does it cross the line from speech to urging violence? What speech is protected? What isn't?

The reaction of students at N.C. State demonstrates they don't need to be protected from scary speech by the adoption of anything resembling a speech code. That's what students at UNC-Chapel Hill showed in the 1960s when Herbert Aptheker, prevented by law from speaking on campus, spoke instead across a stone wall on Franklin Street. He stood on a public sidewalk and addressed hundreds of students on campus.

I was among them, part of a horde curious to hear what legislators thought we ought not hear. After a while, it became evident to me he didn't have anything particularly dangerous, exciting, provocative or useful to say. Some of us left. Some stayed. It made many of us wonder: Why had the legislature wasted its time trying to prevent this guy from speaking? Wasn't it better that we heard what he had to say, so we'd have the opportunity to reject or ignore it?

I think it's largely the same with hateful speech. Most people recognize it when they hear it and reject the message. Some take the opportunity to discuss it and talk about the sometimes jarring collision between free speech and civil discourse. They understand there is no constitutional right not to be offended.

Protecting only offensive speech would be meaningless. If freedom of speech is to mean anything, it means the right to say unpopular, even hateful things. That's a hard lesson — but it's what free speech is all about.