SOC alumnus investigates harrowing journey

by Danielle Moxley

Migrant men help a young girl up onto the train as it passes through Tenosique. It will take five hours to reach the next city and weeks to reach the U.S. border. Robbery, rape and kidnapping are all risks along the way.

He watches as they run to jump on the train. Their family and friends cheer them on. For some, this will be the last time they see one another.

They know the path is dangerous, and that many do not make it unharmed. But they will risk it all.

For a better life. A brighter future. Away from the gangs. Away from the drugs...

This is just the beginning of the journey ECU communication graduate Carlton Purvis ('09) traveled to Central America and Southern Mexico to document.

Purvis collaborated on a project that investigated the dangers migrants, especially women, face while traveling north. Purvis — along with investigative reporter Maria Zamudio and a hired fixer — spent two weeks tracing the route migrants take from El Salvador to Southern Mexico.

continued on page 4
Here, there and everywhere: SOC Pirates are making their mark on the world of comm

Love of communication leads alumna across North America for sorority

by Elena Briere

ECU alumna Katie Mullins, 23, never imagined that she would be traveling across the U.S. and Canada working for her sorority’s headquarters.

Mullins graduated from the ECU’s School of Communication in May 2014 with a concentration in journalism and public relations.

“I have always loved working with people and getting messages across to an audience effectively, and PR is perfect for that,” said Mullins.

Currently, she uses her B.S. in communication to help her while she travels to different chapters of her sorority, Alpha Omicron Pi, as an Educational Leadership Consultant (ELC).

Mullins says that her duties and roles vary a bit with each chapter. She is qualified to enhance programming and reporting between the cabinet, executive board and headquarters; provide training and assistance with membership recruitment and overall chapter leadership and management with officers; and also to provide enthusiasm and encouragement to active members about long-term benefits of the chapter.

“Working on the road has taught me to keep my life organized to make sure I can submit my reports on time,” Mullins said. Her professional activities and duties as an ELC vary from day to day and city to city, but she says that’s what she loves about the job.

She also realizes the importance of the lessons she learned in a general communication class she took freshman year on a whim. Mullins recalls the class fondly and views it as the doorway to her professional life.

Mullins got an early start working toward her career while in college. She held three internships and also maintained a position in her sorority.

For two consecutive summers, she worked as a marketing intern for Live Nation. She says that this was the job she learned the most from.

“[It] taught me that the music and live performance business is comprised of many parts and many individuals.”

She says she learned and experienced firsthand how the inside business processes were carried out. The Live Nation marketing department communicates with the company’s tour management and local media, radio programming and with their ticketing offices to make each concert series a success.

After Live Nation, the alumna worked as a public relations intern for Bolt Public Relations, a Raleigh-based public relations and social media agency with other offices in Irvine, California and Dallas/Ft. Worth.

When Mullins was a senior, she worked as a marketing and public relations intern for ECU’s Performing Arts Series and wrote for a national blog called Sorority Stylista.

Radio host aspires to be the voice of Pirate nation

by Joseph Mayancsik

It is 3 p.m. on a weekday and you can find Clip Brock at “The Sports Bar.” While it is not quite “happy hour,” Brock is opening a six-pack of questions live on Pirate Radio, and discussing the tastiest sports news on tap.

Brock, who graduated from the ECU School of Communication in May 2006, says he still uses a lot of the same equipment now as he did then, and that has helped him find a job and not miss a beat.
Brock has been employed at Pirate Radio 1250 and 930 AM for the last eight years and has a hand in producing many shows, including the Bud Light Pregame Tailgate, the U.S. Cellular 5th Quarter Call-In Show, and “The Sports Bar;” which he hosts.

“Over the years my role here has grown, and I owe a lot of it to the experience I picked up at ECU,” he said.

Brock does more than just talk on his show, as he involves unique games, fantasy sport drafts, satirical sing-alongs and many other activities that make his own personal show different from most other sports talk radio shows.

This isn’t Brock’s first gig on the radio. As a student, he was involved with WZMB, the university’s radio station. “The people there really push their students to be the best they can, and I took a lot from my time there,” he said.

Even before college, Brock had a passion for this line of work. As a kid, he would play video games and mute the television so he could commentate on the games.

Despite hosting his own radio show, he really enjoys announcing games and doing play-by-play. “I have done high school football games before, but this season I’ll be doing some baseball games, and that’s really exciting for me,” he said.

While he is happy with where he is now, this radio work ties in greatly with what Brock aspires to be one day. “I want to be the voice of a university eventually, much like how Jeff Charles is ‘The Voice of the Pirates’ here at ECU,” Brock said.

One of his many former guests thinks he can achieve just that. Stephen Igoe, a 2014 graduate of the ECU School of Communication and owner of Hoistthecolours.net, has appeared countless times on-air with Brock.

“He loves what he does and works very hard to produce his best effort every time he gets behind the microphone,” said Igoe. “He has helped me a lot and given me many tips along the way and always can put a smile on my face.”

Igoe is just one of many with positive things to say about Brock, but he owes a lot of his on-air personality and his success to his favorite professor at ECU, the late James “Jim” Lester Rees. “He taught me how to use my voice correctly and countless other tips and tricks that have gotten me the where I am today,” Brock said.

A native of the Greenville area, the radio host/sports fan attended D.H. Conley High School before going to ECU. In his spare time, he enjoys rooting for the Washington Redskins and being with his family. Sports have always played a big part in his life, and he will be the first to admit that even though his job has many perks being able to get into games for free is one of his favorites.
Purvis said that the unstructured trip allowed him to immerse himself in the culture, including facing language barriers.

“I could empathize with migrants coming here without knowing the language after working in Mexico and Central America knowing only basic Spanish,” Purvis related, adding he has since taken two Spanish courses for future travels.

Migrants have been fleeing Central America because of the gang violence. The gangs have started a war tax and will kill anyone who does not pay them. A lot of the migrants are without money and without options. They have become so desperate to leave because of the gangs that they will trust traffickers to help them get to the United States.

The cost to flee is between $6,000 and $8,000 and that does not include the bribes the migrants have to pay on the way. If the groups fleeing run out of money, they will use the women traveling with them as commodities. Many women are raped, assaulted or sold into sex trafficking while trying to make it to the United States. The 2,000-mile journey is mostly done by hopping trains and on foot. What would take two days by car, often takes months.

Purvis and Zamudio talked to two women, Anna and Rachel, who had endured the pains of the journey. Anna was traveling with seven men and was almost raped when they could not pay the bounty, but luckily, she escaped. Rachel got separated from the group she was traveling with and was abducted and raped by a man.

“Talking to them is very depressing and you wish you could do so much more,” Purvis said. Meeting the migrants put into perspective for him how serious the gang and drug problems are in Central America. “We were only there for a moment in their lives, while they faced this every single day.”

Purvis believes that journalists should be sensitive to the people they are reporting on. In this case, he found that meant changing the sources’ names for safety reasons. “Migrants don’t typically have police reports or documents to back up their accounts, but the pain on their faces when they talk about murdered family members and the scars from machete attacks are very real,” he said.

During their trip, the group stopped at one of the Catholic-run shelters the migrants use while traveling through Mexico. The women and men are separated and for some women it is the only time they feel safe. One of the shelter walls contains a map that marks the Catholic shelters, danger zones, cartel activity, bribe locations and places where assault or kidnappings have happened along the trail.

Some of the shelters they reported from were located in one of the danger zones.
marked on the map. “It’s kind of eerie seeing a red dot in the area you’re standing,” Purvis said.

While studying at ECU, Purvis also received a degree in cultural anthropology. He said studying anthropology has helped him in his career because it’s about research and stepping outside of one’s comfort zone. “The exploration of different cultures and practices and some of the research methods I learned on the anthropology side have been very beneficial to my work as a journalist, especially for that project,” he said. “Students considering being reporters should seriously consider ethnographic research methods as an elective.”

Carlton Purvis

A former editor at The East Carolinian, Purvis is a freelance journalist who has written for The Commercial Appeal, Bloomberg Business and NPR's Latino USA.
At the Ninth Annual School of Communication Spring Reception on April 11, Sam Matheny (’94) received the 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award. Matheny is Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at the National Association of Broadcasters. With over 20 years of experience in the broadcast and data networking industries, he leads NAB’s technology team in its efforts to promote innovation and propel broadcast technology into the future.

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CommCrew honors Matheny, debuts award

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