

TECHNICIAN

WEDNESDAY
JULY
20
2005

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Raleigh, North Carolina

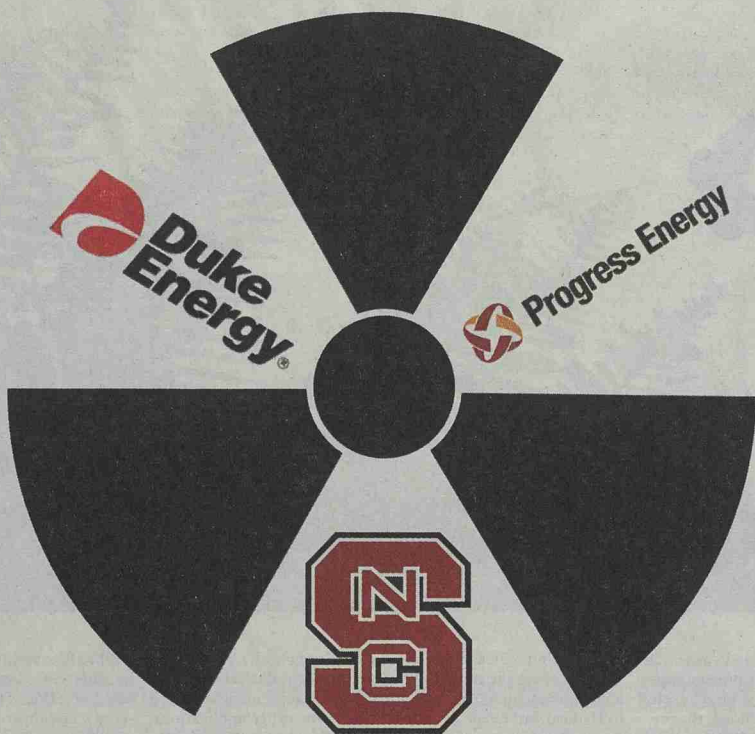


ILLUSTRATION BY WIN BASSETT

Campus reactor leads the way in "nuclear renaissance"

Ian Jester
Staff Writer

Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon in Spring semester, Dayne Murray skated on his Gravity longboard towards what he described as the "home of his future."

He was one of 45 nuclear engineering students to attend this second-year class inside Burlington Laboratories. The sophomore said skating to class saved him 20 minutes of traveling, which he put towards sleep.

But there is an object that captured his attention before walking into each class.

"There's a Progress Energy plaque that I look at on the wall next to our classroom," Murray said. "It's nothing fancy, but it lets me know there's an employer out there that wants me to come to class and succeed."

The plaque symbolizes the University's appreciation for the

\$385,000 renovation grant presented by the Progress Energy Foundation to former Chancellor Marye Anne Fox in 2000.

Headquartered in Downtown Raleigh, Progress Energy is one of the strongest supporters of the College of Engineering, according to COE Executive Director of Development Ben Hughes.

"Progress Energy needs engineers and we train engineers," Hughes said. "We are a source of recruitment for major companies like Progress, and their generous financial support is just an insight to our long-term relationship. It's a relationship that dates back to before I was at N.C. State."

The partnership began in 1977 — when Progress Energy was known as Carolina Power & Light — it has benefited both parties.

"In the 80 plus years of the company, we've worked with the faculty and students at N.C.

State to ensure their research in nuclear energy is adequately funded," Merrilee Jacobson, a corporate communications specialist for Progress Energy, said. "We want people to be aware that Progress Energy is committed to the University and to the Raleigh community for years to come."

Progress Energy donated a total of \$232,500 to the College of Engineering in the 2004 fiscal year, and is planning to increase that amount by more than \$30,000 for 2005.

Jacobson is part of a research team for the Progress Energy Foundation that decides which non-profit organizations are most deserving for the company's education, environmental and economic development grants.

"It's a very interactive process," Jacobson said. "Everyone is interested in finding the right mix of funding that satisfies both parties. I sit down with Ben once

or twice a month to find out the needs of the engineering college and how we can appropriate our corporate profitability funds."

Hughes said Duke Energy, the North Carolina-based diversified energy company, is another huge supporter of the University.

Based out of Charlotte, Duke Energy provided the College of Engineering with \$174,500 in the 2004 fiscal year, according to Duke Energy Senior Vice President E. O. Ferrell III.

"Duke Energy is a company founded in engineering with seven nuclear reactors under our control," Ferrell, a 1966 alumnus in electrical engineering, said. "And since N.C. State has one of the few operating nuclear reactors for research in the nation, we want to fund N.C. State to

NUCLEAR continued page 2

N.C. State student cleared in bombing

Tyler Duker
News Editor

A former N.C. State student held for questioning in the London terrorist attacks remains in Egyptian custody today, despite being cleared of wrongdoing by the Egyptian government.

Police arrested 33-year-old Magdy Mahmoud Mustafa el-Nashar in Cairo Thursday in regards to "an alleged connection" to the four bombings that killed 52 people on July 7, according to a statement from the Egyptian Ministry of Interior made last Friday.

"He denied any connection to the aforementioned occurrences in London and noted that all his personal property was still in his apartment in Britain," the ministry said.

According to CNN, ministry spokesman Hisham Safiya said the ministry presented the cabinet of Egyptian President Hosni Mubrak with an "internal security report" that cleared el-Nashar.

Egyptian officials have not said when el-Nashar will be released.

Safiya also stated that Egyptian officials found no links between el-Nashar and al Qaeda, the group believed to be responsible for the attacks.

According to the Times of London, London Metropolitan Police discovered that el-Nashar rented one of the apartments searched in Leeds where Police found explosives Wednesday.

Focus turned to el-Nashar after London Police found traces of

Magdy el-Nashar

- July 19 Cleared of wrongdoing
- July 18 Denies link to bombings in an interview
- July 14 Egyptian Police arrest el-Nashar in Cairo
- July 12 Police reportedly find explosives in el-Nashar's apartment
- June 30 Arrives in Egypt, stays with family
- July 7 Terrorists attack London in four locations
- May 6 Receives doctorate from University of Leeds
- Fall 2000 Pursues doctorate at University of Leeds, U.K.
- Spring 2000 Begins master's coursework in chemical engineering at N.C. State
- 1998 Receives master's degree in organic chemistry from Cairo University
- 1995 Begins postgraduate work at Cairo University
- 1994 Receives bachelor degree in chemistry from Cairo University
- 1990 Enrolls at Cairo University in Egypt

COMPILED BY TYLER DUKER

explosives in a Leeds apartment rented by el-Nashar, according to a CNN report.

Scotland Yard said Friday that they could not confirm or deny

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insidetechnician



Poker: A 'Kid's' game

Alumnus Michael Gracz has won a \$1.5 million prize in poker after graduating in finance in 2004. See page 8.

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94°/76°

94°/75°

Campus cutting energy costs

With campus upgrades in the works, the University hopes to take a bite out of its budget

Tanner Kroeger
Senior Staff Writer

With last year's water and energy budget of over \$20 million, N.C. State administrators are taking new measures to cut spending now and in the future.

According to C.C. Maurer, university energy conservation coordinator, NCSU has made a pledge to save 4 percent of their energy budget for the present fiscal year.

NCSU spent \$23 million last year on water and electricity, Maurer said.

A new water chiller plant, paired with improvements at Carmichael Gym, highlight the University's most recent efforts to cut its energy spending.

The plant, finished in Spring of 2005, produces chilled water that is pumped out to buildings all over campus.

"It's a much more efficient air conditioning unit," Maurer said.

While the new air-conditioning system will make the more immediate impact on campus, new features being installed at Carmichael should bring changes that are more significant to the

University's spending in the long run.

According to Dawn Sanner, director of facilities and operations at Carmichael, the improvements to the gym are part of an ongoing process to upgrade the building.

One of the many different energy conservation projects in progress, Sanner said, is the replacement of showerheads in gym showers to use less water.

"The new shower heads increase pressure and decrease water usage, so you get the same effect with less water," Sanner said.

ENERGY continued page 3

PATIENCE, YOUNG GRASSHOPPER



JEFF REEVES/TECHNICIAN

Summer sports camps are a common sight around campus. Former NCSU soccer player Justin Branch coaches camper Alessandro Scanu during the hot afternoon on Tuesday. Scanu is part of a group of around 30 campers from Venezuela attending the State Soccer Camp.

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Research model predicts plant, animal movement

Matt Wilson
Staff Writer

Researchers have developed a model to predict the dispersal of plants and animals using wildlife corridors, which are strips of land connecting separated habitats.

Associate professor of zoology Nick Haddad, in collaboration with researchers from the University of Florida and Allegheny College, conducted the study at the Savannah River Site National Environmental Research Park on the South Carolina-Georgia border.

Haddad's research began in 1993, when he first collaborated with the U.S. Forest Service to research butterflies in a variety of habitat patterns.

"That's where we got the idea of varying the arrangements of habitat[s]," Haddad said. "Those corridors are based on the premise [that] by connecting otherwise separated habitats, you can increase the movement rate of plants and animals."

The idea of wildlife corridors emerged and Haddad began collaborating with other researchers.

However, one significant problem emerged in their research. Tracking the movement and behavior of a species required an extensive amount of time and a large group of researchers.

"We got to thinking, how could we come up with a simpler way? Could we figure out based on their movement patterns if they used corridors or not?" Haddad said.

He then began a study to create

a predictive model that could estimate the dispersal of plants and animals in habitats connected by wildlife corridors.

"In ecology for the last 10 years, we've thought that local behaviors might be used to predict larger scale dispersal, but virtually no one's been successful at translating larger scale dispersal," Haddad said.

As part of the study, the U.S. Forest Service set up eight similar sites, each 2 acres. In each site, a central patch of habitat was connected to another patch by a wildlife corridor, approximately 150 meters long and 25 meters wide. Three other habitats remained unconnected to each other.

The researchers chose to study the Eastern bluebird, an animal known to disperse plant seeds, and the seeds of the wax myrtle plant, found in its droppings.

"The bluebirds are cooperative. They land on perches that we put out there for them," Haddad said.

Researchers marked the plants with a harmless dye to track the dispersal of its seeds through the patches.

"We sprayed the fruits with a very thin film of fluorescent dye powder, so the birds couldn't see it," Haddad said.

After collecting approximately 13,000 samples, researchers found that bluebirds and seeds from the wax myrtle plant were, respectively, 31 and 37 percent more likely to be found in the center of connected habitats than unconnected habitats.

Although many other studies of wildlife corridors have been



GRAPHIC BY KATIE GRAF

published, Haddad's research shows the effects of reconnecting habitats on a larger scale. According to Haddad, the predictions closely fit the actual dispersal of seeds.

Although the researchers could only observe bluebird behavior in a short range, the prediction model correctly estimated seed dispersal at greater ranges.

"We could use that information in a model and predict very accurately where fruits will be dispersed on the landscape," Haddad said.

The bluebirds often were found to travel along the edges of the landscape corridors. According to Haddad, landscape development often fragments habitats, reducing population size and leaving animals and plants vulnerable to the genetic defects that develop from inbreeding.

"Habitat loss and also the separation of habitats is the most important factor causing the loss of biological diversity," Haddad said. "Small populations are more likely to inbreed and they're also more likely to

change genetically in ways that oppose natural selection."

The behavior model could be useful for other applications, Haddad said, such as tracking the movement of disease-carrying birds or invasive species. Haddad also said that his research will have an impact on future landscape development.

"Our work provides empirical data to show that corridors seem to work as they're intended," he said.

Haddad said now he will focus research on two fronts. The first

will be to examine how wildlife corridors affect population and diversity; the second will be to study endangered species in wildlife corridors.

"Our work is going to focus more on species of conservation interest. We're going to focus on six different species of restoration concern in those areas," Haddad said.

The research was published in the July 1 issue of *Science*.

NASHAR

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any information pertaining to el-Nashar.

El-Nashar attended N.C. State during spring semester of 2000, conducting graduate coursework in chemical engineering.

His time at the University prompted FBI officials to scour any records pertaining to him late last week.

According to University Registrar Louis Hunt, the office of Registration and Records released general directory information, but government officials obtained other information about el-Nashar through the Office of Legal Affairs with a court order.

Additional inquiries were directed through NCSU News Services, Hunt said.

"Anytime we have a matter like that we want to funnel everything through the same source so we're giving the same information," Hunt said.

Saad Khan, director of the chemical and biomolecular engineering graduate program, declined to comment on el-Nashar.

The Egyptian-born el-Nashar left NCSU in the fall of 2000 to seek a doctorate from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom.

According to a statement from the University of Leeds Thursday, el-Nashar was involved in biochemical research, sponsored by the National Research Center in Cairo. El-Nashar, who received his doctorate from the University of Leeds in May 2005, conducted the research with a six-member team.

El-Nashar arrived in Cairo on June 30, a full week before the attacks, according to a CNN interview with Magdy's brother Mohammed el-Nashar.

The statement from the Egyptian Ministry of Interior said that Magdy el-Nashar plans to return to the U.K. to continue his work.

NUCLEAR

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make sure the nuclear program stays robust."

That nuclear reactor is housed at Burlington, on the other side of Murray's nuclear engineering class in the Progress Energy Lecture Hall. Ferrell, who is also on the board of directors for the NCSU Engineering Foundation, remembers the first time he was introduced to nuclear energy.

"I remember watching the utility trucks pass by my house in Durham. That was the first time I knew of Duke Power," Ferrell said. "While I was at State, Duke Energy was building a hydroelectric station north of Charlotte, and they invited engineers to come see the facility as part of future recruitment. The potential of fission and nuclear power really started to pick up."

Stemming from the ideas of Clifford Beck and former Dean of Engineering Harold Lampe, the present 1-megawatt PULSTAR nuclear reactor was built in 1950, establishing the nation's first university nuclear reactor and research curriculum.

Currently, the PULSTAR reactor is one of three university nuclear reactors located in the Southeast — and one of 27 in the nation.

NCSU is a member of the Multi-University Southeast INIE Consortium, or MUSIC, which conducts research based on grants from the U.S. Department of Energy. The department head of nuclear engineering Paul Turinsky points out that U.S. Department of Energy has funded the NCSU program in several ways, including a \$12 million research grant applicable over six years.

"For the longer term, the U.S. Department of Energy is developing six new reactor designs, dramatically different from current plant designs, to deploy two or three decades from now," Turinsky said. "Our pro-

gram will be a key player in that development, through our membership in the Battelle Energy Alliance, which recently received a \$5 billion contract to operate at the Idaho National Laboratory for the next 10 years."

Hughes said the nuclear industry took a major hit in confidence following the melting of nuclear fuel from a full-scale commercial reactor at Three Mile Island near Middletown, Pa. in 1979. The loss that halted a nuclear dream of unlimited potential for some time.

"Lots of nuclear programs closed down, and now whether it's because of political controversy or the threat of nuclear terrorist attacks, there's a reluctance to rebuild that confidence in general," Hughes said.

According to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission there was a decline in orders for nuclear plants following the meltdown, and the demand for new employees dropped. But as many universities discontinued their nuclear funding and programs after Three Mile Island, NCSU remained committed throughout the questionable period in the nuclear industry, a move Mohamed Bourham, a professor in nuclear engineering, praised.

"We are now in the nuclear renaissance," Bourham said. "Nuclear engineering programs have increased nationwide and the numbers are incredible compared to five years ago."

As more programs are created across the country, NCSU's program grows.

"There were only 25-30 undergraduates in nuclear engineering three or four years ago," Hughes said. "Now there are about 120 graduates this year."

Spring graduate Josh Nowak said researching the history of nuclear engineering in high school didn't scare him from enrolling in the program.

"The scholarship from Duke Energy means the world," Nowak said "Because I'm an out-of-state student I wouldn't have been able to get my degree without that."

Nowak's scholarship is one of four areas of financial support given by the nuclear companies'

foundations. The second area is directed toward programmatic support, which includes anything from improving the operation of the PULSTAR to renovating teaching facilities and labs. The renovations have not gone unnoticed by one nuclear engineering student, who receives scholarship support from Progress Energy.

"I know that I just got out of a nuclear lab without new equipment, and the radiation counters were so worn out," Jason Kopp, a senior in nuclear engineering, said. "Through the funding of Progress Energy we've gotten a world of help in our experiments."

The other two areas reflect corporate funding in the areas of event sponsorships and unrestricted support. Both energy companies sponsor dinners for Ben Franklin scholars — students earning a bachelor's degree in both engineering and humanities — as well as providing a "piggy bank" fund for the dean to use at his will.

"The dean will use the unrestricted support funds to benefit highly-qualified out-of-state students that are considering a closer alternative for education," Hughes said. "It's a strong way to compete against Georgia Tech, Virginia Tech, Purdue and other technical schools for the brightest students."

By bringing in this vast potential for future employees of the nuclear industry, Ferrell said both North Carolina-based companies will benefit from a market period that is demanding to hire more graduates.

"Over the past several years, the main goal for utility companies was to operate extremely efficient," Ferrell said. "Now many of the senior employees that we hired in the 1970s are looking at retirement — they've already benefited the company with all they had left. Now we've reached a period where hiring a greater number of college graduates is becoming the main goal."

Jacobson echoed Ferrell's statements, when she also added the market for hiring at Progress Energy is improving following

the recent purchase of Florida Energy.

"You don't normally absorb a company the same size as yourself," Jacobson said. "We had to borrow a lot of money from the market, but this made us more flexible as an employer. Now we'll hire roughly 1,000 entry-level graduates by December to fill those positions vacated by our retiring senior employees."

It's a change in the market Ferrell anticipated, but said he knows one of the two North Carolina nuclear giants needs to build the next-generation reactor to fulfill that promise.

"The need for engineers was static after Three Mile," Ferrell said. "The normal cycle that increased the number of nuclear power plants stopped. It left the country in the position where

adding more base-load generating plants will support the need for engineering talent, the talent that will replace the seniors of the 1970s."

Jacobson and Ferrell both agreed the importance of nuclear power in the nation's future will be witnessed by its environmental safety compared to other energy sources.

And by way of their long-term relationship with the University, both companies have NCSU graduates believing in the same prosperous future.

"It's going to start booming here when we start running out of fossil fuels," Kopp said. "I think my future is going to be a promising one for the nuclear industry."

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ENERGY

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Sanner said the University is also looking for ways to keep lights from being left on, hoping to install sensors in bathrooms, classrooms and other areas with high, but sporadic traffic.

"Starting later in the fall, we are going to be installing some occupancy sensors," Maurer said. "These sensors will turn on lights when someone enters a room and turn them off when the person leaves."

Sanner said Carmichael's eventual expansion, which breaks ground in January, will also have these features.

"Energy will be [the expansion's] main focus," Sanner said. "We are working on ways to dim the lights so that we don't need full wattage while cleaning."

Korey Hite, a junior in mechanical engineering, is part of Students for Sustainable Energy, an energy conservation group on campus.

"Every student needs to get involved because the biggest changes happen when everyone is a part of change," Hite said. "I've heard it said that we could save a million dollars a year if students would just turn off their computers."

Hite said his group, along with similar student organizations, are planning ways to get students involved this fall.

"Right now, Students for Sustainable Energy is planning some other things on campus," Hite said. "We might merge with another on-campus group and plan some bigger and better things."

Maurer said NCSU has a commitment to save 4 percent on energy this year; however, there is a state-wide campaign to save 20 percent.

"The University is committed to save 4 percent per square foot," Maurer said. "Of course, we want to exceed that, but it's our commitment for right now."

POLICE BLOTTER

07/13/05

10:19 P.M. | ANIMAL PROBLEM
RPD's ECC reported NCSU cows were running at large in the Mid Pines area. A staff member and Officers were able to locate and corral 3 cows without incident.

07/14/05

12:24 A.M. | ASSIST OTHER AGENCY
Officers responded to the Hillsborough Street area after reports that an unknown subject was in an accident on Hillsborough Street and fled on foot down Lampe Drive. The suspect was located on Current Drive attempting to get on a Wolfline Bus. The subject refused to give his name and was turned over to Raleigh Police Department and was taken into custody and transported to Wake Med by EMS.

07/15/05

4:53 P.M. | LARCENY
A staff member reported a box of books missing from the loading dock at the bookstore.

6:59 P.M. | B&E/LARCENY

A student reported their vehicle had been broken into while parked at the Capability South Lot. Stereo and sunglasses were taken.

07/18/05

1:21 P.M. | SUSPICIOUS PERSON
Officers responded to Morrill Dr. near Faucette Dr. in reference to a male that was sitting in his vehicle nude and exposing himself. Officers checked the area but the vehicle had left prior the officers arrival. There was no further information available on the vehicle.

11:48 P.M. | SUSPICIOUS INCIDENT

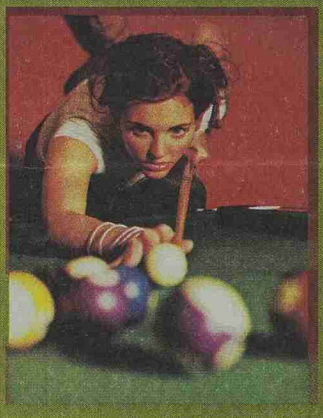
A staff member reported that some of the housekeepers had located a white powder like substance on the floors in the DH Hill Library. Upon investigation, the scene had been cleaned by housekeeping. The officers spoke with the housekeepers, who stated they thought it had come from the ceiling and cleaned it up. The substance was very fine and appeared to be chalk or baby powder.

2:05 P.M. | TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

While attempting to leave the scene of a Fire Alarm, an RFD engine backed into a vehicle that was parked on Stinson Dr. The vehicle was parked illegally, and the driver was issued a parking citation.



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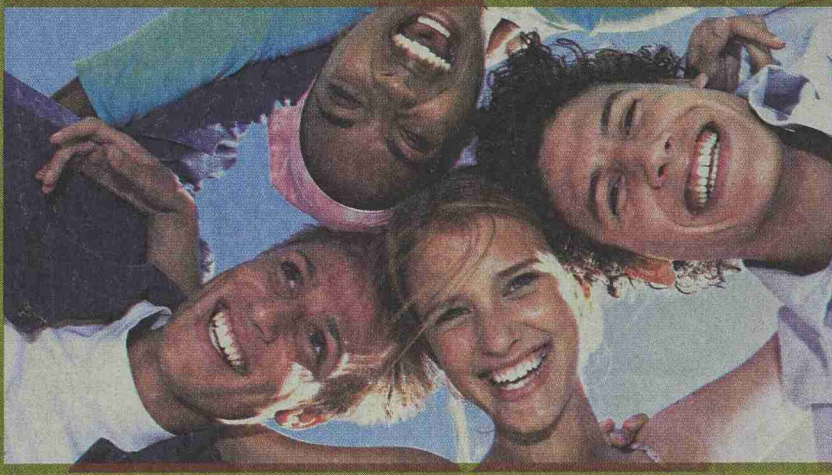
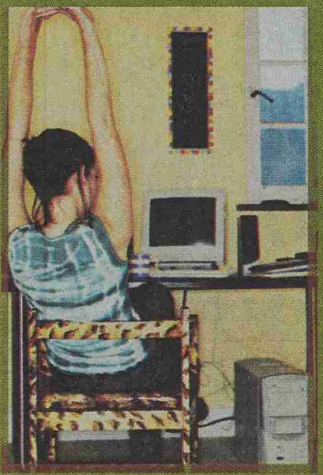
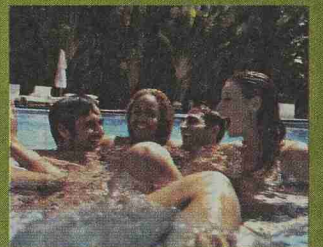
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Student seeks photography exhibit

Greg Behr
Senior Staff Writer

Asking Dana Dillehunt what she wants to be when she graduates from college would produce an answer similar to that of asking a six year old what they want to be when they grow up.

At the moment she is an aspiring writer with a deep love of all things David Sedaris.

She is a copy writer for Rockett, Burkhead, and Winslow advertising agency seeking to do pro bono work for local charities, an amateur musician who can play a mean cello and accordion, as well as a photographer disenfranchised by commercial photography seeking an exhibit in a local gallery.

"I had a business where I took portraits of people, but gave it up after clients wanted too much control over their pictures," she said shrugging off the fact that it was her own morals that led to the failure of the business. "I couldn't express myself and I think that if people want canned photography then they can go to Sears," Dillehunt said.

This example of completely forfeiting a business because her artistic license was threatened is what makes Dillehunt so special and refreshing to an industry that sees so many of its artists compromised by a lack of opportunity.

Her disgust with portraits for profit didn't deter her and she



Senior Dana Dillehunt has been processing black and white film for years. She sets her bathroom up as a darksets, putting her enlarger on her sink and her chemical trays in the tub.

has now turned her attention to other aspects of photography. Currently she is wrapping up a solo exhibit that concentrates on the bonds between fruit and sensuality which she hopes will

become successful, although fears that it won't be because of her environment.

"Opportunities at N.C. State are limited if you are not in the design school," she said, and

fears that she "won't be taken seriously" by the Gallery of Art and Design located in the Talley Student Center. Her gripes with the College of Design weren't limited to the gallery and she

said she is disappointed that she could not enroll in any art and design classes because she was not in that college.

As an English major, she views limited enrollment in the de-

sign curriculum to be a double standard when compared to enrollment in higher level English courses. "Art and design is unlike English where anyone can enroll in upper level classes with barely any qualifications and only a few prerequisites," Dillehunt said.

Although she said she is disappointed by her limited resources at NCSU she appreciates the College of Design as an impressive school that does very creative work on a campus that doesn't always put art first.


"State should give more support to artists and photographers because the art community is alive in Raleigh even though it may not always be visible," she said.

"The gallery on campus is fine, but cannot even compare to the galleries at larger universities like Columbia," she said commenting that she had recently visited Columbia University's gallery and was very impressed.

"Most People on campus don't even know about our gallery and the university isn't doing enough to get people involved, but there is so much potential at State and in Raleigh for something really great," Dillehunt said.

She said she hopes the exhibit she is currently working on may place more importance on amateur art and photography at NCSU and in the Raleigh area, but if it doesn't there is always Plan B or C or D for her.


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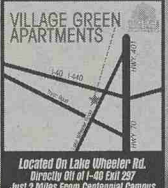


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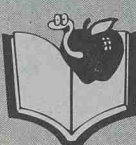
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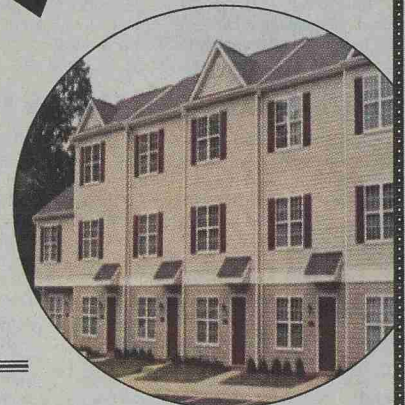
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MEN'S SWIMMING

Velez goes gold twice

State swimmer sets record, wins three medals at Maccabiah Games in Israel
Sports staff report

At the Maccabiah Games in Israel last week, N.C. State senior swimmer Dan Velez set a competition record in the 100-meter breaststroke with a time of 1:03.76 to take home the gold medal.

Velez also won a bronze medal in the 200-meter breaststroke and added another gold medal by swimming the breaststroke leg of the United States' 400-yard medley relay. The medley relay team also posted a record setting time of 3:45.47.

Held every four years in Israel, the Maccabiah Games are sometimes referred to as the "Jewish Olympics." The games unite the best Jewish athletes from around the world for an Olympic-style competition.

Increasing participation in recent years has made the Maccabiah Games the fourth-largest international competition in the world. Velez is just one of the 6,000 athletes from 50 different countries participating this year.

While it's Velez's first year competing in the Maccabiah Games, it's also his first year competing for State. A transfer from Penn State, Velez has only been swimming for State since January.

But he's already made a few waves in that time.

His 55:15 time in the 100-meter breaststroke was the second-fastest time in school history, and propelled him to a fourth-place finish in the ACC championship.

Velez was also a key component of a State medley relay team that took home the ACC championship. Again swimming the breaststroke leg, Velez — along with teammates Kevin Devine, Kevin Velleca and Cullen Jones — set an ACC record with a time of 1:27.46. The foursome qualified for NCAA competition where they finished 12th in the country.

The Germantown, Md. native will remain in Israel until the closing ceremonies July 21.

— COMPILED BY MICHAEL BREEDLOVE

Poker: A 'Kid's' game

ALUMNUS MICHAEL "THE KID" GRACZ HAS WON A \$1.5 MILLION PRIZE AND A WORLD SERIES OF POKER EVENT SINCE MARCH

Joe Overby
Deputy Sports Editor

The Kid walked into his North Raleigh townhouse Tuesday afternoon holding a stack of cash, about the size of five bricks strung together — his earnings from the past few weeks in Las Vegas.

"You want to go shopping?" The Kid joked to his girlfriend, Katie Page, as he slammed the heavy bundle on the kitchen counter.

The Kid, as he's known in the poker world, is Michael Gracz, a 2004 N.C. State graduate in finance — and one of the best up and coming poker players in the world.

Gracz, 24, and Page, a Meredith College graduate, do not live the traditional professional life of a couple in their mid-20s.

They have spent most of their summer in Las Vegas at the World Series of Poker. And on June 11, Gracz struck gold — winning the 7th event of the World Series. He pocketed nearly \$600,000 and earned a World Series gold bracelet.

Gracz and Page have been together almost two years. They met at their old apartment complex when Gracz was at State and Page was at Meredith. When Gracz first started playing professionally, Page used her English degree to manage Gracz's public relations and marketing. Page said when the two first started dating, however, she had a limited concept of the game.

"We would watch poker on television and he would talk about poker, I would just nod and smile," Page said. "But he liked that I didn't know anything about poker, because he talks poker to everyone else."

Page has since passed along Gracz's public relations responsibilities to Poker Royalty and works independently for Poker Resource Network, handling the public relations of multiple poker players.

In college, poker was how Gracz made money; his winnings paying for rent and food. But when he graduated in May 2004, Gracz decided, through the advice of Page and his parents, it would be best if he tried to find a "real" job.

"She was like, 'Let's see you get a job, let's see you try that,'" Gracz said. He used his finance degree and worked in sales at Sageworks in Raleigh for six months. However, in December, he took a weekend trip to the Taj Mahal casino in Atlantic City, N.J. to enter the Trump Classic no-limit Texas Hold 'Em tournament — and won it, bank-

ing \$295,275.

Gracz went back to work for two weeks, then entered another weekend tournament, this time in Tunica, Miss. After a profitable showing, Gracz decided it was the right moment to take his chances on a career in poker — now or never.

"I kept thinking, I've got this \$100,000 sitting here — if I'm going to take a shot at poker, this is it right now," Gracz said. "I walk in, it's raining or snowing, and I'm like, 'Listen guys, I'm going to play poker.'"

"They [his employer] were like, 'Alright, buddy, good luck with that.'"

Gracz took his chances anyway — and it paid off.

In mid-March, Gracz competed in the World Poker Tour's PartyPoker Million IV tournament on a cruise out of San Diego, Calif. Gracz beat more than 700 others in the week-long

is ever the same.

"No, we don't [have a typical week]," Gracz said.

During the World Series, their weeks were particularly hectic. Page would work sometimes from 7 a.m. to midnight, working public relations for multiple players at the tournament. Gracz would start playing poker around noon until 3 a.m. Gracz would sleep for five or six hours, then do it all over again.

"It's like Groundhog Day, every single day," Gracz said. "In Vegas,

playing at the World Series of Poker, it's a marathon. It's every day, no time off. It's really taxing."

Gracz said his weeks in Raleigh are quite easygoing, however. He'll play poker three or four nights a week and spend time relaxing.

But success for Gracz was not instantaneous. As a teenager growing up in Raleigh, Gracz worked at Games Galore and developed an interest for the game. When he

POKER continued page 7

Michael Gracz's recent tournament earnings

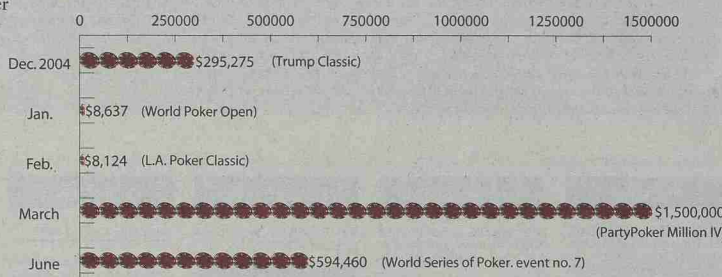


PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY JEFF REEVES

tournament to claim the championship and \$1.5 million.

Since winning the PartyPoker tournament, Gracz said his and Page's weeks are packed when tournaments are going on — and no week

SPORTS FROM ABROAD

Croquet excites travelers at St. Benet's

Nicholas Jeffreys
Staff Writer

With two wickets remaining and the final pole in sight, anything can happen in the sport of croquet.

In England, soccer, known as football in every country except the United States, is king. But at St. Benet's Hall in Oxford, England, croquet is the sport attracting all the boys — and the girls — to the yard, which needs only a ball, a few wickets, a pole and a mallet in order to commence the match.

The objective is to strike the ball with the mallet through the tunnel-shaped wickets until it gets to the pole, which is the final destination.

On the way to the pole, one facet of the game is the ability to send an opponent's ball off the yard. Rising sophomore David Giovannini explained this aspect of the game.

"If you hit someone else's ball along



WIN BASSETT/TECHNICIAN FILE PHOTO
Croquet is a favorite after-dinner activity at St. Benet's, a permanent private hall of Oxford University in England.

your journey, you put your ball beside theirs and you send it wherever you want," Giovannini said, who studies textile engineering at N.C. State. "And you get an extra shot. When you go through a wicket, you also get an extra shot."

After participating in croquet for his first time at St. Benet's, UNC-Asheville history student Jon Spoon said he viewed the sport as one that requires a lot of skill.

"Croquet may appear skillless and frivolous to its sceptics," Spoon said. "But that does not describe it at all. Croquet involves skill, strategy and the ability to see both yours and your opponent's next turn."

Upon arrival at St. Benet's, the majority of the group said they believed the sport was a nice game where no harm could be done. After being around the sport for a couple of days, nearly everyone disagreed.

"At first, I really thought that the sport was simple," State sophomore Vansana Nolintha said. "Then I saw that in order to win you had to have strategy — that required hitting other people around the field, and that's when I realized the sport could get pretty nasty."

Traditional rules allow the sender to place a foot on his or her ball to avoid sharing the disadvantageous position with the opponent. But at St. Benet's, the aid of one's foot cannot be applied.

"By knocking someone else's ball, you improve your position and at the same time you have the chance to put your opponent in a bad position," State junior Justin Fowler said.

Fowler said nice guys finish last in a game of croquet.

"It's not a nice game," Fowler said. "To play well, you have to use other people and put them in a bad position. If you don't, you lose."

The game brews intensity when the men are on the field. And that's before the ladies step forward, creating a passionate sport.

Alisha Belk, a senior in psychology at State, said originally she was upset because she never got to play.

"The first time I ever played was during study abroad at Oxford University," Belk said. "It started out as a predominantly male activity, simply because they hogged the court."

After Belk stepped on to the field, she

had an extreme outlook on the sport.

"It seems like such a high class game," Belk said. "But in the end it becomes cutthroat and your best of friends become your worst of enemies."

Oxford Program Director Jim Pressley said he knows the tradition will continue every summer at St. Benet's Hall.

"Croquet has been going on for many years at St. Benet's and I'm sure that the sport will live on and continue to be played in the upcoming years," Pressley said.

Wilton Barnhardt, academic director for the program, said he enjoyed watching the playing of croquet but was disappointed to see the altered style of play.

"Early on in the program next time, we are going to have to set the rules straight," Barnhardt said. "Back when I lived in Oxford, we played the correct way. But as long as everyone has a good time, I guess the rules can be bent a little bit."

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