

N.C. cities decline in national ranking of 'livability'

By WENDY BOUNDS

Living in North Carolina isn't quite the "finer" experience it used to be, according to a new ranking of the nation's best places to live.

The third edition of Places Rated Almanac has demoted most of the major North Carolina cities. Some of the state's 1989 rankings are:

- Raleigh-Durham, 23;
- Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point, 62;
- Charlotte, 79;
- Asheville, 123;
- Wilmington, 162;

• Jacksonville, 321;

In the last edition in 1985, the Raleigh-Durham area was labeled the 3rd best place to live in the United States.

The Almanac, first published in 1981, ranked 333 cities this year, judging them in the categories of crime, transportation, cost of living, jobs, arts, recreation, climate, education and health/environment.

Seattle, Wash., won first place overall. San Francisco and Pittsburgh received the next two rankings respectively.

The ratings were compiled by the

authors of the Almanac who rank each city in every category on a scale from one-333. There are some specific qualifications used in the ranking process.

Climate is judged on its mildness, with 65 degrees Fahrenheit as the goal temperature. Raleigh-Durham ranked 37th in this category. Education is judged by the quality of elementary and secondary school systems in the city as well as the number of opportunities for higher education. Here, Raleigh-Durham dropped from 16th place to 29th.

Charlotte is one of the few N.C. cities whose "livability" has risen according to the new almanac. The city,

including the Gastonia and Rock Hill suburbs, rose from 106th place to 79th.

Most other metropolitan cities of N.C. fell in the overall rankings. The Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point area fell from 41st to 62nd, and Asheville dropped from 36th to 79th. Jacksonville, N.C., ranked among the lowest in the nation, coming in at 321st.

Mayor George Jones of Jacksonville said the figures were misleading whether they were positive or negative.

"I don't put a lot of credence in the rankings whether they are good or bad. In the last year, Inc. Magazine rated us the 38th hottest economic spot in

America, and Psychology Today ranked us as one of the top 100 cities to live in all the United States. But I don't value these rankings any more than I would the one from the Almanac."

Cities can vary greatly in their rankings in each category. For example, in 1985, New York was rated first in health care, transportation and the arts, but last in crime and near the end in housing (a category now substituted by cost of living).

To compute the overall rankings, all scores in every category are added, and the lower the total points, the better the ranking.

But the overall rankings cannot be taken too seriously, said David Prather, Deputy Director of Communications for Gov. Jim Martin.

"The Almanac uses a somewhat subjective rating system. Each town has its good and bad points, and these rankings are only significant if you give much credence to this kind of a survey."

Betsy Hinnant, Raleigh City Public Affairs Director, said, "It's like art being beautiful to the eye of the beholder. North Carolina is still the best place to live on the east coast in my opinion, and if I didn't like it, I'd move."

ECU medical school continues animal use ban in basic courses

By JANNETTE PIPPIN

GREENVILLE — The heat is on many university research and teaching facilities to stop the use of animals in laboratories, and the East Carolina University medical school is trying to avoid getting burned by banning the use of animals in basic science labs for a third consecutive year.

Dr. William Pryor, director of the ECU Animal Resources Center, said

medical school officials first agreed to a voluntary one-year moratorium and have re-evaluated the policy each year.

"This is an issue the medical school is aware of and willing to work on. At this point, no animals are used in our basic pharmacology and physiology classes, but there are still some third and fourth-year classes where animals are used."

The decision to continue the no-animal policy is not permanent but will

probably be followed while a review of alternative teaching methods continues, Pryor said.

"There was a moratorium a few years ago while alternatives were being discussed and those alternatives are still being investigated," he said.

Animal rights activists would like a ban on the use of all animals in labs, but Mary Beth Sweetland, a spokeswoman for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), said she was happy

to see any kind of improvement.

"We're always pleased with any reduction in the number of animals being used in research labs. However, there is always the reminder that the medical schools in Great Britain don't use animals at all."

Sweetland said she wanted a more definitive policy from ECU but called its decision "a move toward more serious consideration of the problem."

"If they can get away from using

animals in basic classes, I don't see why they can't do the same for upper level classes," she said.

ECU Students for Ethical Treatment of Animals (SETA) keeps pressure on the university to avoid cruel treatment of animals in its labs.

Craig Spritz, campus president of SETA, said he was encouraged by ECU's actions but wanted teaching alternatives to be found for all lab classes.

ECU first came under attack in 1987

when PETA and other animal rights activists accused instructors of mistreating a dog in surgery and violating federal guidelines for animal research.

Though it is keeping a watchful eye on ECU, PETA recently made UNC's labs the topic of its N.C. newsletter. The newsletter described alleged cruel treatment of research animals at UNC, including electrical shocks on animals and heating cats to 115 degrees Celsius to study respiration.

'Walking Across Egypt' reflects notion of Southern hospitality

By ELIZABETH MURRAY

You won't hear loud music seeping through the walls of the Union Cabaret this weekend, but you may catch a whiff of homemade muffins or a basted ham.

The Cabaret stage will serve as a kitchen rather than a dance floor beginning Thursday night, as part of the setting for the world premiere of "Walking Across Egypt," a play written by UNC graduate John Justice and based on the novel by UNC graduate Clyde Edgerton.

Justice, who began writing the play in the spring of this year, said he thought of writing the play because the novel's characters were strong and very vividly drawn. "These are the kind of people you can empathize with on a stage," he said. The strong scenes also lend themselves to becoming play material, he said.

The play is set in a comfortable, rustic Southern home and centers around the idea of Southern hospitality, said Jane Cox, chairwoman of the Union Performing Arts Committee. The committee and the Department of Speech Communication are presenting the play.

"When you read the book you can smell the chicken and biscuits," she said. "It's very much based on Southern food and hospitality and a Southern woman named Mattie."

Mattie is a Southern matriarch who is forced to deal with nosy neighbors, family conflicts and values, and her own aging, said Paul Ferguson, director of the play.

Ferguson, a professor in the speech communication department, said the play preserved and transformed the original story and characters in the novel. While some of the specifics in the novel have been edited and a few of

the characters compressed, the play has done an excellent job of presenting the material, he said.

Cooperation and hard work have made the play what it is, Cox said. "All things came together to make it possible."

It is that work to organize the production that makes the play special, Ferguson said. "This kind of collaboration among performers, director and playwright is unusual."

The fact that the novelist himself has been so deeply involved is rare, he said. "That has been the single most exciting element for us all."

Not only do the novelist and playwright have ties to the University, four of the main characters live in the Triangle area and three of these are graduate students here.

Kelly Taylor, a graduate student in speech communication from Valdese, began work with the play in late July. "I began readings during the summer, and I think I read every role until I became Alora," Taylor said.

Alora is a strange neighbor who feels she needs to take care of Mattie.

Although there are no concrete plans for the play after its performances in the Cabaret, there will be a producer or agent from PBS's American Playhouse Series as well as from the American Film Institute attending one of the play's performances, Ferguson said.

Cox said demand for tickets was so great, another performance had been added. All performances are sold out.

"Walking Across Egypt" will be presented at 8 p.m. Nov. 2-6 in the Union Cabaret. A discussion with John Justice and Clyde Edgerton will follow the Nov. 3 performance.

U.S. to increase minimum wage

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — President Bush and the Democratic-controlled Congress agreed Tuesday to raise the hourly minimum wage to \$4.25 by April 1991, a compromise clearing way for the first increase in nearly a decade.

Both the White House and the Democrats made significant concessions to strike the deal, which for the first time since the minimum wage was established 50 years ago would allow employers to pay a subminimum "training wage" to teenagers with little work experience.

The compromise ends a lengthy and often bitterly partisan battle that pitted Democratic congressional leaders and organized labor against the Reagan and Bush administrations and business interests.

"No side will get a victory for this," said Rep. Augustus Hawkins, D-Calif., chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. "We didn't want the training wage to begin with, but we wanted to depoliticize the thing."

The deal was struck between White House chief of staff John Sununu, House Speaker Thomas Foley and House GOP leader Robert Michel. Hawkins and other lawmakers prominent in past minimum-wage battles complained about being shut out of the talks.

But they agreed to the deal, which was being drafted Tuesday and, barring unexpected disagreements over language, will be presented to the House on Wednesday as a substitute to a Democratic bill scheduled for a vote. Senate passage is expected to follow shortly. Once signed by Bush, the legislation would trigger a 45-cent increase in the minimum wage on April 1, to \$3.80 an hour, with the jump to \$4.25 coming a year later. The last increase in the minimum wage came in January 1981, when it increased from \$2.65 an hour to the current \$3.35.

The new subminimum, which could be paid to workers 16-19 years old for three months, and up to six months in some cases, would be 85 percent of the minimum wage.

Democrats and union leaders long have considered such a "training wage"

unacceptable. However, it became clear that agreeing to the provision was the only way to win a general increase after conservative Democrats and moderate Republicans helped Bush sustain a veto of a minimum-wage bill passed by Congress earlier this year.

In siding with Bush, these lawmakers argued that employers would be reluctant to hire youths for part-time and summer jobs if the minimum wage was increased without an accompanying subminimum. Bush gave up nine months from his offer to increase the minimum wage to \$4.25 in January 1992, and he also conceded ground on the training wage. He had demanded a six-month provision for all workers regardless of their age and prior work experience.

The compromise affects only teenagers, and the subminimum could not be paid to any worker with six months work experience. Employers would have to certify to the Labor Department that they were providing skills training to get permission to pay the subminimum.

Iranian officials react to court ruling

From Associated Press reports

TEHRAN, Iran — Parliament passed a bill Tuesday allowing Iran to arrest any American anywhere who offends the country, and fanatics of the Revolutionary Guards whipped up fervor about the seizure of the U.S. Embassy 10 years ago.

Iranian militants stormed the embassy on Nov. 4, 1979, and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days.

Chief Justice Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi said the bill approved by 150 members of the 270-seat parliament responded to the "bullying nature" of the United States.

He referred specifically to a Justice Department ruling that U.S. government agents could pursue and apprehend terrorists in other countries, which he called "the worst kind of terrorism and kidnapping."

The bill must be approved by the Council of Guardians, 12 religious leaders and experts on Islamic law who decide constitutional questions.

According to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), Iran's agents could seek and arrest any Americans who committed any action against Iranian citizens or territories and bring them to Iran for trial under Islamic law.

It said the authority would apply to countries that gave the right of arrest to U.S. law enforcement agencies and would continue while the U.S. "enjoys the right to commit such irresponsible acts."

The law "aims at preserving the prestige and territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic, safeguarding the lives and properties of Iranian nationals abroad and defending the interests of the Islamic Republic," IRNA reported.

U.S. laws enacted in 1984 and 1986 gave American authorities jurisdiction to prosecute acts of terrorism involving U.S. citizens overseas, but not the power of arrest abroad without the permission of foreign governments.

In June, the U.S. Justice Department authorized the FBI to arrest people wanted by U.S. courts without permission of the foreign government. Details of the authorization were made public this month.

A statement Tuesday from the Revolutionary Guards Corps said tens of thousands of its members would lead demonstrators Saturday outside the former U.S. Embassy to "mark this great day" when militants overran it.

The Guards, who swore loyalty to revolutionary patriarch Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini until he died in June, urged all Iranians to join the demonstration and chant "Death to America!"

It said the purpose was "humiliation of the Great Satan, the criminal America," and U.S. flags should be burned.

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