

Special Report

Handguns on campus: 'We feel the need to protect ourselves'

By Mark Morris, Editor

Among the crowds of students and alumni on campus celebrating Homecoming the night of Oct. 19, strolled seven Edenton youths; at least four of them were armed with handguns.

There were about six guys that came with me on the campus, but there were more Edenton guys around than just us," one of the youths told a *Compass* reporter. "We were standing in front of Williams Hall when we saw this group of State Kids (ECSU students) that we had an argument with earlier. We passed words, started fighting and then gun shots were fired."

The 20-year-old Edenton youth said people were being hit with bottles, sticks, fists and someone even got pistol-whipped.

ing guns on campus. The student, who called the reporter from a pay phone, provided a list of guns that were available for sale, including .38 and .25 caliber pistols and ".22 pistols for the ladies."

The student gun dealer attributed the interest in guns on campus to the presence of New York drug dealers in Elizabeth City.

"The dealers are tough, and students need to be ready for them," the caller said.

ECSU students have also reported guns being pulled on them by local high school students who come onto the campus to attend dances and athletic events.

out having to confront police so we feel a need to protect ourselves."

One student said he is aware of guns on campus because he has seen "clips of bullets on desks beside books and pencils."

Six out of 50 female students surveyed admitted to having a gun on campus. The majority of them keep their guns in their cars.

One older female student said she had a gun that she kept in her truck when she has night classes but she didn't feel comfortable having her gun on campus.

Another ECSU commuter student said, "I carry a gun because my husband is in the Coast Guard and is out of town a lot, not because I feel threatened on campus. At least two or three of my friends carry guns on campus." The student added that her husband taught her how to shoot.

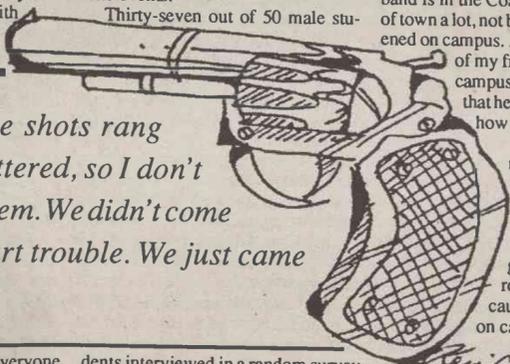
One female commuter said she has not seen anyone on campus with a gun but she keeps one in her car. "I had my gun before I was enrolled here, not because I feel threatened on campus."

Campus policemen say they know first-hand the presence of firearms on campus.

One campus officer, who asked that his name not be used, told *The Compass* that four handguns have been confiscated on campus this semester: two semi-automatic pistols and two .38 caliber revolvers. One of the weapons was taken after a fight and an ensuing car chase which began next to the R. L. Vaughan Athletic Center and ended in Elizabeth City. The assailants were non-students from New York who "were after an ECSU student," the security officer said.

Campus police took one of the guns from a non-student who was on his way into the Bedell Hall Cafeteria with the intent to shoot an ECSU student.

Thirty-seven out of 50 male stu-



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"When the shots rang out everyone scattered, so I don't know who fired them," he added. "We didn't come on the yard to start trouble. We just came prepared."

A series of violent incidents during Homecoming 1991—including the shooting of a part-time security officer—has increased ECSU students' concern about their safety and the presence of handguns on campus. *The Compass* has learned that handguns are being carried on campus by local high school students, young adults from surrounding communities and some ECSU students.

Guns are also being sold in one male dormitory, according to student reports. Without knowing his identity, a *Compass* reporter interviewed one student who has admitted to sell-

dents interviewed in a random survey said they know someone who has a gun on campus; seven students in the survey admitted to having a gun.

The chief motivation for having a gun seems to be precaution.

"Yes, I carry a gun and I know others who do," said one ECSU student. "I usually keep it in my room, because I feel safe here as compared to what I've heard about other campuses, but I keep it just in case."

One male student who admitted to having a gun on campus was not apologetic about it.

"Yes, indeed I have a gun and I know at least ten other people on the yard that do," the student said. "It's not that campus police aren't doing their job; it's just that there are six or seven ways to enter this campus with-

Joining the Ranks

Photo by Chakandi Salisbury



Reggae artist Shabba Ranks poses with Tonya DeVaughn (left) and Joynita Robinson, after the Homecoming concert. R & B artist Tony Terry and the group Ex-Girlfriend also performed. DeVaughn was crowned Miss ECSU on Homecoming night.

"He had the gun out on his way into the cafeteria," the officer said.

The officer said he wishes campus police could do more to control the spread of firearms.

"We have found .38 caliber bullets, nine millimeter clips, shotgun shells and all sorts of things on this campus," he said. "I'm sure if we could shake down just one of these dormitories we would come up with at least 25 to 30 weapons."

The officer also recalled an incident about two years ago when he responded to gunshots near Butler Hall. He said by the time he arrived some students confirmed that an unidentified person had fired a pistol into the air, but the per-

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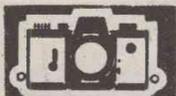


dealers were down here looking for them (ECSU students)," he said. "I've been expecting someone to get hurt. "Those New York dealers don't mess around."

(Crystal Sturdivant and Kimberly Whitaker contributed to this story.)



Tonya DeVaughn Miss ECSU



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