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Preston scientist's nuclear research drawing world's attention

By Ron Page

With age comes deterioration. It's that way with most things in the world, and nuclear power plants are no exception.

But scientists like Preston's K. Linga Murty, a professor of nuclear engineering at N.C. State University, is working to develop a method that quickly and efficiently assesses the condition and life expectancy of such projects.

In other words, Dr. Murty is working to keep disasters from happening at old nuclear reactor plants throughout the world.

His work is drawing world-wide

attention.

With a three-year \$370,000 grant from the Department of Energy, administered by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, Dr. Murty will adapt a recently developed microprobe to test nuclear power plant components.

"We can build new power plants with materials relatively less sensitive to radiation now that we know what makes them radiation sensitive, but what do you do with the old existing power plants that are built with radiation-sensitive materials?" Murty asked.

"For North Carolina residents, that concern includes a plant such as Sharan Harris located just south of the Apex/Cary area," he said.

Murty lives in the Arlington Ridge subdivision opposite the Prestonwood golf course. He and his wife, Ratnaveni, have a son, Venkataraman, 26, a business graduate of Bentley College, and a daughter, Sunita, 19, a sophomore and psychology major at N.C. State.

While he teaches classes at the college every morning, most of the remainder of his days are spent in research, much of it in front of the

computer in his small office in the Burlington Building at State which houses the Department of Nuclear Engineering and the Department of Materials Science & Engineering.

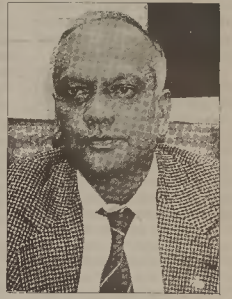
Honors, awards, and citations are everywhere among the shelves and files of books and papers cluttered in the room.

Last October, Dr. Murty became a fellow of the American Society for Materials International, and was honored at the ASM fall meeting in Cincinnati "for sustained contributions to the understanding of deformation of textured materials, radiation effects on mechanical

properties and synergistic effects between radiation and defect behavior in solids."

In 1993, he was the recipient of the American Nuclear Society Mishima award for outstanding contributions to nuclear fuels and materials research and development, and received the Alcoa Foundation Research Achievement Award at NCSU in 1988.

Currently, he is a member of the NCSU faculty senate representing the College of Engineering and is the vice-chairman of the Carolinas Central Chapter of the ASM-



LINGA MURTY

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Emu farmer goes to market

By Ron Page

There's something new these days at the State Farmer's Market in Raleigh.

Former Morrisville Mayor Wade Davis and his wife Jean have opened an emu booth, outfitted with products produced from a bird that is fast gaining a reputation for providing a wealth of health benefits.

"There are some 300 breeders of emu birds in North Carolina today," Davis says, "as well as two slaughtering houses. A few years ago there were only a fraction of that number. While the meat it provides is hailed for its low fat content, the other products it provides are almost unbelievable."

While the bird is best known for providing a range of meat cuts with low fat content, it also offers a variety of products ranging from cosmetic and medicinal oils to jewelry and leather goods. Even research into eye and heart transplants into humans is taking place, Davis explains.

"The bird has a heart the same size as a human, with four chambers. Studies are being made towards transplants, for the eyes as well," he said.

But while such dramatic study is comparatively recent, raising emu birds for their meat has been going on for years in other areas, among them Texas. That's where Davis and his wife heard about the bird that is native to Australia.

"The Aborigines were the first to use the oil for the treatment of muscle aches, sore joints, inflammation, and swelling," he said.

It was while they were attending a funeral for Mrs. Davis's brother in Texas that they came in



MARKETING THE EMU—Wade Davis offers samples of hand cream made from the fat of passersby David and Lynn Wyatt of Raleigh

contact with growers in that state. They decided to try their hand at raising the birds and bought a pair for about \$2,500.

A year and a half ago the Davises had only a breeder pair of emu birds on their three-acre Homestead Emu Ranch off Morrisville Parkway. Today some 40 emu birds roam the pasture enclosures and more are on the way. Davis is raising the birds at the farm where he was born and has lived all his life. "It's a very clean animal," he explains, "and easy to raise. Physically it's covered with brownish gray hair-like plumage, stands between five and six feet tall, and weighs about 120 pounds. Emus run at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour, swim well, and defend themselves by kicking." Davis says they can't fly, however, because their wings are tiny.

"This is 100 percent red meat, 98 percent fat free, higher in protein and iron than beef and lower in cholesterol than chicken," he says, opening a refrigerator at the Market booth to show cuts of meat that range from filets to ground patties, butter and sirloin steaks, sausage patties, shishkabob, stir fry, fajitas, and barbecue steak.

To supply the anticipated meat and products markets, cooperatives have been formed and slaughtering facilities have been set up or started. In March of last year the Davises joined the Tar Heel Emu Cooperative organization. His Homestead Emu Ranch is also a member of both the American Emu Association and the North Carolina Emu Association.

"USDA-approved slaughtering houses are presently operating in

Greensboro and Spotsville, with a possible third opening soon," Davis said. "Most of the growers in the state sell from their farms, but we decided to outlet through the State Farmer's Market and were fortunate to get a spot." He added that Southern Foods is also marketing emu meat to a variety of gourmet restaurants throughout the South.

The 58-year-old former mayor of Morrisville, who retired after 27 years as a field technician with a Raleigh office products firm, feels the emu will be the salvation of farmers in North Carolina. He calls emu raising an alternate form of agriculture in a state where lots of land is no longer available to growers of such crops as tobacco. "Everywhere you look you see housing and office developments gobbling up

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Town board moves toward land closing

Commissioners confident site meets fire department's needs

By Mary Beth Phillips

Morrisville is expected to close on the site for fire station No. 3 on Jan. 31, after receiving assurances from a consulting firm that the site is safe.

The town board voted 4-1 Monday night to proceed with the closing, provided written assurance is received from the state groundwater section that the town's liability will be limited if an environmental problem was found after the purchase.

The board also approved a hike in cable television rates, and set a public hearing for a proposed plan for collector streets.

The 4.123-acre fire station site, at the intersection of N.C. 54 and McCrimmon Parkway, was selected about nine months ago, but the purchase was delayed after neighboring landowners told officials there was a gasoline station on the site many years ago.

The owners, Charles and Nancy Zimmerli of Chapel Hill, hired Withers and Ravenel Engineers of Cary to take soil samples to ensure the site was environmentally safe. The engineers found one home fuel oil tank and removed it from the site.

Commissioner Mark Silver-Smith expressed concern that the water in a pond on the site had not been tested, and voted against the motion to proceed with the closing this week.

Town Manager David Hodgkins assured the board that the engineering firm took soil borings at the pond, which would have shown contamination in the water.

"Nothing in life is risk free," Town Attorney Frank Gray told the board, "but the town has done everything reasonable...to assure something won't come up in the future."

Gray said the state standard for liability extends 1,500 feet from the property. There is one well within that distance.

The fire station would use city water, and if an environmental concern were to show up in the future, the town would be liable to pay for hooking the neighboring landowner up to city water, state officials told

Hodgkins.

Fire Chief Tony Chiotakis is working with architect Surapon Sujavanch on the design of the station, and hopes to bring plans to the board by April, he said.

The closing price for the land is \$230,000, Hodgkins said.

In other action, the board approved a proposal from Time-Warner Cable which would allow the company to increase its basic rate to \$9.26 per month.

By the vote, the board agreed that the company correctly applied FCC ratemaking rules and procedures to arrive at the figure.

Dahr Tanouary of the Triangle J Council of Governments told the board that Time-Warner Cable has agreed to install fiber-optic cable that will improve reception, especially during rain storms.

Time-Warner will collect \$113,321.53 over five years to pay for the upgrade. This will be done by raising rates by a dollar a month per year per subscriber, he said. For example, customers paid a \$1 per month increase in 1996, and will pay an increase of \$5 per month in 2000.

Commissioners expressed concern that the cable company is allowed to collect the money before providing the service.

"I wish in my business, I could charge money to fix something before fixing it," Silver-Smith said.

"This stuff looks good on paper, but it doesn't do anything for our pocketbooks," Phyllis Newnam said.

Tanouary said Time-Warner has already extended fiber optic cable from its headquarters in Garner to Smithfield and Selma, and plans to connect to Cary and Morrisville within three months.

The board also set a public hearing for a proposed collector street plan for the Feb. 10 meeting.

Two streets are under construction: the proposed Artech Drive between International Drive and Airport Boulevard, and an unnamed street between Morrisville Parkway and Morrisville-Carpenter Road.

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Hodgkins narrows engineer search; Feb. hire expected

By Mary Beth Phillips

Morrisville Town Manager David Hodgkins should be introducing a new director of engineering to the town board at its meeting in mid-February.

He has narrowed the candidates for the position from approximately 50 to two "highly qualified" finalists, he said, and has conducted second interviews with each

finalist.

"They each have municipal engineering experience, some private sector experience, and their professional engineering license," he said. Both are also familiar with the area.

The town board approved the position at its meeting Nov. 25, and applications were accepted through Dec. 18. The position was author-

ized at pay grade 29, which ranges between \$39,600 and \$58,500. Hodgkins said he expects to pay the new engineer between \$40,000 and \$50,000 a year to start.

Hodgkins said the position is needed because of the rapid growth of the town. Morrisville has contracted with engineering consultants for inspections and infrastructure needs, but the volume of these

needs has risen in recent months.

"We can save money by doing it in house," Hodgkins said, "and the person would be more readily available to staff and the development community."

He also expects the engineer to take a strong lead role in coordinating development issues for the town.

Pick your seats; movie complex ready for show

By Mary Beth Phillips

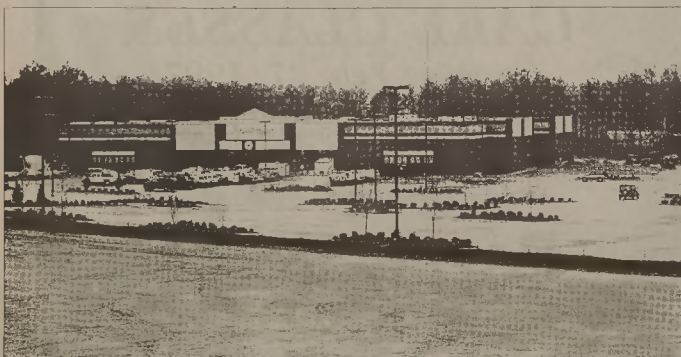
The re-release of Star Wars will be among the offerings at the new Carmike Cinema in Morrisville as it opens Jan. 31.

The 16-screen theater will be among the largest in the state and the largest in the Triangle area. The opening was delayed about two months by Hurricane Fran.

Lewis Tew, Carmike's city manager for the Raleigh area, was juggling times last week to schedule 16 movies with a minimum of chaos. He said he will schedule two movies every five minutes.

On Jan. 30, a grand opening gala will be held with more than 500 city and county officials, con-

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OPENING SOON—Morrisville's Carmike Cinema will hold a grand opening Jan. 30 when it will be-

gin showing movies on its 16 screens. The cinema is among the largest in the state.

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