The Daily Tar Heel

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Nursing profits

Running a for-profit nursing home business does not necessarily propel the best interests of society or of nursing home residents.

Robert Hill Sr., a former farmer from Lenoir County, has built the 12th largest private company in North Carolina. His business is nursing homes, an area that has been experiencing a tremendous boom over the last 10 years. But the increasing dominance of for-profit, chain nursing homes is not always in the best interests of

Since 1983, Hillco Ltd. has grown from only a few nursing homes to 36 facilities in three states, 19 of which are in North Carolina. Income from long-term care has jumped from \$31 million in 1985 to \$129 million in 1994. At the same time, nursing home bills rose eight times as fast as the number of patients over the past decade. Eighty-three percent of Hillco's patients are covered by Medicaid, and thus, most of those costs were absorbed by the government. To generate more money, Hill has also established subsidiary companies that supply his nursing homes with everything from food and medications to maintenance and insurance.

The question is not if Hill and his family are effective businessmen — they are. The question is whether seeking to extract maximum profits from a chain of nursing homes is in the best interests of those in their trust. Are profits worth the possible loss of quality care?

Last February, one of Hillco's nursing homes. Britthaven of Chapel Hill, was assessed a \$510,000 fine after an Alzheimer's patient was found strangled in her restraints. Federal regulators stated that Britthaven had failed to provide a safe environment over a 51 day period and levied a fine of \$10,000 each day.

Chapel Hill's Britthaven continues to have difficulty providing a safe environment. Regulators found a number of problems during the facility's annual state certification inspection. A 24-page report cites Britthaven staff for failing to, among other things, change soiled and wet clothing, keep a patient's bed sores clean and fully nourish people who receive tube feedings.

Many patients in nursing homes do not have the power or the capacity to complain about their care. Their interests must be looked after by state inspectors who need to continue to scrutinize nursing homes and hold owners and operators accountable to the people. The government needs to take an active role in ensuring that standards of care are met.

More importantly, the industry needs to be conscious of the great responsibility with which they have been charged, a responsibility that often overrides concerns about the bottom line Families entrust their loved ones to their care The welfare of the patient needs to be valued above profits.

The United States is aging. It is expected that North Carolina's population over the age of 65 will rise 28 percent during the next 25 years. When our parents, relatives or friends can no longer care for themselves, many of us may have to consider some type of long-term care. The nursing home industry must realize that quality care is their most important responsibility

Humane society

As recent history demonstrates, China uses deceptive histrionics to fool the United States and the international community into ignoring its numerous human rights violations.

Again, seeking to demonstrate a measure of improvement on human rights, China released Chen Ziming, a political dissident, from prison on a medical parole with the hope that U.S.-China tensions will cool before a Presidential Summit meeting in 1997. Serving as an obvious diplomatic ploy Chen's parole was aimed at the international community and not publicly announced in China.

Chen's parole and imprisonment served as a gauge of U.S.-China relations in the recent past. China, seeking most favored trade status with the U.S. in 1994, released Chen on a medical parole only to imprison him again a year later as the two countries feuded over Taiwan.

Only a week before Chen's parole, Wang Dan — a political dissident and student leader from Bejing University - was sentenced to an

11-year prison sentence.

Both Chen and Wang played a somewhat significant role in the 1989 pro-democracy Tiananmen Square student demonstrations. Wang's imprisonment, obviously a warning to Chinese free-thinking dissidents, was criticized

by international human rights organizations.

Historically, applying pressure during times when the U.S. must appear compassionate about human rights is not enough to cease China's deplorable actions. Also, making perfunctory threats to revoke most favored nation trade status or to end all ties with China and isolate them in the world community exacerbates the dilemma and damages our economy.

To improve China's human rights record, without ending its trade ties, the United States can keep China in the world spotlight so their human rights record receives scrutiny from other countries and more action to improve the conditions of the Chinese people. Such attention could be given at the upcoming Presidential Summit Severing ties with China is impractical because it damages our economy as much as it hurts theirs with no impetus to improve the Chinese people's

To improve China's human rights record the U.S. must cease its idle threats and begin to seriously address a way to improve human rights in China. By making China an active and essential part of the international community, the United States can construct a Chinese foreign policy consistent with worldwide views on hu-

properly diagnose and treat patients leads to homicides and suicides. The formation of an effective mental health policy and a change in the diagnosis process is as necessary as any medical advance today. Today mental illness is not seen as a major

cal illness. One illness which has continued to be overlooked is in the mental health system.

The failure of the mental health system to

Te live in a world that has rapidly advanced, technologically, in the diagnosis and treatment of physi-

threat to those in most medical fields. Due to this lack of awareness, many times symptoms go unnoticed and the severely troubled "slip through the cracks." Many feel it is still not possible to cure mental illnesses or reduce the effect of their pain. On the other hand, many doctors claim mentally ill patients start recovering after a first round of anti-depressant medication, according to the National Advi-sory Mental Health Council of the Depart-ment of Health and Human Services, more than 60 percent do. The opposition claims adequate funds are being appropriated for the severity of the problem. Alan A. Anderson, head of a mental health managed care company, says, "Most people can be treated with pany, says, most people can be treated with a fairly limited application of health care resources," but also states, "treatments are in line with the cost and performance of treatments for chronic heart failure, diabetes and

hypertension."
Until families and doctors can become educated enough to recognize those in danger the funds are not necessary. Along with education, will come more funds and a better sys-

Without the proper education many symptoms of the mental illness go unnoticed. When these symptoms slip through and are not treated they can lead to suicide and homicide. The first step is for families to recognize certain

symptoms, such as Abigail Trafford mentions, "Iying, stealing, manipulating and abusing others" and "a person just seems flawed—lazy, thoughtless, distracted." Senator Alan K. Simpson can relate to the pain of not recognizing the symptoms of ill.

Country needs effective mental health policy

pain of not recognizing the symptoms of illness. His niece, "a most beautiful girl ... We did not get or understand the signals in time," said Simpson. As her illness worsened, she committed suicide.

An example of the doctors' failure to notice comes from a personal story from this past summer. At the age of 19 my stepbrother, Chad Flynt, had been living out of the house for several years. He had jobs and lost them, lived from place to place and become mentally unfocused and lost. His illness worsened, but he never wanted help. He reached a point where our family became very worned. As a concerned family we attempted to commit Chad to the NC Mental Health. After a short interview, the doctor declared he was neither homicidal nor suicidal and released him. Three weeks later Chad reached a point no one should have to reach and committed suicide.

A misdiagnosis not only leads to suicides, at also homicides. One of the most publicized serial killers in the past decade was once committed by his parents.

Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, was once

released by mental health after his brother committed him. "We were told he had to be a danger — a demonstrable danger to himself or to others," said David Kaczynski. At that point the Unabomber had struck 12 times, killing one person and injuring 21. "The Unabomber caused two more deaths since

On the local side, a gunman by the name of Wendel Williamson opened fire in Chapel Hill, N. C., killing two. Williamson had been

diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, but had not been using any form of medical treat-ment to improve his illness.

ment to improve his limess.

Improvements in the system could not only saved the lives lost in the preceding paragraphs, but also spared the grief felt by the thousands of close friends and family.

The mental health system is in need of a

change, and the change needs to start today. The first place to start is with the education of

mental illness given to the world.

Education is needed, not only about the Education is needed, not only about the disease itself, but the early warning signs and the results untreated illnesses can lead to. Next, the doctors must be specifically trained in spotting mental illness. The doctors must have lengthy conversations with the patient, and realize that if a parent is so concerned with their child to commit them, the child needs lead to the committee that th help. Finally, more money must be allocated to the treatment and medication for mentally ill patients. As Abigail Trafford says, "What the government can do is design an effective health care system, which includes the treatment and support of those who suffer a mental illness and are therefore at an increased risk of suicide." The solution is simple, but the process is going to be a long, hard fought battle.

Whether the disease is mental or physical it causes great damage to the patient and the family. "We're seeing the needs of mental illness catchup with other diseases," said Nancy Domenci, which is why her husband, a Senator from New Mexico, "recently co-authored legislation that would put mental disorders on an equal footing with traditional health insur-ance plans." With a better education of doctors and families of symptoms, longer examination periods and easier treatment, there won't need to be a Chad or any of the other victims of this horrific disease.

Matt Hawkins is a freshman from Raleigh.



'Limp defense' of Democratic monopoly does not stand up

TO THE EDITOR:

I chuckled heartily at art professor Helen Hills' limp defense of her political party's near-monopoly of the UNC faculty ("Article forgets politics are more than party affilia-tion," Nov. 6). Helen says her heart sank when she read the article, and well it might given she and her faculty cronies have been exposed. Helen would have us believe that though 91 percent of the UNC faculty are registered Democrats, that fact has no political or socio-logical significance whatever. Is she daft?

She assures us with a nudge and a wink she and her faculty cronies boast a broad range of opinion on political and social issues. I have no doubt they reflect the range of opinion within the Democratic Party; which, of course, is the crux of the problem she refuses to acknowledge.

who reflects the group-think of a one-party state, or a professor who tries to convince us that UNC's group-think faculty actually represents diversity of thought.

Does Helen Hills expect anyone to believe

her nonsense? I certainly don't, and I suspect that most thinking men and women won't

For now, The Daily Tar Heel writer's research is the best barometer of UNC faculty political attitudes, and it constitutes de facto evidence that the UNC faculty has systemati-cally discriminated against Republicans in hiring. Kudos to writer Tony Mecia — let's have more investigative articles in The Daily Tar Heel and fewer administration press re-leases. And thanks to Helen Hills for her letter showing how goofy left-wing faculty can really be.

Stanley K. Ridgley
CLASS OF 1977
SPRINGFIELD, PA.

CAA's random distribution policy removes all meaning

TO THE EDITOR:

The Carolina Athletic Association should be commended for making ticket distribution so random, the distribution itself is totally meaningless. On Sunday, about 2,400 num-

READERS' FORUM

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 400 words and must be typed, double-spaced,

dated and signed by no more than two people.
Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC

27515 or e-mail forum to: dth@unc.edu.

I'm not sure which is worse: a UNC faculty bers were issued, more than have ever given out before, a CAA member told me Some of Carolina's more "die hard" fans were rewarded for wandering in line at 1:45 p.m. with lower level seating because distribution started high at 1491. Their laughter at having obtained better seats without wasting their entire afternoon fell on deaf ears frozen from people waiting since noon. Lest we forget this system's superiority, several CAA members reminded us of how great it is to not wait so long for numbers. But we had no idea if our number meant we had lower level or we would

> The CAA claimed some students were unable to camp out. But what about those who can't make it by 2 p.m.? Like hungover students, or those sick in bed or what about those who just slept in real late? No deadline is ever who just stept in real late? No deadine is ever fair. Maybe the CAA should give all 26,000 students a shot at 110A by mailing out tickets randomly. People wouldn't sacrifice anything to get seats; their tickets would be delivered right to their door. Seth Nore could play Ed McMahon in this "Carolina Basketball Sweepstakes," presenting a larger-than-life front row ticket to the week's lucky winner.

Camping out is looking better. Your number told you right then if you got lower level or not, and guaranteed you a seat. And after surviving the night, you were definitely sitting in those hard-earned seats, filling them up with enthusiastic fans. Most importantly, people

built friendships while suffering frostbite and exceeding recommended tent capacities. There's something to say for tradition ... it's a time honored custom people find to be good and worthwhile keeping

Dave Troxler

America is stinking cesspool, but don't blame the Dukes

TO THE EDITOR: Not the Dukes!

I agree with Richard Harris. Our country has been crippled by racism from the very beginning. Our Founding Racists (sorry George) laid the foundation from which our feelings of hatred and acts of oppression could build upon. From the three-fifths clause to Manifest Destiny to Rodney King, our "great" country has managed to do it all. We live in a stinking cesspool where old, white men manage to hoard all the money and power, and the

poor are given just enough to keep them from revolting. Ron Kovic was right, America Stinks. But dammit Richard, why did you have to drag the Dukes into this! The Dukes of Hazzard was THE only show on TV. Forget "The Muppet Show," forget "That's Incredible," forget "Benson," the Dukes ruled. Beau and forget "Benson," the Dukes ruled. Beau Luke Duke were the Butch Cassidy Sundance Kid of the deep South. Whether they were running from the tyrannical grasp of Boss Hogg or the menacing stare of Sheriff Little from Chickasaw County, the Dukes eventually found a way to escape. And when they escaped, they did it with panache. Besides, any show with Daisy Duke had to be good (even in the second grade, I knew Daisy was hot).

Not only did the Dukes provide great enterinment, they taught me a lesson. I learned no matter what situation I got in, I could eventually find a way out. I learned that strong family ties were important in molding my character. And I learned that if you try to slide across the hood of your car, it really hurts. Richard, you've ruined this. Thanks to you, I can never look back on the Dukes in the same light. Next thing, you'll tell me Star Wars was all about incest and religious persecution — AHHH!!!

> Jack Eichler SÉNIOR CHEMISTRY

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