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Former grad student says he's no threat

Romesh Fernando was involuntarily committed after a year of disputes.

BY TONY MECIA
SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS EDITOR

When Chapel Hill police officer Donnie Rhodes pulled up to the home of journalism graduate student Romesh Fernando last Wednesday, Fernando wasn't sure why the officer had come.

But after Rhodes handcuffed him and placed him in the back of the police cruiser, Fernando understood: He was being committed involuntarily to UNC Hospitals for alleged psychological problems.

"(Rhodes) wanted to check me out because people had made complaints against me," Fernando said earlier this week from behind the bolted doors of UNC Hospitals' adult psychiatric unit.

"The complaint is, you are a threat to the community," he said.

Fernando said that because of some e-mail he had sent — some referred to M-16 rifles and talked of "revolution" — some people in the journalism school had compared him to Wendell Williamson, the UNC law student who shot two people to death on Henderson Street in January 1995.

Williamson, who was found not guilty by reason of insanity, sued the University this summer, claiming administrators should have done more to help him with his mental illness.

Susan Kitchen, vice chancellor for student affairs, said the University changed the way it dealt with threats to the community as a result of the Williamson shooting. An emergency disciplinary committee of administrators now has the flexibility to intervene in dangerous situations, she said.

Fernando, who is Sri Lankan, said he was surprised at his institutionalization, which he said occurred without his family's knowledge. He said he was not a threat and was mentally healthy.

But Fernando's colleagues at the journalism school weren't as shocked. To many, this development marked the culmination of a bizarre yearlong battle between Fernando and UNC officials.

Last year several female journalism graduate students accused Fernando of sexual harassment. This spring, he accused a professor of racism when she gave him an "F" in a course. When administrators backed the professor,

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Police find armed robbery suspect in Fla.

BY PHILLIP GARDNER
STAFF WRITER

The man who allegedly robbed a student Union Station employee at knife-point Oct. 20 was arrested in Orlando, Fla., on Friday.

John Allen Campbell, 37, was arrested by the Orlando Police Department as a fugitive from justice from North Carolina, said a representative from Orange County, Florida, jail. The charge is a third degree felony, and there is no bond.

Several N.C. law enforcement departments have outstanding warrants for Campbell's arrest, including the Carrboro Police Department and Orange and Wake County sheriff's departments.

Campbell would have to be trans-

ported to North Carolina for the charges to be executed, an Orlando Police spokeswoman said.

Carolina Dining Services Director Scott Myers said he heard about Campbell's arrest Wednesday morning. He said a University Police detective called the Union Station manager, who later told Myers. He said he was glad Campbell was arrested.



University Police officers say JOHN ALLEN CAMPBELL held a student employee of Union Station at knife-point.

"Wow, was that quick," Myers said. He said he was pleased with University Police's work in investigating the robbery.

"Obviously, we don't know all the details, but they were there right away and asked the right questions."

He said he could relate to how the student Union Station employee felt about the robbery because he was also held up once as a college student while working at a gas station.

"You hear stuff like that on TV every night, but when it happens to you or someone you know, it's almost amazement," he said.

Myers said he would cooperate with the police in their attempt to close the case.

"Whatever we can do to help the police, we want to do."

"You hear stuff like that on TV every night, but when it happens to you or someone you know, it's almost amazement."

SCOTT MEYERS

Director, Carolina Dining Services

Paul Reinecke, production and service manager for Union Station, said although last week's robbery hasn't affected his job, safety procedures have been changed since the incident.

"We're more careful when we handle money," he said.

Like Myers, Reinecke said he was pleased with the police's work.

"I thought they did a good job," he said. "We knew that if we didn't get him right away, we wouldn't get him at all."

Now that Union Station has been informed of Campbell's arrest, the student employee who was held up will come back to work Thursday, Reinecke said. The employee hasn't worked since the robbery.

Campbell allegedly broke into Union Station's cash office Oct. 20 where the student employee was counting money for a deposit and had the safe open, reports state.

She heard a knock on the door, but no one answered when she asked who was there, according to reports.

The suspect then opened the door, pulled out a knife, and reached into the safe. He took a large bag of deposit money and a petty-cash bag.

Candidates turning Green

BY JON OSTENDORFF
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

With a projected doubling of the population of the Triangle in the next 20 years, some candidates said growth was by far the most important environmental issue of the election.

Greg Gangi, political chairman of the Orange-Chatham Group of the Sierra Club, said this year could be pivotal for environmental policy in Chapel Hill.

Gangi said one of the most important environmental issues of this election season would be managed development.

The Sierra Club along with other local environmental groups recently released an environmental score card. The score card tracked council members' votes on environmental and development issues.

Joel Harper, president of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce, said the score card was all politics. "It has nothing to do with the environment," Harper said.

Development was very important for the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area. "Development is the University adding new buildings to give the students more opportunity," he said. "It's building new homes. It's creating jobs. Without growth there are no pay raises and no new money for schools."

Melva Okun, associate director of the environmental resource program at the School of Public Health, said the reputation of the Triangle as one of the best places to live in the nation would contribute to rapid growth. "When some people hear this, they hitch the trailer to the car and move here," she said.

Okun said that if the projected population growth

was not managed, then it could turn Chapel Hill into one of the worst places to live. "It will put stress on our water treatment plant and landfill," she said. "We have had high standards in the past. New explosive growth challenges these standards."

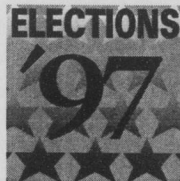
Harper said managed development was a good idea if the rules were upheld. "Make the rules and regulations as tough as you want," he said. "But once the rules are set, you need to permit growth within the rules. This is not what (the council) has done."

Harper said once the rules were set the council could change and alter them. "As a property owner you have no assurance that the rules will be kept," he said.

Bill Strom, who helped to compile the score card, said growth was not always economically beneficial. "Study after study has shown that growth is expensive," he said. "Durham county has had retail development along (U.S.) 15-501 and the Research Triangle Park for years. They should be in their golden age. Instead, they have a higher tax rate and a larger debt."

Edith Wiggins said the score card was not a fair representation of all the environmental issues. "It is just

SEE ENVIRONMENT, PAGE 9



The Daily Tar Heel asked students which five elections issues were most important to them. The DTH now presents a five-part series detailing the issues students chose.

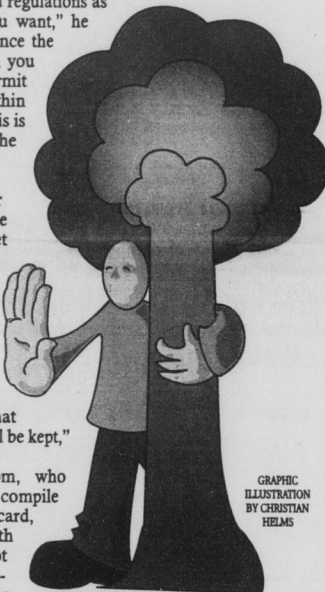
Issue 5: Taxes

Issue 4: The environment

Issue 3: Education

Issue 2: Town-gown relations

Issue 1: Crime



GRAPHIC ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTIAN HELMS

Parking problems create jam of potential solutions

University officials say UNC needs to encourage people to use mass transit.

BY KENYA ELDRIDGE
STAFF WRITER

The University task force trying to solve campus parking problems has to consider as many options on how to change transit as there are universities.

At a Tuesday meeting, members of the Transit and Parking Task Force talked about ideas ranging from adding more bike paths and encouraging carpooling to raising the price for parking permits to their market value — about \$600 in Chapel Hill.

"We're trying to find out what have people done to try to improve parking," committee member Rachel Willis said Wednesday.

The idea to increase the cost of parking permits was just a brainstorm. But at least one member of the committee said

UNC needs to find ways to discourage people from driving to campus.

"I believe parking is one of this campus's biggest problems," said Emily Williams, student representative of the Transit and Parking Task Force.

Williams, who did not express her view on raising permit prices, said increasing prices could have some advantages.

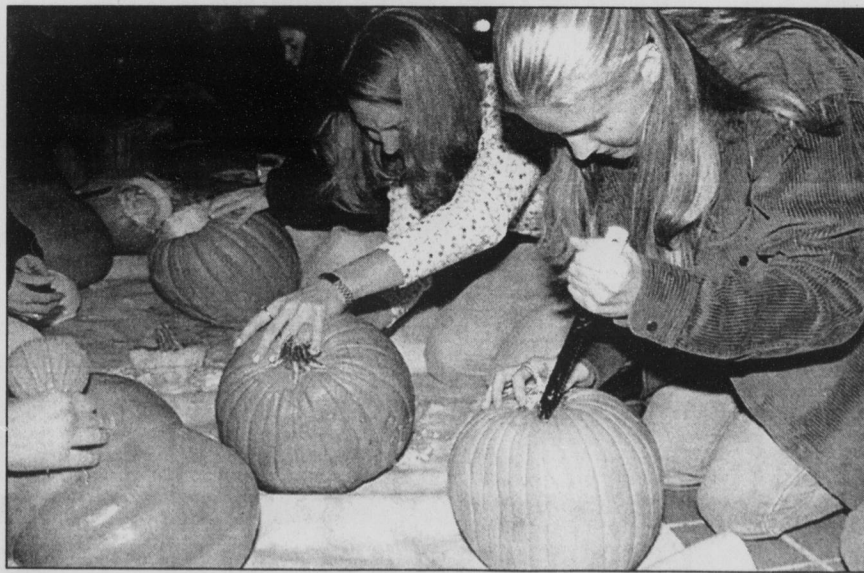
"It would be an incentive for people to use mass transit, and it would serve to increase revenue for a parking fund, which could go toward more parking facilities," Williams said.

Carolyn Efland, associate vice chancellor for Auxiliary Services, said permit prices at UNC are considerably lower than at other schools, which charge up to five times as much as UNC does. Efland said UNC needs to find a way to improve transportation on campus.

UNC has grown over the years, and expansion projects like the McColl Building on South Campus push the

SEE PARKING, PAGE 9

THE GREAT PUMPKIN MEETS HIS MATCH



Pumpkin seeds fly as sophomore Amy Pattishall begins work on her jack-o'-lantern. Kenan Residence Hall held a pumpkin-carving party Wednesday to inspire Halloween spirit.

DTH/LAURA GIOVANELLI

INSIDE

Attire for a night of frights

With just 24 hours until the start of Halloween festivities,

Divisions gives ideas for those last-minute costumes. Page 5

Today's weather

Mostly sunny;
low 70s

Friday: Mostly cloudy;
mid 60s

Get dates online

The Daily Tar Heel is expanding its campus calendar capabilities through its CitySearch web page. Post campus events as far in advance as you want by e-mailing them to dth@unc.edu with the subject line "campus calendar." Submission rules for the printed campus calendar remain the same.

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Anonymous