



ERIN MENDELL

Shearon Harris Stink Might Be Unwarranted

For some reason, protest news always makes me think of pie. I hope someone throws one at the protest against Carolina Power & Light Co. on Sunday at the company's Shearon Harris Nuclear Power Plant, if only to give me a column idea for next week.

The Raging Grannies, N.C. Waste Awareness and Reduction Network, members of UNC's Students for Environmental Action Coalition and residents are planning to protest CP&L's plan to store more waste at its Wake County site.

The company uses only two of its four storage buildings and would like to use them all. Officials with the company say they've had to increase power output because the Triangle is such a fast-growing area. More power means more waste. And more waste means the company needs more space to put it all.

Opponents, which for legal purposes include Orange County, Chapel Hill and Carrboro, say increasing the waste storage capacity at Shearon Harris would be unsafe. CP&L uses the nuclear power plant to store the waste from all its nuclear plants (excluding ones it will acquire from a merger with a Florida company), and opponents of that say it would be safer to store the waste in small amounts at several different sites.

While no one wants a nuclear accident, a small nuclear accident is better than a big nuclear accident.

I'm all for civil disobedience and public protests, and I don't particularly like the idea of a bigger, badder Shearon Harris less than 50 miles away. But the protesters are saying CP&L officials have never publicly addressed safety concerns about increasing the waste storage space. And that's simply not true.

Do I personally think a huge nuclear plant is safe? No. But it's not as though CP&L is trying to nuke the state of North Carolina off the planet.

The company held a forum in Raleigh in September. Officials explained what they wanted to do in terms of waste storage expansion and why they thought they needed to do it. They also answered questions.

Obviously, when a company answers questions about its safety practices, the information is biased in the company's favor, but company officials don't lie outright, especially when they're under as much government scrutiny as nuclear power providers are. Besides, CP&L's top officials live in this area. They back up their word on safety with their lives and their families' lives.

A nuclear storage facility, in the most basic terms, is layers and layers of steel and concrete. It's not just a big plastic trash can.

(Of course, in the event of a major accident, layers of steel and concrete might be about as effective as a plastic trash can.)

The people who deal with safety at Shearon Harris also are highly trained people (as nuclear physicists tend to be). Plus, as company officials explained at September's forum, they are constantly getting their training updated.

Shearon Harris employees didn't stop by McDonalds for a job application first.

Most of the information I have about the safety at Shearon Harris I got from the forum CP&L had. There's no denying company officials were willing to publicly address safety concerns.

Whether I or other people think it would be safe enough is, of course, another story.

There didn't seem to be many protesters at the forum. If there were a lot, then they weren't vocal, because only two asked questions of company officials.

That would have been the perfect place for protesters to voice their concerns.

I'll give my endorsement for Sunday's protest, but I'd also like to see more community activists asking questions at public forums like the one in September.

And banana cream obviously works best.

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Pauper Players Tell Story of 'Side Show'

By ADAM FARABEE
Staff Writer

"Come look at the freaks," the opening number of Pauper Players' new musical "Side Show" invites. Those freaks include Siamese twins, a fortune teller, a bearded lady and a reptile man.

The play, directed by senior David Lorenc, is based on the life of Siamese twins Daisy and Violet Hilton. Using the setting of a 1930s carnival freak show, "Side Show" forces the audience to explore its apprehensions, inadequacies and desire to be accepted.

"The story is really touching and sad, but I think the audience will come away with something very deep," said junior Lorene Atkins, the play's producer.

The plot centers on the twins' departure from the carnival and their attempts to be accepted as normal human beings. "It is very different from most musi-

icals," Lorenc said. "It presents an odd story, but deep down it is beautiful and everyone can identify with it."

The musical opened on Broadway in 1997. Pauper Players' production, which has been in rehearsal since September, boasts two especially strong female roles in Daisy and Violet. The twins will be portrayed by sophomore Meredith Whitford and junior Cassie Cherney.

Whitford, the new discovery of the show, is co-starring in her first principal role in a Pauper Players production as Daisy. She said the cast "has had to come across challenges doing such a difficult show, but it has definitely been a worthwhile experience."

Cherney, a drama major, is performing the other half of the twins, Violet. During the rehearsal process, Whitford and Cherney were joined at the hip with a tie, but in the actual show there will be nothing physically connecting the two.

"Side Show" boasts an acclaimed score that includes songs such as "Come Look at the Freaks" and "Who Will Love Me as I Am?"

While the musical is filled with odd characters, everyone involved with the production insists that "Side Show" is much more than a simple freak show at which the audience can gape.

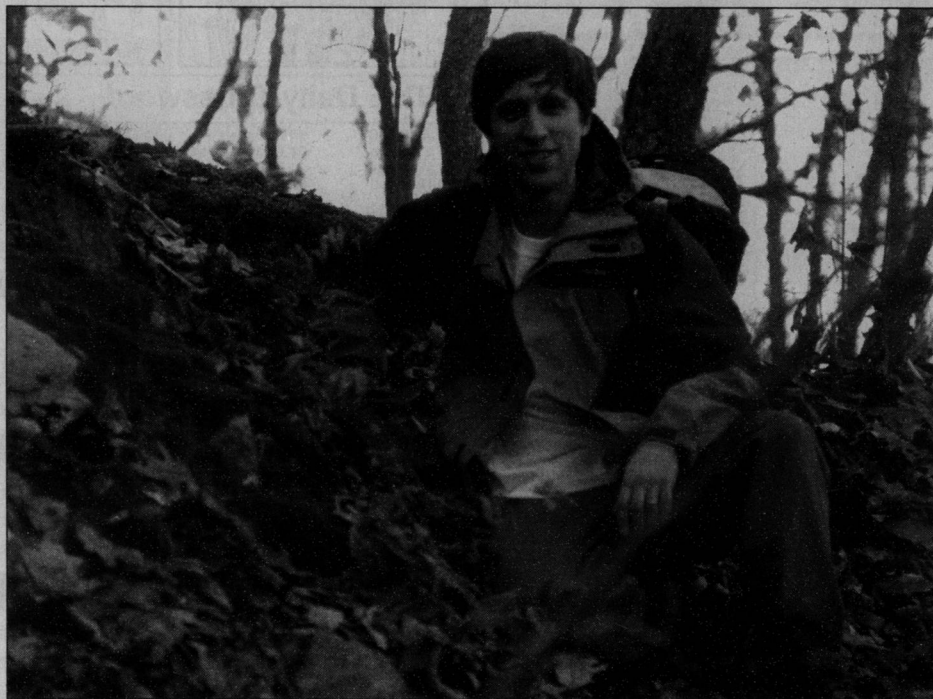
As Lorenc said in his director's notes, "Side Show" is a poignant musical that dismisses our desire to be normal in favor of simply being human."

"Side Show" opened Thursday at Playmakers Theatre on Cameron Avenue. Performances continue through Sunday, with nightly showings at 8 p.m. and a matinee 3 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$5 for University patrons and can be purchased at the door or by calling 962-8481.

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Meredith Whitford (left) and Cassie Cherney play the roles of Siamese twins Daisy and Violet Hilton in "Side Show."



Jeremy Ackerman, a graduate student and a Type 1 diabetic, will climb an Argentinian mountain this month to raise awareness for diabetes. Proceeds from the climb will help make insulin available to the underprivileged.

Climbing for a Cause

By NICOLE GALLAGHER
Staff Writer

Jeremy Ackerman, in mountaineering gear with his pet greyhound nearby, proudly wears a meaningful T-shirt while tromping through an open field behind his Chapel Hill residence.

The shirt of the 26-year-old UNC graduate student reads, "El paciente no es apto para la practica del alpinismo," which translates to, "The patient is not fit for the practice of mountaineering."

Ackerman laughs as he explains that the quote is the "ironic inspiration" for his upcoming journey.

Ackerman, a diabetic, is a founding member of International Diabetic Expedition to Aconcagua 2000, a group of diabetics that at the end of the month will scale the tallest peak in the western hemisphere, the 22,834-foot Cerro Aconcagua in Argentina.

The shirt's quote, taken from the medical chart of a fellow diabetic,

only fuels Ackerman's desire to prove to the world that diabetics are just as capable as everyone else.

"It's great to have a group of diabetics visibly trying to do something they were told they can't do," he said.

Ackerman and the 40-member group hope to inspire all diabetics through extreme athletic activity.

IDEA2000 also aspires to raise money to help fund medical research for diabetes and provide medicines to those who cannot afford it.

The organization is being sponsored for the climb, through which it hopes to raise \$2,000,000 to benefit Latin American diabetes charity groups. Ackerman has already raised nearly \$2,000 through his personal efforts.

"This will have a major impact, and I hope (the groups) can expand their current services," he said.

Ackerman said he is glad to participate even though he hasn't had much climbing experience.

"It is fortuitous. The mountain is doable by people not very experienced in climbing. Getting to the top is an obvious breakthrough and achievement," he said.

Ackerman, an M.D. and Ph.D. candidate, is interested in the upcoming climb in Argentina for many reasons.

Besides his personal goal of ascending the mountain to 18,000 feet, he is looking forward to researching the interaction of diabetes and high altitudes.

While many would consider scaling the tallest mountain this side of the world an extraordinary effort, Ackerman also dedicates his time to educating the public about diabetes — a service he began when he was a teen.

When Ackerman was diagnosed at age 15 with juvenile diabetes, he was leading an active lifestyle, participating in Boy Scouts and other outdoor activities. He vowed to not let diabetes change his life in a negative way.

"My drive comes from stories I heard about diabetics being told they can't do things," he said. "When people tell me they were told they couldn't play contact sports it really ticks me off."

Ackerman has counseled peers, made speeches and worked with parents of diabetics. He also volunteers his medical services at Camp Carolina Trails, a camp for diabetic children.

"It's really great for me and the kids," Ackerman said.

"They realize that other people are going through the same thing. It reinforces my will to continuing taking care of myself."

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CDC Fighting Ignorance About HIV/AIDS

By RACHEL NYDEN
Staff Writer

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is launching new efforts to change the stigma surrounding HIV infection today — the 14th Annual World AIDS Day — in hopes that more people will get tested for the virus.

A public opinion survey showing evidence of a stigma toward victims of HIV and AIDS appears in this week's issue of the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

According to a CDC press release, misconceptions about HIV/AIDS result from a lack of information about the disease.

The press release also states that many people avoid HIV/AIDS tests because they are under the impression that the disease will not affect them.

Survey results state that nearly one in five people — 18.7 percent — agreed with the statement "People who got AIDS through sex or drug use have gotten what they deserve."

The survey also indicated that of the 18.7 percent, 25 percent are under the false impression that HIV can be transmitted by sharing a glass or being coughed or sneezed on by an infected person.

HIV primarily is transmitted through sexual intercourse, prenatal exchange, blood transfusions and needle sharing.

Matt Ezzell, coordinator of community education at the Orange County Rape Crisis Center, said HIV stigma is a significant problem. "No one deserves to get a sexually transmitted disease."

Ezzell said more education about the disease is needed.

"Knowledge is power, and the more we know about the realities of these problems that are affecting us, the less power these problems have over us," he said.

Emily O'Barr, UNC coordinator of human sexuality programs, said the stigma results from a common belief that AIDS will not affect one's life.

"People don't think that they're going to get infected with HIV and are there-

fore willing to make judgments about other people," she said.

The high percentage of gay men with HIV/AIDS adds to the stigma, said Kevin Brown, associate chairman of UNC's Queer Network for Change.

According to the June report, 42 percent of new infections in 1999 were among gay men and 60 percent of all infected men were gay.

"Originally, before it was called AIDS, it was given the name GRIT," he said. "And the G stands for gay." Brown said the stigma concerning gays has faded over time, but many of his female friends do not use proper sexual protection because they do not feel they are at risk. "I think a lot of straight people still assume that they're safe from getting AIDS."

Another concern is the disproportionate percentage of minorities in the United States infected with HIV.

A report released by the CDC in June showed that of 430,411 AIDS-related deaths in the United States since the beginning of the epidemic in the early

1980s, 46.7 percent were white, 35 percent were black and 17.3 percent were Hispanic.

But blacks and Hispanics account for only 13 and 12 percent of the United States population, respectively.

CDC spokeswoman Kathryn Bina said the large percentage of infected minorities results from a number of factors — including lack of access to quality health care.

Caya Lewis, national health director for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, echoed Bina's statements, saying adequate funds are not provided for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in minority neighborhoods.

"(The NAACP) is working with AIDS organizations and the Congressional Black Caucus of the U.S. and minority health organizations to increase and sustain funding around prevention awareness."

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Christmas Marches Into Town

Community volunteer Irene Briggaman was chosen as the grand marshal of the annual Chapel Hill parade.

By JAMILA VERNON
Staff Writer

Bells will be ringing and children will be singing as the annual Chapel Hill Christmas Parade and tree lighting usher in the holiday season.

The tree lighting will take place at 7 p.m. today at the JMC Wallace parking deck on Rosemary Street.

Robert Humphreys, executive director of the Downtown Commission, said the tradition started about 10 or 15 years ago. This year, a tree was bought and lifted onto the deck with a crane.

"We decided that it would be neat to have school choruses and school musical groups come out and sing songs," he said. "It's a community celebration."

The parade will begin at 10 a.m. Saturday, its route running from the post office on Franklin Street to Carrboro Town Hall. It is sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and The Chapel Hill News.

Humphreys said that this year the parade will have nearly 3,000 participants and will include 125 to 130 units.

"They'll be 10 professionally built floats sponsored by various businesses in the community," Humphreys said. "And then there will be hand-built floats by club organizations, scout groups and church day-cares."

There also will be performances from school bands including Chapel Hill High School, East Chapel Hill High School, Hillside High School in Durham and Grey Culbreth Middle School.

Every year, the committee that organizes the parade selects a grand marshal to lead the parade based on work and good deeds performed in the community.

This year, the committee chose Irene Briggaman, a well-known volunteer in the Chapel Hill area.

"(She was named) in recognition of her many years of service to the community," Humphreys said. "If you look (volunteer) up in the dictionary, there's a picture of Irene."

Among other things, Briggaman has helped raise money for local schools, participated in blood drives and begun the Street Scene Teen Center. She also started the Restaurants Sharing V (5) plus V (5) Percent program, which raises money for the Inter-Faith Council through restaurants donating a portion of their proceeds for one day.

"It's an honor as far as I'm concerned," Briggaman said. "I enjoy celebrating Christmas, so I was happy to say yes."

Humphreys said the parade also will contain other musical acts, including performances from the Triangle Youth Ballet and a jazz band called Kitty Box and the Alley Cats. But Humphreys said there will be something special added this year.

"One thing that's unique is that we're going to have two Texas Longhorn steers that will be ridden, along with horses and a donkey," he said.

Humphreys said planning for the parade is a yearlong process. "We start working next week to start working on next year," he said.

But around the first of October, Humphreys said the committee starts to "kick into high gear."

He said there is usually a high turnout to watch the festivities.

"It's a way to remind everybody to get in the spirit of the season and herald the beginning of the holiday."

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