

Letter written by Taheri-Azar leaked to press

UNC alumnus expresses regret

BY TRACEY THERET
CITY EDITOR

JUNE 14 — A letter in which the UNC alumnus charged with striking nine people in the Pit with a Jeep apologized to the University was supposed to remain sealed, District Attorney Jim Woodall said.

However, a filing error allowed the letter to be leaked out.

In the letter dated May 20, Iranian-born Mohammad Taheri-Azar wrote, "I am very sorry for the crimes which I committed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on March 3, 2006."

"I sincerely regret what I did on that day. Please release me from state custody so that I may pursue my goal of living a productive life in California."

Taheri-Azar, 23, wrote that he hopes to work with his father at his general contracting company in Anaheim, Calif., and "re-establish myself as a good, caring, and productive member of society."

The letter, which was sent to the Orange County Superior Courthouse, is under a court order and was placed in a file inaccurately, said the county's Clerk of Superior Court James Stanford, but the Associated Press reported earlier.

Taheri-Azar, 23, pleaded not guilty in January to nine felony charges of assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury with an intent to kill and nine first-degree murder charges in connection with the day that left five victims seriously injured.

In letters to The Daily Tar Heel since the incident, he wrote that his



Alumnus Mohammad Taheri-Azar expressed his repentance in a letter, which was leaked.

actions were an effort to avenge the deaths of Muslims worldwide.

In March, public defender James Williams requested a motion to require Taheri-Azar to undergo psychiatric evaluation at Dorothea Dix Hospital to determine his ability to participate in his defense.

Before the hearing was concluded, however, Taheri-Azar was thrown out of the courtroom after several outbursts, when he repeatedly said he hated all Americans and Jews and that his attorney was a moron.

Taheri-Azar also apologized for the court incident in his letter.

"I ... apologize for my distasteful conduct in your courtroom on March 5, 2007. I promise you that I will never again in my life display such poor, ignorant behavior," he wrote.

Following Taheri-Azar's outbursts, Williams said, "Here again, his behavior is a reflection of a severely disturbed and mentally ill individual."

"That mental illness affects his actions and I believe affected his actions on the day in question."

Taheri-Azar was taken to Dorothea Dix in Raleigh and the results of his evaluation are expected to be presented in court this summer. It will then be determined whether he is competent to stand trial.

If convicted of the 18 felony charges, he could face about 150 years in prison.

Taheri-Azar graduated from the University in 2005 with a psychology degree.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

--The Associated Press contributed to this article

Finding more than opportunity at UNC

Welcome to Carolina, whether you are new to campus or returning for your next semester. I hope that you have had an enjoyable and productive summer and are returning with renewed energy and enthusiasm for the 2007-2008 academic year.

I want to extend a special greeting to our first graduating class of Carolina Covenant scholars. When the first Covenant scholars were selected in 2004, UNC was breaking new ground in making college possible for qualified students regardless of their financial means. As we enroll our fourth entering class, we expect to have awarded a total of 1,400 scholarships for a debt-free education through the Carolina Covenant. More than two dozen colleges have followed our lead in offering similar financial aid packages to low- to moderate-income students. They include Brown, Harvard, MIT and Stanford, as well as Michigan and Virginia.

And while I am glad to see each and every one of you enjoying your time on this beautiful and historic campus, I hope you are not tempted to extend your stay overlong. This serves as a gentle reminder that this fall marks the implementation of new eligibility requirements for undergradu-



JAMES MOESER
CHANCELLOR

ates — namely, the maintenance of a 2.0 grade point average each semester. We are also implementing a system of probation and more intense advising, to give students a second chance if they happen to stumble. But we should all keep in mind that Carolina is a four-year — not a five- or six-year — university.

One way students can boost their learning opportunities in this four-year time frame is through Maymester. Introduced last spring, Maymester was a resounding success, with nearly 300 participants earning three credit hours in only three weeks. This intense schedule of morning or afternoon courses, taught Monday through Friday between spring exams and the end of May, will be offered again in May 2008.

You will be sure to notice that our unprecedented pace of campus construction is continuing this fall, much of it funded by the higher education bond referendum in 2000. (Thank you,

voters of North Carolina.) While the pedestrian detours may be inconvenient, try to keep in mind that these disruptions are better equipping Carolina to meet the needs of the future.

We are entering the second phase of the \$187 million Science Complex, with the addition to Sitterson Hall underway now and the planned demolition of Venable Hall. More space will then be available for two new buildings, which will house chemistry, marine sciences, computer science, as well as a combined new library for the mathematical, computational and physical sciences.

Another major construction project you will see is the first phase of the Arts Common, including the construction of a new building for musical instruction. This facility will offer space for classrooms, faculty offices, multimedia teaching labs and studios.

Some new buildings opened this summer, including one of the two Student and Academic Services buildings at Manning Drive and Ridge Road, which brings together offices that had been scattered across campus. Now the Honor System, Dean of Students, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Housing and Residential Education and Academic Services

(including the Writing Center and the Learning Center) will be housed in one location. (For a complete list of the offices that have relocated to the Student and Academic Services buildings, visit <http://sasb.unc.edu/>.) The entire facility will be open this fall and dedicated in October.

Other buildings are receiving much-needed improvements. You may notice the array of solar panels on top of the newly renovated Morrison Residence Hall, which will be providing hot water to more than 800 residents. It was paid for in part by you through the renewable energy special project student fee. Carolina students are leading the way in promoting sustainable, environmentally-friendly projects such as this.

The advising offices located in Steele have been temporarily moved to Phillips and Coates because of renovations, so be sure to check on your adviser's location when you make an appointment. Boshamer Stadium is undergoing a major expansion. Please be safe and follow all of the pedestrian detours around construction projects.

You are attending Carolina at an especially exciting time, a time of growth and innovation. Take advantage of all the opportunities afforded to you as a Tar Heel.

UNC student dies in Union County accident

BY ALLISON MILLER
UNIVERSITY EDITOR

JUNE 14 — A UNC-Chapel Hill student killed in a car accident earlier in June is remembered by family and friends as someone who has always helped others.

Danielle Liotta, 19, a rising sophomore, ran through a stop sign on June 2 and collided with another car at the intersection of Rocky River and Doster roads in Union County.

According to the N.C. State Highway Patrol, the driver of the other vehicle, Linda Jones, 61, was injured.

Neither drugs, alcohol or speed were contributing factors said the State Highway Patrol.

Elizabeth Liotta, Danielle's mother, said her daughter was on her way to drop off homework for

a classmate at UNC-Charlotte, where she was taking summer classes.

"She was helping somebody again when she died," Elizabeth Liotta said.

Liotta said her daughter, a biology and chemistry major, was a part of the Marching Tar Heels and Mu Beta Psi music fraternity.

She added that Danielle also performed community service and earned her EMT license in Orange County.

"She's just done a lot in her little short life," Elizabeth Liotta said.

Friends at UNC-Chapel Hill remembered Danielle as an upbeat person who reached out to her fellow students.

"She used to have Bible study in her room," said Alyssa Leach, a rising sophomore music major and



Sophomore Danielle Liotta died in a car accident while in Union County.

Danielle's friend.

Leach added that Danielle also cooked dinners for her hallmates.

"She was very sincere about everything that she did," Leach said.

Danielle's friend and roommate Jamie Powell, a rising sophomore biochemistry major, said she would miss everything about Liotta.

"Danielle was my best friend; we met in marching band the first day," she said. "She was really sweet. She was really outgoing."

Liotta's wake was held June 5, and her funeral was held June 6.

"It was a very nice memorial to her life and the people she touched," said Jeff Fuchs, director of University Bands. "It was also very sad."

Elizabeth Liotta asked that instead of flowers, donations be made to Lake Norman High School Marching Band Boosters or the UNC Marching Tar Heels.

Elizabeth Liotta said she is "heartbroken" without her only child.

"She had an infectious smile, she loved life. She did everything with a passion," Elizabeth Liotta said. "I know she could have done great things."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515
Clint Johnson, Summer Editor, 962-4214
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