



Carpet capers

DTH/David Surowiecki

Graeme Philip, a sophomore from Winston-Salem, struggles to get carpet cushioning into his first-floor room in Mangum.

State representative Watkins dies

By **KIMBERLEY MAXWELL**
Staff Writer

William "Billy" Watkins, a powerful N.C. representative who served four terms as the House Appropriations Committee chairman, died of a heart attack Saturday.

Watkins served the 22nd district for 11 terms and worked under former Speaker of the House Liston Ramsey, said Rep. John Church, D-Vance. Church served in the same district as Watkins, and they worked together in the House for 22 years.

As chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Watkins was responsible for budgeting money for the state.

Watkins was relieved of his position as chairman of the Appropriations Committee last December, Church said. Twenty Democrats in the House pledged their support to Liston Ramsey for Speaker of the House, but they turned against Ramsey to vote for Rep. Joe Mavretic, D-Edgecombe.

Seniority was not considered when positions in the House were chosen so

that all representatives had an equal chance of getting a powerful position. According to Church, Watkins didn't think the Republicans in the House deserved control when the Democrats formed the majority.

One of Watkins's most recent accomplishments was establishing an administrative hearing system for the state in 1987, said Rep. Jim Crawford, D-Granville. This system allows grievances against state departments from state employees and N.C. citizens to be heard.

One of Watkins's main interests was public education. He worked to help state employees and to raise teachers' salaries. Participating in the Basic Education Plan, he helped public schools in the poorer areas of the state improve their curriculum, Crawford said. He also worked to strengthen the community college system.

Watkins's interest in this area stemmed from the fact that he had five sisters who were teachers, Church said.

Watkins was also an advocate of the people and their needs, Crawford said. He helped create programs for his district that also were needed in other areas of the state.

Watkins was well-respected among his colleagues in the General Assembly. "He was an exceptional legislator," said Rep. Anne Barnes, D-Orange. "He was a very dedicated public servant."

Barnes noted his tremendous grasp of the budgeting process and his skills as a legislator as his political strengths.

Watkins had an unusual ability to understand the legislative process, Church said. He also knew what was going on in the mainstream.

Watkins hailed from a family of legislators, Crawford said. Both his father, John Watkins Jr., and his brother, Joe Watkins, served in the House in the 1900s.

Watkins was very popular with his constituents, Church said. "His constituents felt strongly about him.

He was one of the most effective legislators in the House. He maintained good communication lines with them and vice versa."

Watkins's influence and power will be missed in the House, Barnes said. "Certain knowledge and skills will be lost in the House," she said. "He was a strong advocate for public education, so they will be without a strong spokesperson in that area."

UNC political science professor Thad Beyle said the political situation in the House now will be more advantageous to Republicans. "It will be easier for the non-Mavretic forces to regroup. He's (Watkins) no longer there to contend with."

Gov. Jim Martin issued an official statement on Watkins's death. "As a legislator and a lawyer, Billy Watkins worked hard to make his goals a reality," the statement said. "He was dedicated to the good of the state of North Carolina, and most especially, to public education. We will surely miss him and his leadership."

New study stresses effectiveness of AZT

By **ALAN MARTIN**
Staff Writer

The drug AZT may take on a larger role in the battle to control AIDS, according to the recently released results of a National Institutes of Health study.

The study involved patients who tested positive for HIV infection, but who had not yet developed actual AIDS symptoms.

Three groups were involved in the study — one group took five capsules of AZT per day, and another group took 15 capsules per day.

The third group received no AZT and developed AIDS symptoms, while both groups taking AZT showed significant slowing of the disease. Both doses of AZT seemed

equally effective in slowing AIDS symptoms.

The study results indicate lower doses of the expensive drug may become practical, and with early detection, AIDS may become a chronic manageable disease like diabetes, said Kathy Martin, head nurse in infectious diseases at Bowman-Gray Hospital.

AZT is the only Food and Drug Administration-approved drug for AIDS and is very expensive. A one-year supply at full dosage costs between \$7,000 and \$8,000.

AZT is the most expensive drug treatment in the history of medicine, Martin said. Most drugs used for comparable diseases such as cancer and Hodgkin's disease cost between \$1,000 and \$4,000 per year.

Burroughs Wellcome, the maker of the drug, has received much negative attention from the AIDS community because of the high price of the drug.

Many AIDS patients think Burroughs Wellcome is making windfall profits off desperate people, said Wayne Simpson, a counselor at the Metrolina AIDS Project in Charlotte. The AIDS patients understand the ordinary practice of recovering research and development costs, but they believe they are in an

extraordinary situation, he said.

Simpson said patients using AZT encounter all kinds of obstructions from insurance companies and Medicaid because the agencies want to raise deductibles and/or not pay for prescription drugs. Most people on AZT also expect more government subsidies for programs that try to help them pay for the treatment.

David Jones, a lobbyist for the N.C. AIDS Service Coalition, calls the price of the drug both restrictive and destructive. The cost of AZT treatment often financially ruins patients, he said.

In response to protests from the AIDS community, Burroughs Wellcome reduced the price of AZT by 20 percent in December 1987.

Reducing the price of a medication still under copyright protection is highly unusual in the industry, said Karen Collins, a Burroughs Wellcome official. Burroughs Wellcome has also given more than \$5 million to the AIDS Drug Reimbursement Program and has given 30 million capsules to 6,800 patients through clinical trial programs, Collins said.

The high cost of treatment is related more to high dosages of the drug than to an expensive price per capsule, she said. Burroughs Wellcome sells AZT to distributors for \$1.50 per capsule.

One large local drug distributor quoted prices for several other drugs as high as \$1.35 per capsule. But

most of these drugs are only taken in a dosage of two or three capsules per day, as opposed to the standard AZT dosage of 12 capsules per day.

Jones said Burroughs Wellcome's actions were noble, but they were not enough.

Claims of high research and development costs are largely unfounded, said Kevin Armington, a representative for the Gay Men's Health Crisis Center in New York. AZT was discovered and developed in the 1960s during cancer research funded by tax revenues, he said.

"The Gay Men's Health Crisis Center believes if Burroughs Wellcome were socially responsible they would significantly reduce the price of AZT in the near future," Armington said.

Collins said AZT was discovered during cancer research by Jerome Horowitz in 1964, but it was quickly found to be ineffective as an anti-cancer agent and was shelved.

AZT was tested again by Burroughs Wellcome labs in 1981 to determine if it could be used as an anti-bacterial agent.

When HIV was identified as the cause of AIDS in 1984, the AZT research was expanded to include possible AIDS applications and showed great promise, Collins said. AZT has been continuously refined and developed since the 1984 breakthrough leading to its release in 1987 as a prescription drug.

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