

# The N&O shows its petty side

By Julian Sereno

The Raleigh News and Observer is getting smaller, not only in size but in spirit.

A few weeks ago it ran an article criticizing a community weekly, The Carrboro Citizen, for accepting a loan from the Town of Carrboro. The article characterized it as government assistance, and quoted various experts as saying it represents a slippery slope in which a paper won't report honestly on government because the government subsidizes it.

The part of the article that was exceedingly petty was a glaring omission – they never mentioned the name of the paper The Carrboro Citizen. They published an article skewering the paper and, like Elizabeth Edwards, wouldn't mention it by name.

The next day, though, they ran a one-sentence correction on Page 2 saying that the paper they had written about the day before was the Carrboro Citizen.

I had figured out it was the Carrboro Citizen because the article mentioned its publisher, Bob

Dickson. Carrboro has another free community paper, the Carrboro Free Press.

When I tried to find the article in question in the N&O online archives, it wasn't there. Instead I found a blog by Mark Schultz, editor of the Chapel Hill News that talked about the Carrboro Citizen applying for a loan from the Town of Carrboro's

revolving loan fund in a straightforward way, naming the newspaper and abstaining from criticism.

What is going on at the N&O? Years ago, when I worked for the Durham Herald-Sun, they refused to mention the N&O by name, referring to it as "a Raleigh newspaper," and doing that as little as possible. The reason was that they feared the N&O, which was moving aggressively into Durham to

exploit community complaints about the Herald, which was considered by many at the time as arrogant and out of touch.

Did the N&O act in such a petty and mean-spirited fashion because it is afraid of the Carrboro Citizen? The N&O owns the Chapel Hill News, and has dramatically slashed its reporting staff and

its news hole.

Of course, the N&O and the Chapel Hill News are not locally owned. They are owned by the McClatchy Company, a California-based newspaper chain that is drowning in a sea of debt after it bought the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain right before the bottom fell out of the daily newspaper business.

The N&O and the Chapel Hill News are still full of ads and probably wouldn't have had to cut their staffs and their news holes if they were still locally owned. Instead, they are firing North Carolina workers to save the bottom line in Sacramento. The Carrboro Citizen is locally owned – Bob and Victoria Dickson offered to put up their Carrboro condo as collateral for the loan.

These are tough times in the newspaper business, for community papers as well as metropolitan dailies. But if the N&O sacrifices its integrity as it struggles to survive, its survival will be meaningless.

*Julian Sereno is editor and publisher of Chatham County Line. Disclosure: he has written opinion pieces for the N&O, articles about Chatham for the Carrboro Citizen, and real estate and business articles for the Chapel Hill News, including a weekly business column that was discontinued due to lack of space.*



# Returning in 747s

By Don Lein

Thus ends T.D. Jakes comment about his mission in Africa: "African Americans may have left in slave ships, but we're returning in 747s." The Kenyan clergy equate Jakes to the biblical Joseph, a man who was born into slavery and is now returning with enough wealth to help his brothers. The Kenyan clergy have indicated to Jakes "We will give you your past if you will help us find our future." The message that Jakes brings to his African followers is one of God and self-help. He delivered two sermons at Nairobi's Uhuru Park and drew an estimated crowd of a million people. While he brings doctors and medical supplies, he feels his greatest contribution is teaching entrepreneurship and the promise of an American-style life.

Jakes is one of a growing group of pastors who have not only exploited modern technology, but equally importantly modern management techniques in growing their churches, which allows them to reach out both within their community and globally. These pastors have been dubbed "pastorpreneurs."

Typical of these is Bill Hybels, who when he was founding his church in suburban Chicago conducted a survey asking people why they did not go to church. He was intent upon keeping the customer first and eschewed those concerns voiced in the survey. He eliminated crosses and stained glass and used videos, drama and contemporary music. Today Willow Creek Community Church features food courts, basketball courts, cafes, video screens, parking spaces for 3,850 cars, but no altars. It has a mission statement "to turn irreligious people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ," a management team, a seven-step strategy and a set of ten core values and is concerned with evangophobia. It also employs two MBAs; one Harvard, one Stanford, a consulting arm and has been a Harvard Business Review case study.

Across the fruited plain churches provide "total service excellence," being open seven days a week from early morning til late at night providing an array of services from banking, pharmacies and schools to martial arts in the "Christian warrior way". It also allows churches to specialize to vari-

ous market niches – bikers, gays, conservatives, etc. T D Jakes reaches 260 prisons a week via satellite. Joel Osteen, whose Lakewood Church raises over \$1 million a week in offerings has a television ministry that reaches 7 million people around the world.

Although the American religious scene is startling it is the exportation of this phenomenon that promises to bring about the most dramatic change. Pentecostalism founded in Los Angeles only a century ago now claims over 500 million adherents worldwide. It has had dramatic growth in Latin America where it has challenged the Roman Catholic monopoly. However, its greatest impact is visible in places such as Seoul, South Korea where Yoido Full Gospel Church has 830,000 members. They feature seven Sunday services which average 35,000 per service and teach approximately 40,000 Sunday schoolers. Yoido follows closely the order of worship of American churches, but more importantly is culturally an American institution. Yoido attracts the same kind of people who go to American megachurches – the upwardly mobile middle class.

We see the spread of American style religions in the developing world, with Pentecostalism leading the way. One of the surprising elements is that part of the attractiveness of religion is its American-ness. The pastors model their churches on the American equivalent and study at American institutions. They use females much more extensively than local custom. There also is an emphasis on worldly success and upward mobility. Mega Frater, a 12,000 seat Pentecostal church with heliport in Guatemala is proudly located upon Burger King Drive.

While Europe and American intellectuals insist that modernity and religion cannot coexist, churches throughout the world are using both modern technology and modern management techniques to reach out and bring members into the fold. While European and American intellectuals cling to failed ideas such as secularism and moral relativism many hundreds of millions in the world are finding their moral footings in religious fundamentalism.

*Don Lein is a Chatham resident who is active in a variety of civic organizations.*

## BRIEFS

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Application forms may be requested online at [bleek@gallowayridge.com](mailto:bleek@gallowayridge.com). For further information applicants may contact Brenda Leek at 919.542.2604. The deadline for submitting applications is September 14, 2009.

Galloway Ridge, a Continuing Care Retirement Community located in Fearington Village, established the Charitable Fund in December, 2006 and made its first grants in 2007. Part of its mission is to provide community benefits through organizations devoted to supporting residents of Chatham County.



## Cats need loving homes

The Goathouse Refuge, an animal sanctuary in Pittsboro, houses almost 200 abandoned or injured cats. The refuge provides food, shelter and medical care while working to place cats and kittens in permanent homes. To learn more about the refuge and to view adoptable cats and kittens, please visit [www.GoathouseRefuge.org](http://www.GoathouseRefuge.org) or call 919.542.6815.

## Chamber of Commerce creates events calendar

The Chatham Chamber of Commerce is pleased to announce the Chatham Community Events Calendar, which will serve as a central repository for events in Chatham. The calendar is intended to spread the word about community events while helping to increase attendance and foster unity in Chatham.

The calendar can be accessed from the home page of the Chatham Chamber of Commerce at [www.ccucc.net](http://www.ccucc.net). Simply click on the "Community Events" link and you will be routed to the calendar. From the calendar, you will be able to submit your events after reading and agreeing to the calendar guidelines.

The calendar came about through a group project developed by the Leadership Chatham Class of 2009. Leadership Chatham is a signature program of the Chatham Chamber of Commerce.

*Got briefs? Email your news to [chathamcoline@mindspring.com](mailto:chathamcoline@mindspring.com)*