



AP Photo

Whoosh!

A cyclist in the category three division streaks past a turning arrow in downtown Racine, Wis., Friday. The race was part of the Fresca International Cycling Classic.

Ferguson wants Schlow library relocated outside of downtown

By MARK PARFITT
Collegian Staff Writer

Accessibility and parking were the two major concerns the Ferguson Township Board of Supervisors had last night with relocating Schlow Memorial Library to another downtown location.

The supervisors discussed the current proposal to move the library to Foster Avenue and Allen Street. They will now forward their recommendations to the Centre Region Council of Governments and the library board.

Supervisor Dorothy Schmidt said in a survey done by the library board, the majority of library users opted for a non-downtown location.

"Fifty-one percent of the people surveyed said they wanted a non-downtown site, and I think we agree with them," she said. "We see downtown as congested and not as a family-friendly site."

Library board president Daniel Hawbaker told the supervisors downtown residents make up a large portion of library users. "Thirty percent of our users are from the downtown area," he said.

Schmidt told the Ferguson representatives on the library board they should not let priorities and agendas of State College Borough

affect where the library is located.

"I don't think your first priority should be what is best for the Borough of State College. Your responsibility is to do what's best for the Ferguson Township families," she said.

The library representatives said they chose a site that was best for all Centre Region residents, not just those of Ferguson Township and the borough. They said the downtown site was in a geographic and population center of the Centre Region.

However, Schmidt said in the future that will not be the case. "The population is moving to the west," she said. The latest population figures show that Ferguson, Halfmoon and Patton townships have seen the greatest growth among Centre Region municipalities.

Supervisor Robert Crassweller said he favors moving the library to the Westerly Parkway Plaza shopping center. He said in addition to the ample amount of parking and large residential surrounding, it could supplement the State College Area High School library.

"They're running out of space at the high school," he said.

"Many people have given up using (Schlow) because of where it is," Crassweller said. "And I think

that's what our concern is."

Library representatives said they were concerned about putting a public building in the middle of a commercial shopping center.

However, chair supervisor Donald Suit said the proposed site is in the middle of the downtown commercial area.

Ferguson Township, which opened a new 3.3 mile trail last week, has tried to be a pioneer in building bike paths. The proposed library cannot be reached safely via bicycle, the supervisors said.

"I still don't see a good bicycle access that is safe downtown," Suit said. "That needs some type of resolution."

The Ferguson supervisors said although progress has been made, the proposed library does not contain enough parking spaces in proportion to the number of users.

"It's like fitting an elk in a dog house," Suit said.

A library relocation must be approved by all COG members. Patton Township supervisors endorsed the downtown location July 9. College Township rejected the proposal June 26, citing problems with parking and cost.

Ferguson vice-chair Anna Peters was absent from last night's meeting.

FDA looks into heart problems

The Food and Drug Administration is examining the possibility that diet drugs may have damaged people's heart valves.

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — The government is investigating 16 more people whose heart valves may have been damaged by popular diet drugs — and critics are using the scare to fight Senate legislation that would spur wider sales of such unapproved medicines.

Although doctors haven't proved that fen/phen is to blame, the Food and Drug Administration is reviewing a total of 49 cases of heart damage linked to the diet drugs. Ten patients needed open-heart surgery.

The FDA has never approved taking both diet drugs fenfluramine and phentermine together. While drug salesmen may not advertise unapproved uses of drugs, it is legal for doctors to prescribe medicines in any way they choose — and some 6 million Americans are estimated to have tried fen/phen last year, before doctors spotted the possible side effect.

Now the Senate is preparing legislation to let drug salesmen get in on the act, allowing them to provide doctors with studies promoting unapproved uses of medicines.

Doctors "should have the ability to receive credible scientific information from reputable sources in order to make informed treatment decisions," the bill's author, Sen. Connie Mack, R-Fla., wrote senators last week.

But FDA allies say fen/phen shows that "off-label" drug promotion is dangerous, arguing that more Americans might be at risk for the heart damage had drug companies spurred even wider sales.

"Fen/phen is a prime example of the potential danger from off-label drug use," said Jim Manley, spokesman for Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., who is leading the opposition. "Problems like this would only be amplified by passage of this amendment."

The bill "can most accurately be described as the killer fen/phen amendment," Dr. Sidney Wolfe of the consumer advocacy group Public Citizen wrote senators.

A drug goes on sale only after the FDA determines it is safe and effective against a particular disease. But doctors then can prescribe that drug for any disease, and some 40 percent to 60 percent of all prescriptions are for these off-label uses.

Doctors learn about new uses for old drugs from medical meetings or scientific journals. Some new uses prove lifesaving — drug-makers, for example, knew aspirin could prevent heart attacks before the FDA did — while others have killed. But the idea was that doctors are supposed to keep up with the latest science, not be swayed by a drug salesman.

Mack's bill attempts to balance the issue by letting salesmen hand doctors copies of studies from what are considered the best medical journals.



AP Photo

Demonstrators with Italia Democratica call for signatures to an appeal for Joseph O'Dell in front of the American Embassy on Via Veneto in Rome. O'Dell, on death row, has rallied the support of Pope John Paul II and the Italian government as well as high-powered lawyers.

Inmate seeks truth to set him free

By BILL BASKERVILL
Associated Press Writer

RICHMOND, Va. — From death row, Joseph Roger O'Dell III has rallied Pope John Paul II and the Italian government to his side, along with some high-powered lawyers, a New York public relations firm and a close friend on a crusade to prove him innocent.

They have until tomorrow night to keep the 54-year-old O'Dell from execution by injection for raping and murdering a Virginia Beach woman in 1985.

The courts and Republican Gov. George Allen have rejected O'Dell's claims of innocence as well as his request for more sophisticated DNA tests of semen taken from the victim, Helen Scharnter.

The unofficial manager of the campaign to prove O'Dell innocent is Lori Urs, a former accountant and now a Boston law student who got involved in the case in 1993 when she was with a group that works to free innocent inmates.

She has orchestrated O'Dell's publicity efforts, worked with two high-powered law firms — Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison in New York and Miller, Cassidy, Larroca and Lewin in Washington — and lobbied the pope, who she said gave her a rosary to encourage her.

"I'm fighting for the truth. That's all I want is the truth, because Joseph is innocent," said

"I'm fighting for the truth. That's all I want is the truth, because Joseph is innocent."

— Lori Urs

Boston law student fighting for O'Dell's freedom

Urs, who describes herself as O'Dell's closest friend and adviser. "If this can happen to Joseph O'Dell, and he's innocent, then God help all the other people in this country."

Even if O'Dell is executed, Urs said, "I intend to carry this out until it is proven beyond a doubt that Joseph O'Dell is innocent."

O'Dell isn't the first Virginia death row inmate to try to avoid execution by stirring up a publicity campaign. But this is by far the biggest such attempt in recent years.

Paul F. Enzina, one of O'Dell's lawyers, said the inmate's advocates have been galvanized by two factors: "There is no doubt that the sentencing hearing in which he was sentenced to death is unconstitutional today, and they won't let us test DNA evidence that could prove the guy's innocence."

O'Dell argued that he should have been allowed to tell the jurors at his sentencing in 1986 that if they did not give him the death penalty, he would have to spend the rest of his life in prison because of 14 prior felony convictions.

"The prosecution frightened

the jury with the threat that, unless executed, Mr. O'Dell would some day be let loose in the streets and neighborhoods of Virginia," O'Dell's lawyer Robert Smith said.

Last month, however, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected O'Dell's argument. The high court said its 1994 ruling that juries in capital cases sometimes must be told defendants have no chance of parole is not retroactive.

In refusing new DNA tests, the governor — like the prosecution — said O'Dell's conviction was based on overwhelming evidence. O'Dell was seen in a Virginia Beach nightclub at the same time as the victim and left within minutes after she died.

Shortly after she was beaten and strangled, O'Dell showed up at a convenience store with blood on his clothing. He offered conflicting explanations for the blood.

At his trial, prosecutors showed that the wounds on Scharnter's head matched the shape of a pellet gun owned by O'Dell. In addition, tire tracks from the crime scene matched the tires on O'Dell's car. Semen found on the victim's body matched O'Dell's

blood and enzyme types. Hairs found in O'Dell's car also matched those of the victim.

In 1990, a judge ordered DNA tests on O'Dell's bloody clothing. One test found the blood on O'Dell's shirt was neither his nor his victim's. A test on O'Dell's jacket found a partial match to the victim's blood.

A DNA test on semen taken from the victim's body was not possible in 1990 because the sample was too small.

DNA expert Barry Scheck, who was a member of O.J. Simpson's defense team at his murder trial and is now advising O'Dell's camp, said new techniques make it possible to test the sample and perhaps prove O'Dell innocent.

The case has gotten extraordinary attention in Italy, where opposition to capital punishment runs high and where Urs has worked the media.

The Parliament and the pope have asked Allen and President Clinton for clemency. On Friday, Italy's president appealed to Allen to spare O'Dell's life.

Allen, a staunch supporter of capital punishment, has allowed 18 executions to proceed as scheduled since he took office in 1994 and has commuted only one death sentence: Last November, he spared Joseph Payne hours before he was to be executed for killing a fellow inmate. The victim's own mother and members of the jury had raised doubts about Payne's guilt.

Third rape reported in two weeks

A female University student said she was raped by two attackers in the Eastern section of town early Saturday morning, the State College Police Department said.

Officers have not been able to pinpoint the exact location of the assault, police said. Descriptions of the attackers are also limited, police said.

Saturday's sexual assault report is the third in two weeks. Two assaults — one rape and one attempted rape — were reported in the early morning of July 13, the Sunday of the 31st Annual Central Pennsylvania Festival of the Arts.

Women can take steps to protect themselves, State College Police Chief Tom King said.

"We advise particularly at night to avoid walking alone," King said.

The attacks of July 13 both took place within an hour and a half of each other in the Eastern section of town near Park Hill Apartments, 478 E. Beaver Ave., police said.

The two victims gave only vague descriptions of their assailants, but police said they believe the same man may be responsible for both attacks.

Investigations are underway in all three cases, King said.

—by Jason Fagone

State College resident dies in car accident

A State College man died Sunday evening in a head-on collision after he turned the wrong way onto the Mount Nittany Expressway, State College Police Department said.

John A. Kennedy, 79, of 1244 Westerly Parkway, was pronounced dead on the scene by Centre County Coroner Rich Kelley, police said. His granddaughter, four-year-old Cara Zierke of 115 Outer Drive, was taken to Centre Community Hospital for treatment, where she is listed in satisfactory condition.

New Cumberland residents John Haughney, 41, and passenger James Brannon were ejected through the windshield when Kennedy's Chevrolet Lumina crashed into their Ford Explorer at the Oak Hall interchange, police said. Haughney and Brannon were flown by helicopter to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville.

Brannon and Haughney are listed in critical and serious conditions respectively. Both were not wearing seatbelts, police said, but two air bags were deployed at impact.

—by Jason Fagone

Slaves forced to practice Christianity honored African religion

By TOM STUCKEY
Associated Press Writer

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The buttons, pins, pebbles and coins were hidden away for decades under door sills, hearths and the northeast corners of basement floors.

Archaeologists who uncovered the objects during a dig at an 18th Century row house in Annapolis say the findings are proof that slaves forced to become Christians continued to practice elements of their West African religion long after the first slaves arrived in America.

"Generations of African Americans lived in this house," said Mark Leone, a professor of archaeology at the University of Maryland. "Long after their arrival from West Africa, their traditions of healing, prediction and safety had survived."

The findings are part of a three-year dig at a house built in 1774 by John Ridout, then secretary to the provincial governor of Maryland.

Such row houses were common in London, but "it's unusual in the United States to find high-style brick row houses like this," said Lynn Jones, who has worked on the dig for

three seasons as part of her doctoral degree in archaeology.

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence that the original back yard was a working yard, with a privy, a vegetable garden, a well and a storage building.

But a major goal of the project was to examine the lives of slaves, and it is this area has been the most productive, Leone said.

The dig has national significance, he said, because it is the first in the United States where archaeologists set out to look for evidence of slave religious practices, picked

certain areas to explore and found evidence of religious practices in each designated area.

They knew where to look for the religious objects — called diviners caches — because of information gleaned from histories that were based on recollections of slaves.

Leone said the caches, also called conjurers bundles, included black and white pebbles or buttons representing death and life. Other common contents included discs with one hole in the center, pins and crystals.

"They were part of a whole tradition of managing the spirit world," Leone said.