

## Bus rider steamed about rude passenger

So, I'm coming home Tuesday evening, and a barista at a local coffee shop has a story she is dying to tell.

Seems she was riding the No. 14 city bus that afternoon, and a disabled man boards.

A woman who appears to be fully able is sitting at the front of the bus in a spot where this man needs to sit, so he can strap in his wheelchair. She doesn't budge. Everyone looks

She announces loudly enough for all to hear, "I ain't movin'." Several times.

She announces further that she and her child are already settled

In Finally, the bus driver orders her to another seat and the disabled man, who is courteous the whole time, gets situated.

The rude woman glowers. "I was so angry," my barista friend says, and I can tell.

She is normally a cool customer. I think it's the first time she's suggested I do a story, or the first time in a long time.

"That man might have been a veteran," she adds.

She wanted me to bring attention to the incident, in case the rude bus passenger should happen to read my column, so she'll know her rudeness was not appreciated.

OK, done.

I have two further thoughts. First, it was guilt that made the rude passenger explain her actions, however brazenly, to her fellow riders. Guilt indicates a self-awareness that she knew she was in the wrong, and self-awareness is something.

Second, as long as people like her are upset about these kinds of things, we still have a shot at restoring a civil society.

So take heart, my friend.

**Chief vs. council**

I believe much of the drama over police consent searches ends when we get a new police chief.

A new chief with a new attitude and a new way of doing things is the only way to do a hard reset. And that's what's required in this toxic debate.

It doesn't appear to me that Police Chief Tom Bergamine and the City Council believe in each other any longer. To my eye, he undercut council members Jan. 24 when, a day after saying he'd go along with their directive on a moratorium on consent searches, he sent a letter to the N.C. Department of Justice asking that it declare the action invalid.

The chief says he was only trying to make sure his officers were not "following an unlawful mandate."

The moratorium issue does need to be settled in court so officers and municipalities statewide get legal clarification.

Meanwhile, I don't see how the broken relationship between police and council helps city residents in terms of public safety. If anyone has a rational case of why a chief out of step with the mayor and city leaders should stay on until July, I'd like to hear it.

**Cool deck**

On Friday, the city will open the parking deck on Franklin Street downtown, in time for Fourth Friday.

The deck is snazzy looking and fits well into the surrounding brickwork landscape, which includes the Robert E. Williams Business Center.

The deck is also a rare case of forward-thinking and helps us get out in front of what will eventually be a major downtown parking problem.

Good job to all involved.

Columnist Myron B. Pitts can be reached at [mpitts@fayobserver.com](mailto:mpitts@fayobserver.com) or 910-486-3559.

## Ride to honor Iraq War vets

By Drew Brooks  
Staff writer

When the war in Iraq drew to a close late last year, members of the nonprofit group GOTDAD awaited the celebrations they felt certain would come.

And they waited. And waited. Roughly two months after the war's end, the Fayetteville-based organization is through waiting and has decided to take the lead in honoring veterans who served in Iraq.

**GOTDAD Giving Opportunities Through Dedication and Devotion**

The convoy, symbolic of the last convoys out of Iraq, will cover eight miles — from the John D. Fuller Recreation Center on Old Bunce Road to the Airborne & Special Operations Museum on Bragg Boulevard.

Fuller will host a "Ride to Freedom" convoy Saturday to recognize Iraq War veterans. Director Joe McGee said

The convoy, symbolic of the last convoys out of Iraq, will cover eight miles from the John D.

Fuller Recreation Center on Old Bunce Road to the Airborne & Special Operations Museum on Bragg Boulevard.

McGee said the group hopes military families and Fayetteville residents will turn out to partici-

pate in the convoy.

"This is Fayetteville's way of saying 'Thank you,'" McGee said. "Bring your car, your minivan, decorate it and come ride with us."

GOTDAD has reached out to veterans groups including VFW posts, American Legion chapters and the Wounded Warrior Project, McGee said, and has been encouraged by the response.

McGee said he expects the convoy to leave the recreation center about noon, after a one-hour

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### FALLING LIGHT POLE



Emergency personnel treat a Pike Electric worker who was struck by a part of a lamppost Wednesday morning on Person Street. Below, pieces of the lamppost lie on the ground.

Staff photo by James Robinson

## Accident injures worker

A Pike Electric Inc worker was injured Wednesday morning when a light pole at Person and Bow streets fell on him.

The worker was identified as Anthony Yow, construction consultant Pete Oxendine said.

Yow and other workers were attempting to replace two bulbs that were out about 8:45 a.m., Oxendine said.

A strap attached to a line truck was holding the pole from the top, he said, while Yow was using a strap to loosen the pole closer to the ground. As the pole came loose, it slipped from the top strap and

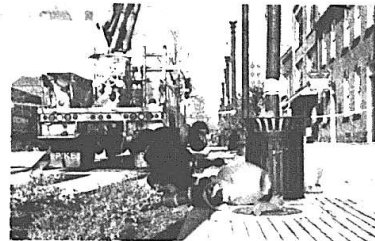
crashed down, grazing Yow on the head and landing on his leg, breaking it, Oxendine said.

Yow was taken to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center.

Fayetteville Public Works Commission has contracted with Pike to handle the effort to install underground utility lines downtown.

The state's Occupational Health and Safety Division is not required to investigate a workplace accident if no one is killed or less than three workers are injured, a spokesman there said.

— Nancy McCleary



## Sicinski hears Linden Oaks concerns

Fort Bragg's garrison commander says work on an additional elementary school will likely begin in 2014.

By Drew Brooks  
Staff writer

**SPOUT SPRINGS** — Fort Bragg's garrison commander visited the installation's newest community Wednesday to discuss residents' concerns and announce growth.

Col. Stephen Sicinski fielded questions about crime, schools, shopping and other community interests at the town hall meeting, held in the cafeteria of Gordon Elementary School in the Linden Oaks community.

Sicinski acknowledged some growing pains the community is dealing with and said help is on

the way.

Sicinski said construction on an additional elementary school in Linden Oaks has two elementary middle and a middle school — would likely begin in 2014.

In the meantime, some temporary classrooms would have to be used to help relieve overcrowding, he said.

The community, which opened in 2008, has quickly ballooned to 1,225 homes and more than 6,000 residents, said a spokeswoman for Pierece Mil-

itary Housing, which manages the houses.

An additional 217 homes for field-grade officers will be built in the next year-and-a-half.

Sicinski said concerns about other amenities will be addressed as the community continues to grow.

He pointed to the planned construction of a gas station and shopette within Linden Oaks and the increased construction of fast food, grocery stores and other businesses around the community, which is located in Harnett County.

Sicinski said efforts are under way to increase recreation in Linden Oaks, with plans for baseball diamonds and ball fields to be built in the near future.

In the past, military families have had to travel to Fort Bragg

proper to participate in those activities.

"Youth sports are coming to you," Sicinski said. "That's the message."

Most of the questions dealt with safety on walking trails and crime concerns and Sicinski assuaged fears that Linden Oaks was the "forgotten stepchild" of Fort Bragg.

He said Linden Oaks is the "most over-patrolled community in the Army."

"I would challenge the idea that you're an afterthought," he said. "You're not. You're the nicest community on Fort Bragg."

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## Lender to ad agency facing Fla. lawsuit

By Paul Woolverton  
Staff writer

Gary Smith, the owner of Smith Advertising & Associates in Fayetteville, said his company received and repaid short-term loans from a Florida man as part of a longtime business practice.

In the last several weeks, the company's relationship with Florida businessman Marvin Kaplan

has become associated with a lawsuit alleging Kaplan was engaged in a check-kiting scheme that cost a bank at least \$9.8 million.

Sarasota, Fla., police and the U.S. Secret Service are investigating, a Sarasota police spokesman said.

Smith Advertising is not a defendant in the lawsuit, and the detective assigned to the case said

the advertising agency is not a suspect.

And Gary Smith, who founded the ad agency in 1974, portrayed his company as an innocent bystander in the dispute between the bank and Kaplan.

Fayetteville-based Smith Advertising has an office in Sarasota, Fla., and a number of clients in that area.

Check kiting occurs when multiple bank accounts are used to move and obtain money. A kiter might have \$1,000 in the first bank and write a check for \$10,000 on that account to the second bank. Then he withdraws some large amount, \$3,000 for example, from the second bank to get cash before

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