

V A N D E R B I L T U N I V E R S I T Y M E D I C A L C E N T E R

HOUSE ORGAN

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April 2009



**DNA Research Reveals
Surprising Results**

**Patient Zygorg
"Cabbagehead" Neumacher
has unusual genetic makeup**

April Fool's Issue
100% Lies or Your Money Back!

A brief, yet helpful, history of House Organ

BY WAYNE WOOD

Most of you probably know that *House Organ* began publishing shortly after Vanderbilt Medical Center moved to campus in 1925. Canby Robinson, who at that time was serving as dean of the School of Medicine, director of the hospital, and Chancellor of the University, and Governor of Tennessee, had decided that a publication to cover the news of the day would be a good idea—and so on April 1, 1925, the first edition of *House Organ*, then called *Newes Organ of the House of the Vanderbilt Medical Department & etc*, was published under the editorship of William Woolsley, who bragged in his typical windbag fashion that he had learned the newspapering trade from Benjamin Franklin.

The new publication contained a guest editorial from Dr. Robert Collins, which he dispatched by telegraph from his home.

In those early days the publication had no photographs and consisted of narrow columns of dense type, and included articles such as “Employees Complain About Lack of Conestoga Wagon Parking,” “Beloved Staff Member Eaten by Rapacious Wolves on Campus Outskirts,” and “Physician Sells Honey from his Own Bees.”

The editor’s column, “Observing the Wheels Which Are Spinning Round,” was also popular with readers.

During the Great Depression, tight budgets forced some cutbacks, including a reduction in the number of copies printed. To make sure that staff and faculty would hear about the events covered, Robinson would stand up in the cafeteria, which was in the basement of what is now Medical Center North, and read each issue out loud.

Later, during World War II,

continued on page 93

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April Fool's 2009



9³/₄

Belly button transplants offer hope

Those with an outie who would like an innie—or vice versa—can now find navel-oriented relief at the One Hundred Oaks Belly Button Transplant Program.

3.14

Don't eat lunch on conference room table, employees urged

You know that table in the conference room on the fourth floor? Trust me, it would be a really, really bad idea to eat lunch off that table.

∞

PNAS acceptance draws giggles from middle school group

A scientist who proudly told a visiting group of middle school students that he had had a paper accepted in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science drew a round of snickers and guffaws when he referenced the journal by its widely-used initials, PNAS. “I don’t know what those kids thought was so hilarious,” Denny Bushmiller, Ph. D., said after the group had left. “They seemed to think that was really funny. I don’t get it.”

666

Tree surgeon treated at Shade Tree Clinic after fall from shade tree

Dazed tree worker lands among 17 medical students, asks “I just hit the ground—how’d so much medical care get here so fast?”

420

Safety Fair to install Midway Games, Tilt-a-Whirl

Declining attendance at the semi-annual VMC Safety Fair has led planners to come up with new enticements. “We want to make the Safety Fair more like a real fair, although we are currently drawing the line at livestock judging,” one planner says.



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DNA DATABANK

reveals surprising findings



fMRI confirms strange findings.

In the first breakthrough from the Vanderbilt DNA Databank—an anonymous collection of genetic and clinical information—researchers have identified a gene variant that impacts skull formation.

This variant, named ET-42, increases cranial volume and orbital circumference, and is associated with previously unrecognized levels of cognitive function. Investigators are currently exploring the brain circuitry in patients with this gene variant using functional mag-

netic resonance imaging (fMRI).

Surprisingly, the variant occurs in up to 25 percent of patients represented in the databank.

“We knew that patients come from all over the place to Vanderbilt, but we had no idea that so many of them come from so far,” said Ron Hill, vice president for strategic development at VMC. “We have patients traveling from light years away and centuries in the future, and we often see their extended families in the lobby or in McDonalds.

“We even had some of them record the patient reminder notices for The Vanderbilt Clinic.”

One of the patients with the ET-42 variant, Zygorg “Cabbagehead” Neumacher, agreed to speak to a reporter.

“I am always happy to gratify earthlings with answers to their pathetic, puny inquiries,” he said. “But please do not vex me, otherwise I may lose my temper and vaporize you with my formidable

Continued on page 74



"Cause bracelet elbow" a GROWING source of torment

Some people want to help so much that they hurt.

VMC researchers have identified a new disease brought about by a dedication to too many charitable causes and the bracelets for those causes.

"We see people in absolute torment because they have embraced so many charities," said VMC research nurse Eufala Bentley.

The cause-bracelet movement began several years ago with the Lance Armstrong, anti-cancer "Live Strong" bracelet, a bright yellow strip which inspired a rainbow of wrist displays for causes ranging from a panoply of diseases to environmentalism to religious conviction.

"People who are active in a lot of good causes are most prone to CBE," Bentley said.

"Therapy for CBE involves carefully cutting each bracelet off the patient's arm, followed by an educational session based around the idea that it's possible to care for and support a cause without a piece of rubber around one's arm signifying that. Some people have never thought of that."

Hot dog stand goes upscale

Adds carpeting, paneling, Picasso



Before



After — note the carpeting, paneling and Picasso.

In an effort to keep up with the well-received refurbishment of the Courtyard Café, the hot dog stand outside The Vanderbilt Clinic has returned with a new, upscale look.

"The carpeting and paneling are nice touches, but what really made it for me was the original Picasso hanging at the side," said longtime customer Isabelle Ringing of Finance. "That incredible masterpiece really added a touch of class to the whole plaza area, even after that guy accidentally got some relish on it."

Stand manager Curt Manners says the remodeling is an example of giving customers good value.

"People have told us they want a more upscale dining experience, with better atmosphere," he says.

"Next year, we plan to have a co-op deal with Tiffany's to sell jewelry along with our quality meats, sides and condiments."

Humorless jackass hates this issue

■ Humorless jackass Frederick C. Shuttlecock, M.D., says that this issue of *House Organ* isn't funny and is in poor taste.

"In these tough economic times, is this the best use for our scarce Medical Center funds?" the grizzled longtime faculty member asked in his characteristic nasal bray, waving the April Fool's issue of the magazine around. "Can't we do better than cheap satire, buffoonish sight gags and other dubious content of similar ilk?"

But *House Organ* editor Wayne Wood noted that the publication is, by common cost-accounting measurements, quite cost efficient: "*House Organ* is quite a bargain, since its entire year's budget is only 11 cents," Wood said. "And that's not per copy, that's the total budget."

"I think in these times, it is really important to have the ability to laugh at ourselves and allow humor to help us through stressful times.

"I realize that others may have a different opinion, but the important thing for those people to realize is that their different opinion is stupid and wrong."



As budgets get tight, research labs continue to find creative solutions to making ends meet, including the sale and purchase of used lab rats.

Where's Melvin now?

MelvinTracker 5000 keeps track

Those wishing to keep up with the current whereabouts of VMC's Mr. Ubiquitous, Melvin Fitzgerald of Biochemistry, can now sign up for MelvinTracker 5000.

This satellite-based service can tell anyone at the Medical Center in an instant where he is, so that they can increase their chances of running into him to say hello. It appears as a desktop icon on computer screens and follows the peripatetic Fitzgerald.

"Melvin certainly seems to be everywhere, but he's only human," says one longtime VMC employee. "This will help avoid those rare but sad days when I don't see him at all."





Newes Organ of the House of the Vanderbilt Medical Department &c was responsible for the sale of tens of thousands of dollars worth of War Bonds, and then-editor Webley Webster personally planted a Victory Garden where the Round Wing now stands, and then, after the war, wrote a column in which he appeared to take personal credit for the defeat of Hitler.

It was shortly after this that the name of the publication was shortened to *Newes Organ of the House*, or, as it was popularly known, *NOOTH*, or, as some "wags" had it, the *NOOTHpaper*.

During the 1950s, *NOOTH* was briefly delivered to its stands by a young truck driver named Elvis Presley, who, legend has it, read a feature story about a VMC physician who volunteered time at a prison—headlined "Jailhouse Doc"—and thought that, with modification, that title could make a good name for a song.

The year 1964 was a watershed year for the publication, as its name was shortened again, this time to the familiar *House Organ*, and photographs became a regular part of the magazine. This immediately led to the first Pet Photo Contest, which proved so

popular that, tragically, editor Weebil Weemsbacher was buried under a 17-foot pile of cat and dog photographs and suffocated.

The year 1969 saw the name of the publication shortened again, this time to *HO*, but after two issues, for reasons lost to history, it was lengthened again, back to *House Organ*. One of the most popular stories from the early 1970s was about how a faculty member, Earl Sutherland, was the top winner on that era's hit reality show, *Who Wants to Win a Nobel Prize?*

It was also around this time that the editor's column was rechristened "Watching the Wheels," and, in 1974 when Paul McCartney came to Nashville to record some songs, he became taken with the phrase. Unable to work it into a song himself, he suggested it to his longtime collaborator John Lennon, who eventually used it as the title to one of his last hits.

In the early 1980s, *House Organ* won its first Pulitzer Prize as Mike Cline published a series of hard-hitting stories exposing the fact that employees felt that \$5 a year for parking up to 40 feet away from the door of the building was a rip-off.

The '80s and '90s were a time of a great building boom at the Medical Center, which was chronicled in depth by *House Organ*, and which led to a series of editors, including Weeb Webb, Weyman Wanker, and Wesley Walter Walker being killed in a series of freak construction accidents.

And, in this millennium, I have sought to add to the class and dignity of the publication by beginning the popular "Send in a Xerox of Your Butt" contest, which proved to be one of the most popular in the publications almost 300-year history until copyright lawyers from Xerox forced us to rename it the "Send in a Photocopy of Your Butt" contest.

But whether in its early days, covering the western expansion of the Medical Center, or in the middle of the roaring American Century when the Medical Center was in its heady salad days, or to the present, when we regularly use hidden cameras to cover faculty parties for blackmail purposes, *House Organ* has stood the test of time as the place Medical Center employees come to read the facts of the day.

House Organ pet poll overloads entire Internet

Sadie the Weimaraner mix receives 1.6 trillion votes as worldwide chaos envelops computer users.

■ Last week's *House Organ* pet poll overloaded the capacity of the World Wide Web, resulting in a worldwide computer crash, officials said.

The poll, which allowed readers of *House Organ* to pick their favorite dog and



cat picture from the annual "Pets of the Medical Center" issue, quickly got out of hand with each nominee adding up millions of votes through computerized automatic voting schemes.

The overload spread from computer to computer and server to server, first in the U.S. and then internationally, so that within hours, the Internet collapsed from overuse.

Before the collapse, Sadie the mixed Weimaraner was declared the dog winner, while Rascal the orange tabby won the cat category with more than 600 billion votes.

"This is a catastrophe, with computers in every



country on every continent experiencing a total shutdown," said a spokesperson for the U.S. Government.

"And on top of that, my 1.3 trillion votes for Buster the dauchshund were only good for a fourth place finish."



Giant fan clears smoke from 21st Ave. S.



Pedestrians along 21st Avenue. South in front of the Medical Center can breathe easier now that a gigantic fan has been installed to blow away the fumes from all the smokers who gather on the sidewalk.

A new no-smoking policy enacted Medical Center-wide last year compelled smokers to leave campus to light up, and the public sidewalk on 21st Avenue is the most convenient place for many staff and faculty puffers.

"The problem has been that so many people have been smoking along that stretch of sidewalk that it's almost been like sticking your nose in the exhaust pipe of a badly-tuned car," noted Joel Lee, the VMC official who has implemented the smoking policy.

The fan, a Vornado "Caramba 5000" model, can generate gale-force winds and creates an interesting "outdoor wind tunnel" effect on the busy street.

"This will allow people to smoke on a public sidewalk, as is their right, while propelling the smoke into the stratosphere," Lee said. "And smokers will return to work refreshed and invigorated from the brisk breeze, assuming they aren't blown away like Sally Field in *The Flying Nun*."

When asked their opinion of the fan, some smokers seemed less than pleased.

"Why don't you come over here and ask that to my

continued on page 77

Medical Center North named to Fortune's '100 Most Confusing Places to Work' list

Vanderbilt's Medical Center North, the labyrinthine structure where senses of direction go to die, has been named to *Fortune* magazine's "100 Most Confusing Places to Work" list.

"We've been trying for this national honor for a long time," said Larry Goldberg, CEO of Vanderbilt Hospital, who has an office in the AA corridor of MCN. "I think what put us over the top was when the man who had been lost in the building since 1934 was found last year."

That man, 95 year old Sam Roundtree, had walked into the building as a teenager when it was still Vanderbilt Hospital, and hadn't been seen for 64 years. The story received national publicity, including a mention in a



Sam Roundtree

David Letterman monologue.

The *Fortune* story mentions the Roundtree saga, but also points out that the building has had at least six major additions, some of which match up poorly with the existing hallway grid.

"The result is numerous 'halls to nowhere,' confusing numbering, and a staggering number of bewildered people wandering the halls at all hours of the night and day," the magazine says. "Medical Center North stands as a monument to befuddlement."

"We couldn't be more proud," Goldberg said. "We'd have a party, if we could afford one, which we can't."

continued on page 47



Snugglies to replace graduation gowns

In an effort to increase comfort for faculty and graduating students, traditional graduation gowns will be replaced this year by Snugglies, the popular blankets with sleeves that are relentlessly pitched on late night television.

"Everybody knows how uncomfortable those gowns are, and I was up late one night watching the Weather Channel and it just hit me—Snugglies would be a lot better," said Jeff

Balsler, M.D., Ph.D.

"They're like a blanket, only with arms, so students would be able to accept their degrees without having to struggle the way they would with a blanket.

"And the commercial says Snugglies are ideal for outdoor sporting events, so I know they'll be great for commencement."

continued on page 37

Other News



Space and Facilities unveils new cubicle design

See Page 97

ALISQUATS

All the science news you can read in the bathroom



See Page 65

Shuttle service begins from MCN to Eskind Biomedical Library

Medical Center Parking and Transportation Services has launched a shuttle service between Medical Center North and Eskind Biomedical Library, providing a welcome respite for those who otherwise would be forced to walk the 30 feet between the two buildings.

"This is so much easier," said Wanda Fonda, who was waiting on the bench outside Medical Center North for the once-every-half-hour shuttle, dubbed the Magenta Route, on a recent Thursday morning. "The shuttle will be along in a few minutes and I can get

off of it and just walk straight in the door over there."

The Magenta Route picks up outside MCN, drives counterclockwise around the turnaround, and drops passengers off at Eskind. It then picks up passengers there and ferries them directly to the entrance of Medical Center North. The driver then apparently disappears from the face of the earth for about 30 minutes.

"It's a way to make life a little easier," Fonda said of the 17-second ride. "Lord knows we all need that."

continued on page 97

"I'm Looking Through You" named official song of Radiology

VMC's Department of Radiology and Radiological Sciences has named the Beatles' "I'm Looking Through You" as its official theme song.

"It just seemed appropriate," said Jeremy J. Kaye, M.D., chair of the department. "I've heard people say that it's a break-up song that Paul McCartney wrote about a girlfriend, but to me the title just says 'radiology.'"

"I'm Looking Through You," originally released by the Beatles in 1966 on the *Rubber Soul* album, becomes the fourth theme song adopted by a medical school department,



following Ophthalmology's selection of the Who's "I Can See for Miles," Microbiology and Immunology's choice of Kitty Kallen's "Little Things Mean a Lot," and Anesthesiology's rather obvious pick of the Chordette's "Mr. Sandman."

News and Public Affairs is reportedly considering adopting another Beatles song, "A Day in the Life," as its theme, although department director Bill Hance, for obscure reasons, is holding out for Rolf Harris' "Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport."

"I am far too busy to be your profile subject"

Weymon C. "Buzz" Kell, M.D., is the kind of high-flying physician-scientist that we dearly love to write long profiles of, but unfortunately he keeps putting off our writer.

"I am far too busy to be your profile subject, and I do wish you would halt your efforts to write about me except under the specific circumstances which I dictate," he said in a late-night phone message from Northern Africa on his way to the airport for an all-night flight to make it back in time to chair a staff meeting.

"Working 24/7 is for losers," he added. "I work 25/8."

When we contacted Kell's wife, Kelly, a Ph.D./M.B.A. who is a stay-at-home mom to



the couple's two children, son Bertie and daughter Coyote, she asked us to pass a message back to her husband.

"Tell him that Coyote has been walking for several

months now and Bertie has started kindergarten.

"Buzz is working all the time! I've barely seen the man in years. I'm not even sure, in retrospect, how we've ended up with two children."

When confronted on his way to the car about his wife's charges, Kell grew red and responded

continued on page 97



Volunteers sought for cootie vaccine trial

The Vanderbilt Vaccine Research Center is recruiting volunteers ages 5 to 8 for a clinical trial of a new vaccine against an old foe: cooties. Like the common cold, cooties are ubiquitous in elementary schools throughout the U.S.

Most existing cootie vaccines are variable in effectiveness, often requiring a complex administration technique and sometimes an intricate handshake. Moreover, some of the current vaccine delivery systems utilize lead pencils, posing a risk of lead poisoning as a side effect.

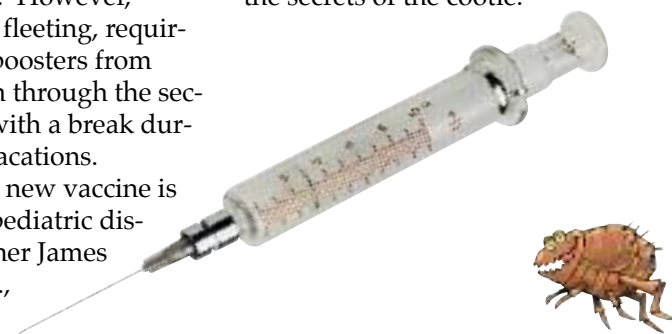
The new vaccine, dubbed "Cootie Protection" has simplified vaccine delivery, using a simple ballpoint pen.

"Administration is really simple and requires minimal training," said researcher Kathryn Edwards, M.D. "In fact, classmates can be trained to administer the vaccine to one another, as in traditional cootie shot programs."

Immunity is achieved within 20 seconds of the initials "C.P." being written on the upper arm near the immunization site. However, immunity is fleeting, requiring weekly boosters from kindergarten through the second grade, with a break during school vacations.

While the new vaccine is promising, pediatric disease researcher James Crowe, M.D.,

says we still have much to learn before WHO can accomplish its goal of total cootie eradication. "Why has the cootie genome changed so little over the last century? Why are cooties transmitted only when school is in session? Why is the opposite gender so much more contagious? The best minds in medicine have yet to unlock the secrets of the cootie."



Check please



Champ has a hard time, even with the help of Brenda Black of Development, depositing the big check from a recent charity event. "We're always happy to get any kind of check," Champ said, breaking his usual silence, "but the normal-sized ones sure are easier to deposit!"

Departmental budget woes solved by Nigerian businessman

An unexpected e-mail from a Nigerian businessman has helped VMC's Division of Surgical Pedagogy solve a knotty budget problem, said May Talltoots, the area's financial officer.

"We were asked to cut back our budget for next year, as all areas at the Medical Center have been, and we were really having a tough time making it all work out," she said.

"And then, I just couldn't believe it. I opened up my e-mail and there was a letter from this nice man in Nigeria. It turns out that he needs some help getting a substan-

tial sum of money out of his country, and if we help him out, we stand to reap a large budgetary windfall."

When the money from overseas comes through, which Talltoots expects within a matter of days, "Our budgetary problems will be over for the whole fiscal year," she says.

"I think other areas of the University should look into this. After all, what could go wrong?"

continued on page 97