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Missile areas at Nike Park to be covered up

By JIM LYNCH Staff Writer ISLE OF WIGHT — Concrete slabs will soon conceal all surface hints of the subterranean control room and missile silos at Carrollton Nike Park.

Calling the ground-level vents and hatches both ugly and dangerous, the Parks and Recreation Authority agreed Monday to recommend that the Army Corps of Engineers seal off the defunct military site off Route 669.

The decision follows years of debate on how best to seal the missile site and protect the county against possible liability suits. Explorers have repeatedly broken through the hatches and main doors into the dark rooms below.

While flattening the surface protrusions and blocking off the main entrance solves the safety and unsightliness issues, Nogueira noted, "This is a temporary solution to maximizing the use of the property."

The county could consider eventually paving over the entire missile site located between the parks tennis and basketball courts, he added. Nogueira also suggested that shuffleboard or other games could be played on the concrete slabs replacing the vents and hatches.

The five-inch-thick slabs can be removed, if desired, with a tractor, Nogueira said. "If some kid can push them open he deserves to be down there."



An entrance to the missile area is overgrown and blocked off.

Pilot drops fireballs from sky Tough job helps foresters plant trees

By JIM LYNCH Staff Writer SURRY — It took more than 50 stiches to mend and blend the left eyelid into the rugged wrinkles that fan from his eyes like helicopter rotors.

Slightly more than two months since his helicopter crashed, James E. Stevens returned to work, dropping fire on tree tops from a windy late-September sky.

Working with state foresters to burn 328 acres of cut-over timberland near the town of Henric, Stevens squatted in the soil Friday and sketched his battle plans with a stick.

"See, I'll fly low over here and drop next to the power lines here and then make a couple more drops, about 100 feet towards the middle. These flames will run towards the middle where there's more heat, see?"



He paused, then gave a daredevil aviator's wink that made Chuck Yeager seem like a simp.

Stevens has become part of Eastern Virginia's forest management. In the past five years, he has covered the market on prescribed burnings of cut-over timberland, which prepares the tracts for future planting of another crop of trees.

A 50-gallon barrel of gasoline mixed with powdered aluminum, a blend similar to napalm, is bound to a torch and fastened with cables to Stevens' 245-horsepower, two-man Hillers helicopter. The carriage swings beneath him as he climbs above the treetops with the awkward flight of a greasy eagle clanking too big a fish in its claws.

Also the biggest trick, Stevens starts his trail, pressing a lever that squirts the gel past the torch. Flat-tined balls descend like house-flaming snowflakes.

\$2.3 million granted for HU complex

By PHIL MURRAY Staff Writer HAMPTON — The federal government has approved a \$2.3 million grant to help finance a shopping center and apartment complex, planned by Hampton University near its campus.

The federal funding, known as an Urban Development Action Grant, was the last major hurdle faced by the university in the development of 20 acres of land at the intersection of Sellers, Landing Road and Tyler Street.

The City Council has approved a rezoning for the property and agreed to loan the university's for-profit development company about \$300,000 for the project. Credit Bank is committed to loan up to \$8.8 million pending approval from the university's board, said William Harvey, president of Hampton University.

The city, on behalf of the university, had applied for a \$3.5 million federal grant, but Harvey said the smaller amount would not alter the scope of the project. The project, dubbed Pearce's Cove, includes a retail shopping center, offices, restaurants and 250 luxury apartments to be built on university-owned property that now contains the university's ROTC barn. Harvey said he hopes to break ground next spring.

Portsmouth hospital to dedicate radiation center

By SUSAN NOBMAN Staff Writer PORTSMOUTH — Maryview Hospital will dedicate on Sunday a \$2.5-million radiation oncology treatment center, bringing state-of-the-art technology a little closer to home.

"We think this service will make it a lot more convenient for people," said John Stone, the hospital's senior vice president. "We've had people in Western Tidewater who have gone to Duke (University) or to Richmond to get this."

The new center is a "radical upgrading" of the level of radiation treatment available at Maryview, said Dr. Alan M. El-Mahdi, chairman of the department of radiation oncology and head of the Medical College of Hampton Roads.

The center will house a "linear accelerator," which can treat a broad spectrum of tumors that formerly could be treated only by "three huge machines," El-Mahdi said.

The accelerator can treat more types of tumors, because it can treat deep-seated cancers and then be modified to treat very shallow cancers, like those on the breast or the head and neck, Stone said.

"It hits the tumor with a far stronger dose of radiation in a far narrower beam," he said.

In addition, the Davis Center has a model room, where metal molds are cast to fit the exact dimensions of each patient so that healthy tissue is protected from radiation exposure, a physicist with a physicist who will make sure the equipment functions properly, and doctors, of faces and examination rooms.

Other area hospitals with up-to-date radiation oncology treatment include Riverside in Newport News, Sentara Norfolk General and DePaul in Norfolk, Virginia Beach General and Portsmouth Naval. El-Mahdi said.

Recent improvements in radiation therapy have paid off in better survival rates for certain types of cancer, said El-Mahdi, an American Cancer Society professor of clinical oncology. In the United States, one in four people will get cancer, and more than 60 percent of all cancer patients need radiation therapy.

Radiation has been particularly successful in the early stages of Hodgkin's disease and cancer of the vocal chord, the cervical breast, he said.

Slayings shattered wildlife preserve's peaceful nature

By STEVEN WINGFIELD Staff Writer ISLE OF WIGHT — Before three gunshots shattered the solitude of an early Sunday morning rain nine days ago, few people had heard of Ragged Island.



The 1,536-acre game preserve at the end of the James River Bridge was simply an unnamed marsh on Route 17 at 55 mph. The Sept. 20 murders of David Knobling, 20, of Hampton, and Robin Edwards, 14, of Newport News, have ended that anonymity.

By day, Ragged Island is a "wildlife area" designed to give urban residents easy access to wilderness. People come here to crab, fish and watch birds. By night, however, it takes on a different complexion.

Tree-agers, particularly those who live on the Peninsula, have known about the parking lot on Ragged Island Wildlife Management Area for years and have made it into a popular "lovers lane."

Frontlitters working downtown Newport News reportedly have also used the parking lot to practice their trade, police believe.

Three days after the slayings, police officers had joked about the people they'd caught there in compromising positions. Now Sheriff F. Dixon said he'll have his men step up their patrols of the area.

Investigators probing the murder case believe Knobling and Edwards who had just met the night they were killed, made arrangements for an after-midnight rendezvous and a trip across the bridge to the secluded parking area. Karl Knobling, the man's father, said David's regular girlfriend had told him they'd been there before.

Dixon theorizes the pair were surprised in Knobling's pickup truck, forced to hurriedly dress and then marched in the rain for about a mile through woods and an elevated walkway over marsh to the river. He believes they were pulled into the river several hundred feet.

The bodies washed up Wednesday about a half mile away.

Bridge parties part of pressure, ex-wife says

By VIRGINIA BREGINS Staff Writer NEWPORT NEWS — The former wife of an Air Force colonel says she plans to tell a special task force about the pressures on a military spouse, including how her ex-husband received what they considered an unofficial retirement because she refused to attend bridge parties given by his commanding officer's wife.

The task force arrived at Langley Air Force Base Monday for a two-day fact-finding conference. The panel discussions are closed to the public to allow spouses to air their complaints in anonymity.

"I was forced to support his military career and let me go down the drain," said Mayfield. "Now I have nothing to fall back on this late in life."

Mayfield said she had a pending career in radio, but let it go because of the pressures on her to support her husband's career. "Oh, yes, there were some obligations we had to respond to. Though subtle and sometimes not so subtle, the pressure was there," she said.

The seven-member panel headed by Maj. Gen. Anthony J. Bursback is trying to determine whether Air Force spouses are unduly pressured to support their mates' career.

The task force's fact-finding tour, which includes seven bases, was prompted by complaints made by spouses of Air Force officers.

"The tumor itself gets a healthier dose of radiation," because the accelerator is more precise, it scatters fewer rays to other parts of the body, and it causes fewer side effects, such as hair loss.

Auxiliary equipment in the treatment center will include a simulator, which shows doctors the exact location of tumors, and a treatment planning computer, which takes all of the information about a patient's body and tells the doctors at what angle to aim the accelerator.

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