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Katherine Fritsch bumps fists with an RBC Center worker as she arrives to sing before Saturday's playoff game.
STAFF PHOTO BY CHRIS SEWARD

SINGER

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Growing into it

She wears the same pink cowboy boots, which were a gift from her father, and a red Canes jersey, a hand-me-down from Evan, for nearly every performance. When she first started singing the anthem, the jersey reached nearly to her knees.

"It was like a dress," Suzanne said. She's grown into it since then, and before long will probably need a new one.

Katherine has been singing in public for years. In her first appearance, at age 4, she sang

"Ain't No Mountain High Enough," at a cousin's wedding. In the years since, she has become one of Raleigh's best-known singers, and she's still in the fourth grade at St. Timothy's Episcopal school in Raleigh.

Practically since the time she could talk, Katherine has been singing, Tom said. When asked if the Canes pay her to sing, Tom smiled and would say only that the team has been very good to his family.

Katherine's lively version of the anthem provides a good transition into the opening minutes of the game, said Jon Chase, promotions director for the Hurricanes.

"The way she finishes so strong, the crowd cheers with

her at the end," he said, and that energy carries over to the puck drop.

Fans appreciate her enthusiasm for the anthem.

"You can see her get tickled sometimes when the fans respond," said season-ticket holder Sandra Hamm of Raleigh. "We just love her. She's just adorable."

Gotta be the socks

It's a fun job, and Katherine enjoys singing the song. Even when she's having a bad day, "the anthem always makes me cheer up."

She generally arrives at the arena an hour before game time and watches warmups from just

behind the glass. When the scoreboard reads 20 minutes to game time, she finds an empty room in which to practice. On Saturday night, she slipped into the empty locker room of Stormy the mascot. There, in front of a mirror with her dad watching, she sang the anthem twice, just as she always does.

And then, even though she was battling a stomachache, she walked onto the ice on cue and nailed the anthem before a packed house. She smiled, gave a quick wave to the crowd, and scooted off the ice.

Tonight, she'll be back at it again, lucky socks and all.

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AIRPORT

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\$24,000 to settle claims filed by a few dozen car owners since December 2003 and as recently as May 7.

"It doesn't happen very often, and it's not readily predictable," Steven M. Pittman, deputy airport director, said in an interview. "Three or four days a year we have this problem, at most. And it doesn't last very long."

The stuff seems to ooze from the concrete ceilings in the main, center section of the garage. It has not been reported in older, outer portions of RDU's garage, or at big parking decks elsewhere in the Triangle, Pittman says.

RDU officials have puzzled for years about what the goop is, where it comes from and whether fixing it would be worth the cost. An engineering consultant examined scrapings in 2006 without learning much.

"I do think it has subsided somewhat over time as the concrete ages," Dave Powell, who oversees airport construction projects, said last November in an e-mail to Pittman. "I think the best solution is to pay to have the few cars cleaned."

Tell-tale stalactite

William Engel of Kenly received \$610.67 in October 2006 after he spotted a tiny white stalactite on the garage ceiling, about four inches long, that had dribbled goop on the door of his white Lexus.

"It took the clear-coat finish right off — the paint wasn't shiny there any more," said Engel, 49.

"I was lucky I figured out what it was, because I could see the white blemish on the car and I looked up. It has probably happened to a lot of people who get the car home and don't realize what happened."

A few days after Engel's car was damaged, Otis Huff Jr. of Fayetteville noticed water condensation on the ceiling when he returned

"It took the clear-coat finish right off — the paint wasn't shiny there anymore."

WILLIAM ENGEL

WHO WAS PAID MORE THAN \$600 BY RDU AIRPORT TO FIX DAMAGE TO HIS LEXUS

from a trip to find his dark blue Toyota Avalon streaked and splattered. The repairs cost RDU \$3,386.92.

Engel doesn't shelter his car inside the RDU garage these days. He parks on the rooftop.

Huff avoids the garage altogether. When he flies out of RDU, he leaves the Avalon in a remote park-and-ride lot.

"I'd rather let the weather beat on it than have that stuff on it again," said Huff, 54. "Mother Nature isn't as severe."

Huff and Engel shouldn't be so worried, Pittman said.

"I don't think anyone should have reservations about using the garage," he said. "This is an anomaly, really. It's something we had thought for a time we were past, for a couple of years, and then it came back last fall."

Splat magnet

One frequent flyer, Todd Vezina of Cary, has filed four claims since 2005 for the cost of scrubbing spots off his graphite gray BMW.

"This is [the] second time in 30 days ... that this has occurred," Vezina wrote on a claim form he submitted in February with a \$55 receipt from ABC Detailing. "It is a hassle to deal with!"

Pittman is waiting for a new consultant report he hopes will explain what is splattering cars in RDU's garage and why.

"And what, if anything, is available for a remedy," he said.

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LONG LEAF

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Easley aide, blamed the increase on a relatively recent policy of considering longtime state employees upon their retirement and posting information about the award on the Internet.

"When we put the application form on the Web, it made it much more accessible," he said.

The Order of the Long Leaf Pine is strictly symbolic. As "ambassadors extraordinary" of the state of North Carolina, its recipients are entitled only to a certificate and the right to give the state toast "in select company anywhere in the free world."

Many states have similar honors.

The governor of Kentucky inducts members of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, while land-locked Nebraska has honorary admirals in the state's fictitious Navy. South Carolina's governor chooses members of the Order of the Palmetto.

Some say the award was never as prestigious as some of its recipients presumed.

Democratic consultant Gary Pearce, who served as press secretary for Hunt in his first two terms in the late '70s and early '80s, recently wrote on his blog that there were "no criteria" and "no review process" for applicants to the order during his tenure.

"We pretty much gave the things to anybody who asked, as long as there was no indictment pending," he said.

Although early records are lost to history, Hagler says the award began as a goodwill gesture.

At the time, Laotian and Vietnamese military officers were undergoing specialized training at Fort Bragg. When their American counterparts were scheduled to learn about sensitive topics, Hagler took the foreign officers to the state capital for a field trip.

There, they were given a tour of the new legislative building and treated to a buffet lunch. Sanford then personally presented them with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, named for the native tree with a sticky pitch that may be the source of the term "Tar Heels."

On one trip, Hagler was also given an award, which he says he later learned was the first given to an American.

"The award then was nothing like what it later became," he said.

No record of recipients

In fact, governors thought so little of the awards that they didn't begin keeping track of who they'd given it to until 1983.

A few years after receiving the award in 1991, Raleigh real estate executive Phillip Fisher became

WHO'S ON THE LIST?

The biggest group of people in the Order of the Long Leaf Pine is retired state workers and longtime civic volunteers.

But over the years, a number of celebrities have been added to the list. Here are a few, by category:

ATHLETES

Major League baseball players Jim "Catfish" Hunter, Enos Slaughter (twice), Gaylord Perry, Rod Carew, Ted Williams and minor league star Lawrence "Crash" Davis; NASCAR drivers Dale Earnhardt, Richard Petty, Junior Johnson, Rick Hendrick and Benny Parsons; golfers Gary Player, Curtis Strange and Lanny Wadkins; basketball player Michael Jordan, college basketball coaches Dean Smith and Clarence "Big House" Gaines (three times) and the 1982 NCAA championship Carolina men's basketball team; NFL quarterback Roman Gabriel and lineman and former Wake County sheriff John Baker Jr. (three times); boxer James "Bonecrusher" Smith (twice); soccer player Mia Hamm; and Olympic skier Jean-Claude Killy.

POLITICIANS

Former President Gerald Ford, former Supreme Court Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, former U.S. Sens. James T. Broyhill and John Glenn, former U.S. Rep. Shirley Chisholm, former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young, former Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Hugh Shelton, former Govs. Bob Scott and Jim Holshouser, former UNC president Bill Friday, UNC-Charlotte founder Bonnie Ethel Cone, former U.S. Attorney Janice McKenzie Cole, N.C. Supreme Court Justice Patricia Timmons-Goodson (twice) and former Chief Justices Burley Mitchell and I. Beverly Lake Jr., former state Speaker Dan Blue, former District Court Judge Elreta Alexander-Ralston (twice), former Charlotte Mayor Harvey Gantt and former Raleigh Mayor Tom Fetzner.

MUSICIANS

Country singers Charlie Daniels, Randy Travis, George Jones, Tammy Wynette, Kenny Rogers and Ronnie Milsap; bluegrass players Earl Scruggs and Doc Watson; gospel singer and preacher Shirley Caesar-Williams (three times); songwriter Arthur Smith, calypso singer Harry Belafonte, pop music singer Engelbert Humperdinck, and classical violinist Itzhak Perlman.

ACTORS AND ACTRESSES

Robert Redford, Sidney Poitier, Joan Crawford, Ruby Dee, Danny Glover, Leslie Nielsen and George Jessel.

WRITERS

Poet Maya Angelou, historian John Hope Franklin, Charlotte Observer columnist Jack Betts, former News & Observer publisher Frank Daniels Jr., former N&O columnist Dennis Rogers, former New York Times reporter Claude Sitton.

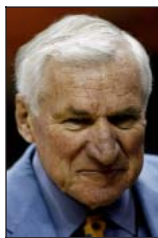
ARTISTS

Painter Bob Timberlake, clothing designer Alexander Julian, Broadway costumer designer William Ivey Long.

OTHERS

Evangelist Billy Graham, conservationist Hugh Morton, anti-profanity in music activist Tipper Gore, civil rights activists Coretta Scott King, Jesse Jackson and Myrlie Evers-Williams; the earls of Guilford and Erroll; talk show hosts Phil Donahue and Oprah Winfrey, former Campbell University president Norman A. Wiggins (four times), stuntman Hal Needham, Miss America Bess Myerson, editorial cartoonist Doug Marlette.

SOURCE: N.C. OFFICE OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY



Smith



Powell



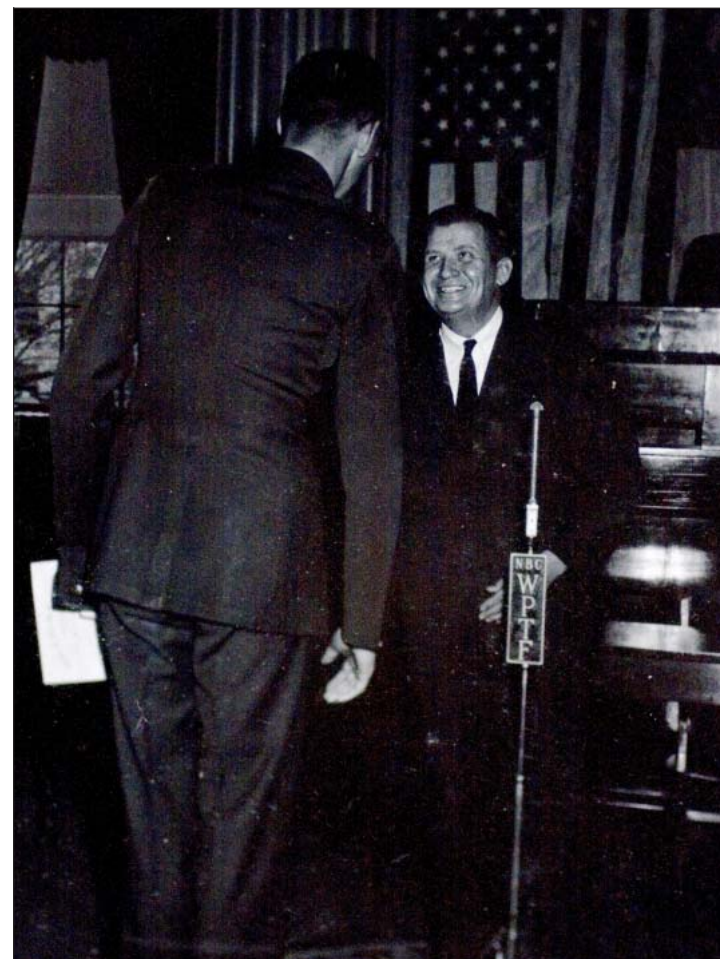
Perlman



Angelou



Graham



Gov. Terry Sanford, right, gives John Hagler the Order of the Long Leaf Pine in 1964. Hagler said the award has become "like a Cracker Jack prize."

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN HAGLER

the backs of envelopes or the margins of another state document. Eventually, he compiled a list, which he still updates annually.

Since there were no official criteria for the award, it appears to have changed a little with each governor, he said.

In the early years, it was mostly given to visiting dignitaries, something akin to making them honorary North Carolinians. Over time, it shifted to honoring native Tar Heels for their achievements as artists, athletes, politicians or volunteers.

In recent years, the award has also been given to retiring state workers with more than 30 years of experience — a major reason for the spike in recipients.

In the first four months of her term, Perdue gave out 108 awards, a rate of about six a week. Spokesman David Kochman said she plans to continue the policy of recognizing state workers with "exceptional service" on a case-by-case basis.

Erica Baldwin, a spokeswoman for the State Employees Association of North Carolina, said the award has to be requested by the head of an agency and is not given to just any worker. She noted that a number of qualified former employees have not received it.

"We think the governor should spend more time on the issues

than handing out awards," she said.

A Burger King and a dog

The Order of the Long Leaf Pine has drawn some controversy recently.

The day before he left office, Easley quietly inducted Robert Lee Guy, the former head of the state's troubled probation department. A photo of Guy with the certificate ran in a Clayton newspaper, but Perdue's office could find no official record of the award.

Easley also gave the award to the parents of his wife shortly before Christmas 2004.

Through the years, there have been some unusual recipients. They include a Burger King restaurant, a pet shop, the Lake-wood Shopping Center, two classes of fourth-graders, a dog show, the 1982 Carolina men's basketball team, staffers of the Agricultural Market News, the Bahama community and the Puppy Creek Fire Department.

In one case, the award was even given to a dog, although no official records exist.

Former Supreme Court Chief Justice Burley Mitchell, who received the award in 1992, said his English bulldog, Bruno, was inducted into the order in the late 1970s by Hunt's administration.

WHO'S NOT ON THE LIST?

Despite the thousands of names in the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, it appears to have a few omissions.

Here are some notable North Carolinians who appear to have never been inducted:

- Former U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms
- Former Gov. Jim Hunt
- Duke basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski
- Actor Andy Griffith
- Singer/songwriter James Taylor
- Poet Reynolds Price
- Former Harlem Globetrotter Meadowlark Lemon
- Etta Baker, Sonny Terry, George Higgs or any other Piedmont blues musicians
- New Bern-created Pepsi-Cola or Salisbury-created Cheerwine (Coca-Cola is on the list, however)

NOMINATE SOMEONE

Think someone should be in the Order of the Long Leaf Pine?

You can nominate them using a form available online from Gov. Beverly Perdue's Office of Citizen and Community Services here:

<http://www.governor.state.nc.us/certificates.aspx>

THE STATE TOAST

Members of the Order of the Long Leaf Pine have the privilege of giving the North Carolina Toast "in select company anywhere in the free world."

The state toast was adopted by the legislature in 1957 from a poem by Leonora Martin and Mary Burke Kerr. Although the official toast has three more verses, the version printed on certificates features only the first:

*Here's to the land of the long leaf pine,
The summer land where the sun doth shine,
Where the weak grow strong and the strong grow great,
Here's to "Down Home," the Old North State!*

SOURCE: N.C. GENERAL STATUTE 149-2

Mitchell, who served as secretary of crime control under Hunt at the time, said the award was a humorous way of recognizing Bruno's job as the highly publicized mascot for a neighborhood watch program. "It was sort of a spoof," Mitchell said.

Pearce, who also worked for Hunt, did not recall the award. "I am certain that not just any mutt off the street would have received this prestigious honor," he wrote on this blog. "It would have to be a good dog. Housebroken, certainly. And likely one who had done mankind a good deed."

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