

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2010

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Life, etc.

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REALITY RECAP

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& 'Dancing With the Stars'
at blogs.newsobserver.com/tv.



CLASSIFIED

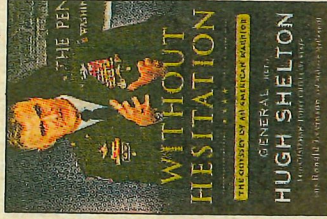
Need a cat, a car or a new career? Stroll through our listings. Inside

Warrior holds no hatred

By JAY PRICE
STAFF WRITER

Tarboro-born Hugh Shelton was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1997 to 2001. He is now executive director of the Gen. Hugh Shelton Leadership Center at N.C. State University. We talked with him by phone about his book, "Without Hesitation: The Odyssey of an American Warrior."

Q: How is your health?



A: Pretty good. For a guy who had spinal cord surgery and then subsequently had four back operations. I'm working too hard, but basically quality life is pretty good. The last jumps were using the free-fall chute so those were pretty tough. It was the first 400 or so that took a toll on my back.

Q: Throughout the book, it doesn't seem like you bear any personal anger toward any of the people you're critical of.



Vladimir Nabokov's 'Pale Fire' and some reading glasses are testament that books are actually involved, too.

BOOKS THAT INSPIRE



Chip Williams, left, watches host Don Reynolds prepare egg noodles for the meal at a recent meeting of the Well Formed Heads.

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READING BETWEEN THE LINES

should have been. Is it all about effectiveness for you?

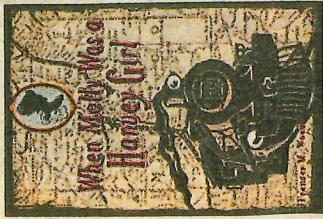
A: Absolutely. If there was one thing I wanted to come out of this book, it's that I hold no personal vindictiveness toward anyone I worked with or worked for during this period. ... I like Secretary Rumsfeld; he's a very personable guy. It's just that the environment he established did not appear, in my opinion, to be in the best interests of our armed forces and certainly not for the great people who were working day in and day out to please him. He seemed very distrustful of them. It wasn't out of any personal animosity toward him; it simply was that the work environment in the Pentagon changed drastically between him and [Rumsfeld's predecessor].

SEE SHELTON, PAGE 4D

WANT TO GO?

Gen. Hugh Shelton will read from his book at 7 p.m. Friday at The Regulator Bookshop in Durham and at 3 p.m. Sunday at Quail Ridge Books & Music in Raleigh. For details: www.regulatorbookshop.com and quailridgebooks.com.

STEPPING OUT



Frances M. Wood
7 p.m. today

REGULATOR BOOKSHOP, 720 NINTH ST., DURHAM. 286-2700.

Wood signs her new young adult novel, "When Molly Was a Harvey Girl." Thirteen-year-old Molly and her older sister wind up as waitresses at a Harvey Eating House along the route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad.

Find more things to do at triangle.com.

■ **"Julie and Julia"**
by Julie Powell, combined with **"My Life in France"**
by Julia Child

Child discovers French food, and Powell discovers Child

■ **"Eat Pray Love"**
by Elizabeth Gilbert

The menu could be Italian, Indian, Indonesian - or all three.

■ **"Trail of Crumbs"**
by Kim Sune

Her memoir about being a South Korean orphan adopted by a New Orleans family who eventually lands in France includes mouthwatering descriptions of meals in Provence.

■ **"The School of Essential Ingredients"**
by Erica Bauermeister

The fictional tale is centered on the students who find meaning and solace during cooking classes with a restaurateur.

■ **"The Help"**
by Kathryn Stockett

The controversial novel about relationships between black domestics and their white employers in Mississippi is a natural to discuss with Southern food.

■ **"Food of Love,"** or **"The Wedding Officer"**
by Anthony Capella

The first is a rhapsody of food in Rome, the second is set in Naples. Either one should be served up with Italian food.

■ **"Francesca's Kitchen"**
by Peter Pezzilli

The story about an Italian-American family centers on the kitchen.

■ **"A Thousand Days in Venice"**
by Marlene de Blasi

The memoir of an American who marries and moves to Venice ends up as an exploration of the food of Tuscany and Umbria.

RECIPES INSIDE

- Roasted Okra
- "Try the Pork" Kebabs
- Red Russian-Style Slaw

Less Alton Brown, but more good eats

By ANDREA WEIGL
STAFF WRITER

Food Network star Alton Brown, who made food science interesting with his show, "Good Eats," will be in Raleigh on Thursday for a book signing.

We got a chance to chat with Brown about his new book - "Good Eats 2: The Middle Years" - his weight loss and his most successful and least successful kitchen hacks.



Brown

(A kitchen hack results from repurposing a device used for one task for another, such as using a heating pad to help dough rise or a blow dryer to supercharge your charcoal grill.

Q: How much weight have you lost?
A: Last year I lost 50 pounds,

which left me looking really scrawny and kind of like I had a turkey neck. But I'm happy to say that through a rigorous regimen of boxing and weight-lifting, I've put 10 pounds back on - all muscle. ... I look a lot better than I did a year ago when everyone thought I was having chemo. ... I'm at 170 right now, which is down from 215.

SEE BROWN, PAGE 2D

By KATHLEEN PURVIS
STAFF WRITER

Many years ago, social activist and writer Harry Golden made a very simple observation:

No eating. No meeting.

In other words, if you want people to come together, think deeply and share thoughts, you'd better make sure there's food.

Today's book clubs could second the notion. Yes, the book is important. The mix of personalities is key. But with book club names like "Mostly We Just Eat" and "First, The Food," does anyone doubt what really pulls book clubs together?

"We're not so much a book club as a drinking club with a reading problem," jokes Stephen Celestini, a member of an all-male book club, The Well-Formed Heads (from a line in Walker Percy's "The Moviegoer"). The group has been meeting and eating in Raleigh since 1997.

"We all expect to be fed, and we all expect better-than-average beverages," Celestini declares. "A case of Budweiser is not acceptable."

Molly Lundquist, founder of the national book-club site litlovers.com, was trying to estimate how many book clubs there are - pick a number, from 5,000 clubs to 10 million members - when she mentioned library-based book clubs. And then she cracked up.

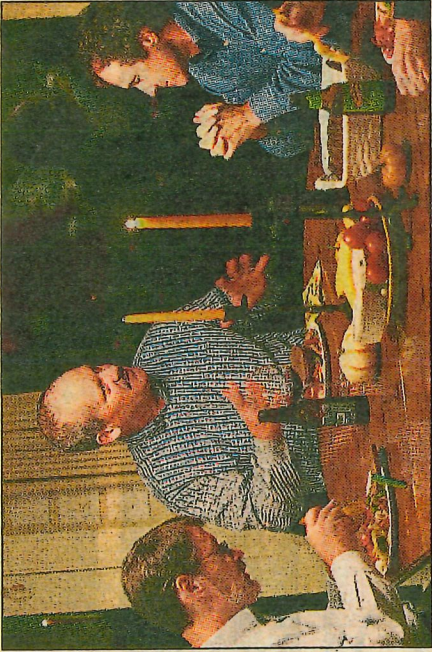
"Why would anyone want to belong to a library club? There's no food and no wine!"

Finding a tasty theme

Yes, food is as integral to the book club scene as Oprah picks and Amazon orders. There are books about food, there is food in books that aren't about food, there are books set in countries that have interesting food.

Lundquist, who lives in Pittsburgh, includes a section of international menus on her website. The most popular, by far: Afghan food, for clubs reading "Three Cups of Tea," "The Kite Runner" or "A Thousand Splendid Suns."

SEE READING, PAGE 4D



From left, Bill Kratt, Chip Williams and Chris Lynch enjoy the meal during a meeting of their book club.

WANT TO MEET ALTON?

Alton Brown, host of "Good Eats" on the Food Network, will be signing copies of his new book at 7:30 p.m. Thursday at Quail Ridge Books & Music, 3522 Wade Ave., Raleigh. To have your book signed, you have to buy any of Brown's books at the store.

For more information, call 828-1588. If you'd like to enter for a chance to win Brown's new book, go to blogs.newsobserver.com/Mouthful.



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READING

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There's even "The Book Club Cookbook," by Judy Gelman and Vicki Levy Krupp, which grew out of a website by the same name.

People find many ways to tie food themes to book club meetings. Charlotte's Mother-Daughter Book Club has been meeting for three years, with books appropriate for 9- to 11-year-old girls. Besides reading the book together and discussing it, the girls and their mothers do an activity tied to the book.

Kim Ewert of Charlotte hosted the club Aug. 29, the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. The girls read "Lost Among The Tears," Charlotte teen Kathryn Byron's story about storm refugees. Afterward, they set up a lemonade and beignet stand outside and raised \$200 for Katrina recovery.

"It was a lovely afternoon."

'Chit-chatting over dinner'

Rhonda Cramer of Stallings just joined her book club a year ago. But she was quick to volunteer to host this month's meeting when she heard the book was going to be "In Defense of Food," by Michael Pollan. Cramer describes herself as a local-food fan who loves to cook Southern.

She started planning a couple of weeks in advance: deviled eggs from local farm eggs, toasted pecans from a grower in Norwood, the special roasted okra she learned from a farmer at the Matthews Community Farmers Market.

"I hated doing book reports [as a kid] because I loved to read but I hated talking about it." But once she joined a book club, she found it was different.

"I found that I really loved

talking about it. When we're all sitting there, laughing and joking and drinking wine, we get off on other tangents. Just getting together, it reminds me of one of the things Michael Pollan mentions, that it's not just the food you eat, but the way you eat it. To cook it yourself, at home, and have family and friends.

"I've turned out to really love it. And I read books I never would have read at all."

Most people who belong to food-centric book clubs agree the food isn't just something to eat. It eases the pressure of voicing your opinion.

"It makes it easier," Cramer says. "Like you're just chit-chatting over dinner. You're not on the spot so much."

Setting the bar high

Then again, maybe it replaces intellectual pressure with another kind of pressure.

Artist and writer Stacy Lynn Waddell of Chapel Hill is a member of Mostly We Just Eat. She admits that there are such great cooks in her group, members are careful about when they sign up to host.

"The bar has been set so high that, when it's your turn, you think long and hard about the food. You don't want to be the person that had a bad spread. The members are like, 'Oh, we like the fellowship,' and they do. But certain people, you don't want to follow."

Celestini says The Well-Formed Heads started out of envy: "We were jealous because our wives were having book-club meetings. Most of us that decided to jump in said, 'It sounds like a good reason to get together and pretend to read a book and drink.' Lo and behold, we ended up enjoying doing the reading."

The members, who were mostly lawyers, also discovered



Pork kebabs cook on the grill before a meeting of the Well Formed Heads, a men's book club in Raleigh.

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'TRY THE PORK' KEBABS

From Don Reynolds of Raleigh. For Vladimir Nabokov's "Pale Fire," Reynolds adapted Russian kebabs from Steven Rachlen's "Barbecue Bible." Russian for Nabokov, of course, and pork for a moment in the book when the vegan narrator is urged to "try the pork."

6 large white onions, divided
18 cloves garlic, pressed or minced
6 bay leaves
4 1/2 teaspoons each salt and black pepper
1 1/2 cups dry red wine

3/4 cup red wine vinegar
9 tablespoons olive oil
5 pounds pork tenderloin, cut in bite-size cubes
3 green bell peppers, cored, seeded and cut in chunks
Hot, cooked egg noodles

GRATE 3 onions and combine with garlic, bay leaves, salt, pepper, wine, vinegar and olive oil in a large bowl or resealable freezer bag. Add the pork cubes and refrigerate 4 to 8 hours.

CUT the remaining 3 onions into chunks. Thread the pork, onions and green bell peppers on skewers, alternating pieces. Grill until browned in spots. Serve over cooked egg noodles with red Russian-style slaw.

Yield:

10 to 12 servings.

that several of them really liked to cook. Pretty soon, elaborate meals were as much a part of the book club as the books.

Longtime member Don Reynolds served barbecued goat when they read Cormac McCarthy's "Blood Meridian" (characters in the book wander in the desert and have to eat whatever

they can find). For this month's book, Vladimir Nabokov's "Pale Fire," he's grilling Russian-style pork kebabs, with the propane grill symbolizing the title.

Club members have come to love the food so much that they have an annual beach retreat where food plays a bigger role.

"We don't go play golf, we

RED RUSSIAN-STYLE SLAW

From Don Reynolds of Raleigh, adapted from "Grilling for Life," by Bobby Flay.

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 thinly sliced red onions
2 heads cabbage, thinly sliced
2 beets, diced or grated
1/2 cup coarsely chopped parsley

4 tablespoons grated horseradish
1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
1/2 cup olive oil
1/2 teaspoon each salt and pepper

HEAT the olive oil in a skillet and briefly sauté the onions and cabbage. Mix with the remaining ingredients and toss to mix well.

Yield:

10 to 12 servings.

ROASTED OKRA

From Rhonda Cramer of Stallings, who got the recipe from Big Oak Natural Farms at the Matthews Community Farmers Market. This is fantastic even for okra haters: There's no slime, and the slices get as crispy as potato chips.

1/2 to 1 pound okra pods, as fresh as possible
1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon salt, preferably coarse sea salt

SLICE each pod lengthwise, from stem to tip end. Toss with the olive oil and salt. Spread in a single layer in a wide, shallow pan, such as a roasting pan.

PLACE in a 375-degree oven and roast about 20 minutes, until the okra slices are very dark and getting crispy. Remove from pan with a wide, flat spatula and spread on a serving plate. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Yield:

3 to 6 servings.

don't go to strip clubs. We camp at the house, and we make food and drink and eat for four solid days," Celestini says.

The beach meeting also led them in a new direction. They learned they were too distracted to focus on a book that weekend. So now, each member writes something that is shared with the group. Writing ranges from poetry to journal entries. One member is doing a chapter a year for a detective novel.

"Some of the stuff that has

come out of that has been really, really good."

The club has weathered divorces, and a few members have gone and been replaced by others. Their wives' book clubs have come and gone.

But food and the love of the written word have held The Heads together, Celestini says.

"We're kind of our own little therapy support group."

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LIMITED TIME OFFER

Is your home ready for the holidays?

SHELTON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

cessor as secretary of defense] Secretary William Cohen, and I thought Secretary Cohen was considerably more effective.

Q: What are the most common bars to effectiveness that

ethics and an appreciation of the people who worked for him or her. Whenever I see people who aren't as effective as I think they should be, if the problem isn't a lack of integrity, normally it's ego.

Q: For years, polls have said that many Americans believe that Republicans are stronger and Democrats weaker on na-

accurate in those two cases?

A: No, I did not. ... When I went to, in the first case, the Democratic president, or later a Republican one, and laid out for them what we needed to do militarily – whether it was increase funding, or was something to do with a military operation – I found them both to be equally supportive,