Written by Steve Frank
Wednesday, 02 January 2013 08:54

A former Lees-McRae student has been charged in Pennsylvania with a bizarre assault on three elderly women, police saying the assault might have been based on religious beliefs. Dereck Holt, 22, was an avid cyclist, enjoyed the outdoors and shared a deep love with his family, according to his sister, quoted in Lancaster Online, of Lancaster. Hannah Holt said he was always willing to help those in need and "wanted good for everyone." She said Dereck was "happy and excited" as he prepared to move from Arizona, where they lived with their mother, back to the Lancaster area in December to spend time with his father. Three days later, Dereck Holt allegedly tortured three elderly Mennonite sisters in their Clay Township home. The publication said the women, aged 84 to 90, were bound, beaten and shocked with a stun gun-like device during the assault, which lasted about two hours. A relative discovered the bound women several hours later, one suffering a broken shoulder and another, a heart attack. Their conditions after the attack were not given. The web site said that Holt allegedly indicated that he was a former member of the Mennonite community and had anger towards its members since leaving the faith. He is said to have damaged the victims' Bibles and punched one of the women in the face when she began singing hymns. Dereck Holt was charged with numerous counts related to the incident and was set a $1 million bail.