

# Opinions

The Banner

## Editorial

### Orwell's "1997"

For those of you old enough, remember back when 1984 rolled around and everybody waited to see whether George Orwell's predictions in his novel "1984" made him into a prophet or some kook? Well, at the time, most looked around at their environment and chose the latter, noting that their private lives were perfectly private, their dignity respected, and their workplace an observant, but not prying, place to make a living.

This is an age where nothing is private, where bathroom conversations in the workplace might be recorded, and where getting and maintaining employment requires you to urinate in a little plastic cup to see what you've been doing the night before. Perhaps Orwell's novel should have been titled "1997."

Isn't it bad enough that every erect-standing human being has a video camera on your every movement, waiting for one of two scenarios. Either you'll show up on tabloid television or America's Funniest Home Videos.

The drug-testing in the workplace, though, has gone a little too far. Now, testing for some occupations is understandable. Pilots, engineers, or those people who could endanger the lives of others should be tested. But drug testing someone who works at Blockbuster is about as logical as having Donnie and Marie Osmond perform at the Apollo Theater.

It seems like America ran pretty well before the age of constant supervision. The master plan to tweak the American "machine" may backfire when people get tired of being treated like children. Most people are much more responsible than they're given credit.

There is some modicum of dignity, privacy, and respect that needs to be left to humans. But, if not, then everyone needs to be drug tested, including the President, Bill Gates, your professor, and everybody's grandmother. When those who make the rules are forced to live by them, they will truly be able to see how ridiculous many of them really are.

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The Banner is the student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville. We publish each Thursday except during summer sessions, final exam weeks and holiday breaks. Our offices are located in Carmichael Hall, Room 208-A.

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The Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication. All submissions are subject to editing for clarity, content and length and are considered on the basis of interest, space, taste, and timeliness.

Letters should be typed, double-spaced, and should not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication should also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA. The deadline for letters is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you can send it to The Banner, 208A Carmichael Hall, One University Heights, Asheville NC 28804.

The deadline for display ads and the FYI calendar is on Monday at noon. The deadline for classified ads is at noon on Tuesday.

## There's red tape everywhere



**Pam Williams**  
columnist

I'd like to share with you some stories about bureaucratic bulls—t. The first is about an injury I received last Monday, and the second story is a tangent of the first, though the stories themselves are completely unrelated.

On February 3, 1997 at approximately 9:30 p.m., I was in Lipinsky Auditorium finishing up my job as sound board operator when I attempted to leap onto the stage. I didn't quite make it. Instead of landing on the stage as I had done earlier, I landed my knee directly into the corner of the stage.

The results were twisted or strained tendons, a bruised kneecap, and a lot of swelling. The people present immediately started first aid. My knee was covered in ice and I was instructed to alternate ice and heat every 15 minutes for approximately one hour. I did so once I got home.

The next day, I attempted to get permission to park in handicapped parking, since I could barely hobble 10 feet and could not begin to climb a single stair,

let alone more than one. They said I needed a doctor's note. So, I went to our school's health facility. And what did I encounter there? I was asked if I had contacted the safety commission. I had not. Then I was told I had to do so in order to see the doctor. I did.

I called the safety commission office and spoke with whom I believe to be the secretary. She had many questions to ask me. The following is a list of some of the questions and my responses: "I hurt my knee in Lipinsky Auditorium and need to see the doctor."

"Did you notify the staff of Lipinsky?"  
"No, they weren't there, it was 9:30 last night."

"Did you go to the hospital?"  
"No. I can't afford emergency rooms."

"Was a faculty or staff member present?"

"Yes."

"How did you hurt your knee?"

"Jumping onto the stage."

"Jumping onto the stage?"

"Yes."

"You didn't use the stairs?"

"No."

Anyway, there were a few other questions. My feeling is that they just wanted to make sure I wasn't planning on suing the school. Why would I? I jumped. I missed. I got hurt. My fault. All I wanted to do was see the doctor.

So after the phone call, I looked at the nurse or secretary, and told her I had informed the safety commission of my injury. She then told me that the doctor could see me at 3:30 p.m. At that time it was 10:45 a.m., 30 minutes before I had to be in Lipinsky for the final performance of "Hamlet" for Arts 310.

I ranted and raved for a bit and received a slip from the doctor saying I needed a handicapped parking sticker. I took that slip to the parking office and received another piece of paper to put in my car dash, saying I had permission to park in handicapped parking spaces. Lucky for me all turned out well.

I'd like to take a moment to thank all the people who had to endure my brief outrage of our system. Granted, the amount of bureaucracy I had to deal with was a lot less than what's actually out there, but that doesn't make much of a difference. It sucks to be an honest soul in a society that doesn't trust anybody to begin with.

How does this story relate to the

second story I mentioned at the beginning of this column? Well, I related my knee story to a friend of mine, just before the "Hamlet" performance, and she told me a story about her parents having to deal with even more bureaucratic bulls—t. The following is a brief summary of what her parents are having to endure.

My friend's (Jane's) parents were having a garage sale. They had set up nice neat rows of the items they wanted to sell. The sale had been going well when a lady who was looking at a bed backed up (apparently without looking), tripped, fell, and hurt herself. She left. But, she came back and bought the bed.

A week passed and Jane's parents were served with papers. They were being sued by the lady who didn't watch where she was going, the lady who bought the bed. I'm sure many of us can remember when sue used to just be a name. Anyway, this case is still tied up in the courts.

Jane's parents, luckily, accepted checks and have called people who were at their garage sale to be witnesses for the case. Hopefully, all will end well with this case.

What's wrong with America? Nothing? Tons? We all have our opinions.

I see a lot wrong with America and next time I'll tell you why I think so.

You see, I was charged with a felony last Thursday.

## Crime and punishment at UNCA



**James Hertsch**  
columnist

Crime and punishment at UNCA used to be about a student court, with all the adherent trappings, trying an accused transgressor and finding him guilty or not guilty. Now, infraction and sanction are about a mixed-membership committee holding a less formal dialogue with a student to find out why he committed an offense, and what sanctions, if any, should be applied.

Ergo, at the beginning of last semester, the student court died, and was replaced by something else—the student conduct committee. Some of the more important changes:

**Sanctions processing through the housing office.** Cases can now be processed by the housing office in a form similar to administrative punishments or plea bargaining. If a student prefers not to convene a committee, and prefers an expedited form of conduct processing, they can do so without dealing with a full committee called for that purpose. Under the old student court, this was not an option, according to Nancy Williams, associate housing director.

**Composition of the judging body and the process of review.** The old student court was a peer-review body, composed of several student judges. The newer committee is composed of a mix of faculty, staff, and students. Where the student court used an adversarial model of justice, based on the U.S. court system, the newer committee tends toward an "educational" dialogue focusing on showing the offending student how his actions affected the

greater student community.

**Sanctions processing.** Originally, cases were processed through the office of the student prosecutor. Now, two student interns employed by the committee process the cases, and speak with the students about what will happen during a committee meeting. There is no more student defender or student prosecutor.

By many counts, the newer system is more efficient, more educational, and more effective than the old student court. But, I have serious concerns

and would go before the court with a defender and a prosecutor, in a manner very similar to a criminal court—a structured process designed to determine guilt or innocence, and to assess the manner of the incident and how it was reported.

Then, the argument against the student court goes, this very structure was intimidating and cumbersome to a student—the very formality of it would be a frightening experience.

On the other hand, the conduct committee, according to literature, focuses more on having a "conversation" with a student, to discover the circumstances surrounding his offense, before imposing sanctions.

While a student can request the presence of somebody to assist in his defense, I happen to agree with Stephen Gross, senior senator and one of the critics of this committee: who said there needs to be an established student defender, a person whose sole job is to assist an accused transgressor in going before the conduct committee, and to make sure he knows his rights and responsibilities. Such an office would be a great asset to the process. While he might slow it down a bit, he would still add a certain needed brake to the process—something that could keep the committee from being (sometimes down the road) too efficient.

Whether anybody likes it or not, the student court is relegated to the dustbin of history. The conduct committee won't be going away anytime soon. While I do like the availability of simple sanctioning through the housing office (something akin to administrative punishment, rather than a court-martial), I would hope that a certain formality might be maintained in this process, and that a student defender, or student defenderesque position, be established.

After all, there is something to be said for a little bit of formality.

