Opinions

The Banner

Editorial

In due time

Read my lips

Though you wouldn't know it by looking at the American people's voting records, this year's presidential election will, like all the others, determine the course that America will follow for the next four years. The group is pretty evenly split — two candidates are pro-life, two are pro-choice. Two advocate the rights of homosexuals, two oppose.

So on which side of the political tree will the majority of the American people fall this year? Who's to say? With the dramatic rifts between the candidates' ideals, there's room for debate — you know, the tough decision of which middle-aged white guy to put in the White House *this* time. Some things never change.

One candidate in question is George W. Bush. His views on environment and defense are particularly disturbing. Deregulating environmental laws and favoring more nuclear weapons is extremely frightening. Should this man really be president? We already have enough nuclear weapons to blow up several planets, and the notion that corporations and factories will voluntarily clean up after themselves is childish and naive.

Although John McCain sounds okay, we have to wonder about his theory that the war in Kosovo is fine, as long as it establishes U.S. power. Would this candidate be willing to participate in other wars, simply to present America in a more powerful light?

Bill Bradley wants to end the war on drugs that was deemed necessary by presidential predecessors, and Al Gore seems to have all the middle-road answers that would appeal to the majority of voters.

The point is, voters need to be aware of what these candidates plan to do once they get elected to office because their policies will affect the nation as a whole.

Slather up

Spring break is fast approaching — come on, just one more week, we can make it — and we all know that our minds are focused more on the thought of soaking up rays on the beach than dying of various cancers. Sure, we know that skin cancer, lung cancer and other illnesses exist, but we're college students, supposedly immortal and immune to the dangers of the world.

Unfortunately, we're just as human as those people in the hospital beds at St. Joseph's, and we are fooling ourselves if we continue to live dangerously and ignore the threat of disease.

It's easy to light up that cigarette between classes even though you know full well that 30 years down the road you might develop lung cancer, which could take your life. Would you be just as carefree in your smoking habits if, say, doctors predicted that you had a 50-percent chance of throwing up immediately after smoking your cigarette? If you always broke into large, blue-and-green psychedelic-shaped bumps after lying in the sun for 2 hours, would you still be as willing to fry yourself to a crisp? Funny how the long-term threat of cancer hardly gives us pause, yet a simple threat of vomiting might cut the number of smokers in half.

It's true that you're only young once, but being young does not make you invincible. Enjoy your wild days of college life, but do not let yourself lose sight of the possible consequences of a spring break suntan or a daily cigarette break.

The song that never ends

Every semester, *The Banner* gets approximately a zillion letters to the editor about the "parking problem."

Let's be realistic, folks. No, parking isn't perfect. Yes, we ourselves have repeatedly complained about it. But come on.

At many other UNC-system universities, students' only option is, often, to park close to a mile from their dorms. If you're actually lucky enough to get one of the coveted spots, it costs you an arm and a leg to pay for it. Most universities do not allow students to have cars on campus until their sophomore, or even junior, year. At Appalachian State University, for example, most students wait three years to get a parking space at a Holiday Inn five miles away from campus. And that's lucky.

We enjoy FREE parking all four years, commuters and residents alike. Yes, humanities rush hour gets really tight sometimes. Yes, some of us have to walk up from below the caf or behind the gym late at night.

If you're that distressed about walking a little, call a friend at UNC-Chapel Hill and ask them about the last time they walked up one hill to get back to their dorm. They'll just laugh.

Remember also that if it is a safety issue you're worried about, which is always a valid claim, you can go to public safety and ask them to give you a lift to or from your car. They're always willing to oblige.

So let's take a minute and step back from the situation. We really don't have a lot of room to talk where parking is concerned. Buck up, UNCA — sometimes there are more important things to be concerned about.

Salvaging traditional art forms

Jason Allen
columnist

With the advent of TV, VCRs, video games, etc., the arts have suffered. People find the traditional arts to be less flashy, and somewhat more boring. How can classic forms of entertainment compete with the elaborate special effects and mind controlling powers of movies and the like? Here are some ideas on how the arts can adapt to keep up with modern technological forms of entertainment.

Dance: Dance as an art has made a step in the right direction. Although not everyone agrees with the direction that shows like "Riverdance" have carried the artform as a whole, it has given dance a solid restart in the art world. "Stomp," "Lord of the Dance" and all these types of shows perform sold-out shows to crowds larger than we have seen in decades. Maybe if we could adapt these styles to the classic form of ballet, we might be able to pull ballet into the 21st century. How about we change ballet with dancers wearing wooden shoes? Not only would it be easy on the hard of hearing, but it would darn fun to watch, too.

Painting: The art of painting has been ruined by the advent of so-called modern paintings that look like some three-year-old threw paint on a canvas and then ran his hands across it. You know the kind of art I'm talking about — that stuff that contains no apparent talent but in which rich people and snobs claim to see deep psychological and spiritual power. At least they claim to see it so their snob friends do not outdo them.

"And now here is my latest work. I call it Blue #345."

"All I see is a canvas you painted entirely blue."

"No, you see the depth and suffering of my soul combined the torment of the knowledge of our own moralities."

Yeah right. True painting is the classic stuff, the capturing of life and imagination in an image that that looks like one is gazing through the window at the real world. That is what needs to change in order to update painting. Photography has allowed us to make crystal clear images that far exceed the details of most paintings. People do not have the patience to look at a canvas covered with nonsensical color and garbage. Painting has to compete against photography. No more of this talentless crud, but paintings that contain the very spark of life, something that no photograph can ever capture, no matter how skilled the photographer. Now I know what you are saying — "Not everyone that paints can paint that well." Good. Let those with talent, skill, or at least patience try to do it, and those without can go do something else.

Drama: Drama is one of the arts that has always tried to adapt itself to keep up with modern day technology, like the seamless hydraulic sets of "Phantom of the Opera" or the moving cloud effects of "Oliver." However, modern day entertainment has ruined the attention spans of the average theater going audience. Moments of silence will destroy an audience's attention faster than a nude running across the stage. The power of the movie, however, is the ability to cut to different angles. Here is how to upgrade the theater. Please note that the following idea requires an arena-style theater, and will not work with a traditional picture frame theater. My solution is this: movable seats that move around the stage. Just as you start to get bored with one angle, it switches to another — instant movie-like cuts. To help with the gritty realism that movies have over theater, hire a whole bunch of extras and in plays where someone dies, kill one of them in each show. (And then you would not need to pay them anyway.)

Sculpture: Sculpture suffers from the same disease that afflicts painting. Modern sculptures look like someone either spot-welded a group of metal rods that happened to be leaning against each other, or let their kid brother play with a huge chunk of clay. Bronzing roadkill does not qualify as art, but turning scrap metal into realistic-looking forms does. It is not the material, but the effort involved. Let's face it, to adapt, sculpture has to follow the same direction of painting. We need art that captures the force of the universe, not wastes material that could have been used by a competent artist later on. In a waste-conscious world like this, how can we afford to let fake artists waste precious materials?

Music: One problem with classical styles of music versus modern day-bands is the visual component. Classical modes of music have stationary groups of musicians with one energetic man or woman waving a stick at them. Modern bands have musicians that move all over the stage, back-up dancers, special effects and smoke, and makes for a more visually appealing experience. Now, here is how we can go about making some changes. Orchestras have lots of people in lots of chairs. Now what does that just scream? You guessed it — musical chairs. What could be more entertaining than a group of well dressed men and women playing classical pieces of Mozart or Brahms while scrambling around trying to get a seat?

Well, these are just ideas. Take them how you will, but don't let true art be ruined by the influx of false art. Don't support those who misuse the arts simply because they do not want to go out and actually put any effort into what they do.

Finding value in everyday stories

Jennifer Ross
columnist

Have you ever found yourself missing an old class, whether it was only last semester or years ago? I miss my old, once-a-week creative writing class. It's not that I miss the subjects we covered, or the challenge of writing essays and stories, but what I really miss is weekly observations. Now to exactly describe a weekly observation to you is impossible. They were anything and yet everything.

I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me tell you how it all started. It began as a weekly assignment for class. At first it seemed an unusual and simple assignment. We would all bring in a short excerpt from our lives to share with the classroom. These small windows into our lives were often funny, strange, tragic or thought-provoking. The one thing that they all had in common, from the most bizarre to the simplest, is that they were all from our real lives. They came from my teachers, my fellow students and my personal life. From this "simple" assignment, I learned innumerable things about people and myself that otherwise I would never have known.

One student talked about how she had noticed that when she took her large dog out for a walk, an elderly neighbor of hers would either talk amiably to her or avoid her at all cost. She had always thought that the behavior was odd, but one day she discovered that her friend and neighbor suffered from advanced Alzheimer's disease. As a child, a large dog had viciously attacked the woman, and so for most of her adult life she had dealt with an extreme phobia of large dogs. Only as her memory about the childhood attack would fade due to the disease could she chat at ease with the student around her large shepherd. On a more bizarre note, another student shared with the class her unusual run in with the mysterious and elusive "Catboy." A young man apparently walked up to her and a friend one night, while they were walking to their dorm, and meowed at them. As they stood there in a state of utter bewilderment, he turned about, took off still meowing and tried to climb a tree.

Other students had strange observations. One girl swore she saw a two-headed baby in a stroller on Biltmore when she was driving to work one day. Another student informed us of how he had met a bag lady downtown who said she was Jesus. One young man told of how he lost the trust of his pet goldfish when he and his roommates had accidentally swatted a very angry live wasp into its bowl and he had mistaken it for fish food. Another student talked of his discovery and exploration of the largest porn store in the world. Everyone had an interesting and unique story to tell each week, and I learned that life for UNCA students is anything but normal.

Now it's a whole new semester and I find myself oddly nostalgic over losing weekly observations. So in remembrance, I dedicate this article to just a few of the odd observations I've made this last week. On Sunday I witnessed a theft from the cafeteria. What did these criminal masterminds, you ask, steal secretly under the dense cover of night from the high-security caf? Well, actually, it was more like 2 p.m., and the criminal masterminds (a.k.a. two giggling girls) were apparently hoisting not a priceless Rembrandt or a cache of precious jewels, but an oh-so-valuable 6-foot-tall cardboard "O" that had been lying in the lobby. Of course, I had to give a description to the police sketch artist, and the borders to Mexico and Canada have been firmly secured in the case that the suspects attempt to flee. But until the fugitives are brought to justice, we can only keep the hotline number to America's Most Wanted at our fingertips and wonder what kind of sick person would steal a giant cardboard O. To be perfectly honest, the giant cardboard Os were kind of cool and I have been wanting to redecorate the dorm room, wait, what am I thinking?! No, I've come over to the dark side, NOOOO! Help me, Obi-Wan!

On Saturday I discovered that not only is Denny's restaurant crowded at four in the morning, but they even have live entertainment. While my friends and I were sitting down to supfast (supper-breakfast) there was a woman (who to the best of my knowledge was an extremely drunken prostitute) that mooned and was subsequently arrested by a group of five police officers right outside our window. Now if that's not entertainment, its at least a cross between Jerry Springer and Cops. And according to our waitress, much like its television counterparts, this is also a weekly event.

Friday was the day I have microbiology lab, and for all my fellow on-campus students, I would like you to take heed of what I'm about to say. In micro we swabbed and cultured samples from all sorts of places. One person swabbed her dog's tongue; another, the toilet seats at her dad's construction site. One even tested her pet cow's nose. But my plate grew, in my opinion, a larger quantity and variety of bacteria, fungus and molds than any other plate I saw. And what horrible, disgusting site did I culture, you ask? Was it dog droppings, a filthy street or a McDonald's employee's hands? No, it was my very own Southridge shower! Which, much to my surprise, grew way more stuff than a construction site toilet seat! If I learned anything from this lab it is the value of flip-flops.

So, fellow students, I leave you with this. Go out and see all the stories that make up our lives. Share your stories with friends and listen to theirs. You will discover that the truth is stranger than fiction.