

# The Daily Tar Heel

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## Ineffectual Buyback

A local businessman wants to buy your gun. Jim Protzman, chief executive officer of FGI — a local marketing company — and a candidate in this year's Chapel Hill Town Council race, believes a gun buyback program will decrease the number of gun-related crimes in Chapel Hill.

Protzman will need to have some deep pockets.

There will be a lot of guns to buy back. Although the idea sounds great in theory, it will not be effective in reducing gun-related crimes.

In addition, Protzman has asked the town council to back his proposal. If the plan becomes a town-funded program, it would be a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

Gun buyback programs are effective in removing guns from the streets, but the effect on crime is negligible.

According to The New York Daily News, the New York Police Department bought back 1,246 guns during the first month of its gun buyback program.

The number of gun-related crimes in New York did not decrease during that month. In fact, the number of gun-related crimes increased for the year. Other cities that have tried gun buyback programs report similar statistics.

The main reason gun buyback programs do

not reduce the number of gun-related crimes is that manufacturers continue to produce guns at a blistering pace.

The Washington Post reported in 1991 that there were 922 gun manufacturers and 989 businesses that imported guns for resale in the United States.

According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, between 1985 and 1989, 17.8 million new guns were available in the United States. This number exceeded the number of births in the same period. There are more guns in this country than there are people.

Buying back guns in Chapel Hill will not decrease gun-related crime. Chapel Hill does not exist in a vacuum. People from surrounding areas, such as Wake and Durham counties, still will bring guns here.

In the short run, buying back guns will decrease the number of guns on the streets of Chapel Hill.

In the long run, however, the number of guns will continue to increase, despite efforts to buy them up.

If private businessmen want to spend money buying back guns, that is their prerogative.

But the town council should make sure this privately financed initiative does not become a Chapel Hill-financed initiative.

## Victory and a Vote

Chalk one up for student representation.

James Hunter Schofield, 23, a part-time senior at Appalachian State University, won a four-year term on the Boone Town Council earlier this month. He will be sworn into his new office in December.

A large percentage of Boone's population — similar to Chapel Hill's — is composed of university students who often go underrepresented or are not represented at all in municipal governments.

Students at ASU deserve a vote in the town's political processes, and now they have one in Schofield.

ASU's student body president in the past sometimes has served as a nonvoting member of the Boone Town Council, but Schofield's victory marks the first time that an ASU student will have a vote on the council.

Three UNC students over the years have served on the Chapel Hill Town Council, including present member Mark Chilton, who

was elected in November 1991.

Although they do not solely represent student interests, student members of local town boards, such as Schofield and Chilton, bring a fresh, young perspective to often old problems existing within the community.

Schofield only won by four votes and garnered 40 percent of the community-at-large vote. The power of each individual student who voted for Schofield is demonstrated in that narrow margin of victory.

In a time when so many think the "MTV generation" doesn't care about politics and generally are an indifferent population, Schofield and others like him across the nation show that not all male and female 18- to 24-year-olds are apathetic and uncaring.

Instead, Schofield's victory — and the victories of other young people before him in town elections — demonstrates our generation's voting and political power and a hope for an active, politically involved future.



## Americans Lucky to Have First Amendment Freedoms

My parents fled Mao Tse-tung's newly established Communist China in 1949. Amid the chaos of a country rife with conflict, they boarded boats with other Chiang Kai-shek Nationalists and left their homes to go to Taiwan where they would remain free.

It is there where I was born. It is there where I was lucky to be born free.

When I was 3, my family came to the United States so my father could pursue his doctorate. Thus, it is in America that I have grown up. It is in America that I never have had to fight for my basic freedoms. It is in America that I frequently take for granted what thousands of Chinese students fought for in 1989 and continue to fight for today.

Often, I wonder how my life would have been different had my parents never fled China. Last Monday, as Li Lu — deputy leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations — spoke, I thought that I very easily could have been one of the students protesting in Tiananmen Square. But the same question nags me every time: Would I have had the courage to stand up against a government I knew was not right?

In America, there is a malaise; we don't always remember the importance of freedom. Our voter turnout for elections is less than most industrialized countries. We continue to censor music, books, the arts. We implement speech

codes on campuses.

In other words, we often take for granted the struggles that secured us the rights to be free. Perhaps we have forgotten that, as Li suggests, "Freedom is not free. It costs."

A large number of the letters to the editor have criticized the fact that columnists with conservative viewpoints are given editorial space. Moreover, there is a rising tide of speech codes against hate speech. Many believe that anything racist, sexist or homophobic must be censored.

But under the First Amendment, a conservative has the right to speak out just as much as a liberal. Under the First Amendment, racist, sexist homophobes may speak out as well.

At the same time, the First Amendment allows those who oppose bigots to speak out just as loudly. Bigots thus can be challenged and discredited in the open. Ironically enough, the bigot often discredits himself through his own ignorant arguments.

By merely punishing bigoted speech, we only



SHIRLEY FUNG  
MONDAY'S ANODYNE

treat the symptoms. Bigotry should be discussed in the open; misconceptions should be cleared in the open. To push bigotry underground only would force it to show up costumed in other outlets.

University campuses should remain a forum for free and open interaction and discussion. College is a place to grow and to learn from each other. We all come to college with misconceptions and prejudices. By hearing others, we either can change our minds or strengthen our views. By expressing our own views, we can change others' minds.

It would be a horrible thing if we could not come to college and have the freedom to express our views and to have the opportunity to listen to others who differ in thought.

This freedom, after all, is an integral part of our education. Li is right when he says, "Freedom cannot be preserved without educated minds." It seems fair to say that without freedom, we cannot have educated minds.

I am lucky, as are all Americans. I have not had to decide whether to risk death to stand up for my freedoms.

And if I can have it my way, I never want the chance to.

Shirley Fung is a junior political science and economics major from Mansfield, Mass.

## Studying in Japan Provides Valuable Lessons of Life

It's a sunny day, so I've hung my futon out my window as does every family in the town of Takarazuka, and all of Japan for that matter. It kind of takes away from a beautiful day to see a bed hanging from every window of every building. It reminds me of that movie in which that kid was almost a teenager and still wet his bed every night, and his mother would hang his sheets out for everyone to see. He would not get along well here.

Many people would not get along well here. Japan is a country full of contradictions and can be very frustrating.

For example, most everyone commutes to school or work. There are vending machines on every corner selling everything from seaweed rice snacks to three-liter cans of beer. But you are not supposed to eat or drink while you are in class or standing, walking or sitting on the train or in public.

What are all these people doing with the food they buy on the streets? From experience, I know that sushi does not keep well in your backpack. You can go to the local Makudonarudo (McDonald's), though, and get fries, a Coke and a McTeriyaki burger for 1,000 yen, or about \$10.

OK, enough complaining. Once you get past the initial adjustments, Japan becomes a country full of culture, tradition and men with haircuts like Moe from the Three Stooges. So far, it's been an adventure everyday.

One weekend, I climbed Mt. Yamanashi, where you can feed the squirrels and watch monks offer 1,901 blessings to Buddha. You can climb high enough that you can see the smog really well. This weekend, I'm taking the bullet train to Tokyo to visit relatives.

Oh, yeah! Did I mention why I'm here? UNC offers a great study-abroad program that, so far, I highly recommend. I'm taking two classes a day at Kwansai Gakuin University. Each day I take a Japanese class and a class in Japanese management, psychology, politics or history, depending on which day it is.

I have one professor who learned most of his English from watching the David Letterman Show. He even has a weekly Top Ten list and an awful sense of humor. I coach elementary kids

in basketball on the weekend, and I go to two hours a day, six days a week of Karate Club.

The "social clubs" are what college life revolves around in Japan. Each student has killed himself (many literally) to get into the best universities. Companies don't look at how well you did in college, but rather just which college you attended.

These four years are when young Japanese are expected to hone their "social skills" before entering the real world. It's referred to here as the paradise between Hell and Prison.

Academics? The students don't care, the teachers don't seem too concerned, and there's plenty of sake, so everyone just has a good time ... that's pretty familiar?

There's no Greek system here, though. Society already has put everyone in his or her place and has told everyone how to dress and who they can hang out with. A famous saying here is, "If a nail sticks up, it is hammered down." Customs and traditions are so rigid. I've learned some of them the hard way.

For example, the Japanese consider their business card to be their faces. In fact, they're called face cards. When exchanging cards, it is most important to hold onto the card for the entire conversation with both hands, cherishing it as though it were more than a piece of paper.

You never stick it in your wallet, and you never shove it in your back pocket. This is the equivalent of sitting on the face of the person you have just met. In most cases that I can think of, that's pretty undesirable.

The good side of having such a deep-set, unifying culture and tradition is the communal sense of trust that exists everywhere. The crime rate is very low, and if you accidentally leave your leather jacket in a bar, it still will be there when you come back for it.



KEN RUSSELL  
VOICES FROM ABROAD

People take care of each other here. Last night we were celebrating a friend's birthday, and as we went into a 24-hour convenience mart to pick up some ramen and lowmei noodles at 4 a.m., I noticed my bike had a flat. We mentioned it to the cashier and asked if he had a pump. He didn't and, instead, lent me his bike and wrote down my address. This morning, when I woke up, my bike was sitting outside the door, tires inflated!

This may seem rather odd, or that he was just a little too friendly to me, but no! It's not rare at all to find Japanese going considerably out of their way for you, giving "love thy neighbor" and "customer service" a whole new meaning.

But times are changing. There's a young generation in Japan that has begun to reject the old ways. This generation eats on the trains and wears Pee Wee Herman elevator shoes. They love Bon Jovi and aren't afraid to say it (it sounds more like "I rabu Bon Chobi," though).

Individualism is peeking through, and nails are sticking up all over the place. The hammer of Old Japan is getting pretty slack. Who knows, there may even be room for a Sigma Phi Epsilon Japan Alpha chapter!

I've just been taking everything in so far. In one of those "it's an acquired taste" sort of ways, I really love this country. It's fascinating. But there are many things I miss back home. I miss football games and Last Call. I miss Calvin & Hobbes and Jason Torchinsky's column (I think he graduated). I miss a group of the closest friends I've found since I've been at UNC, and a girl on the other side of the world who I won't be able to give a hug to for almost a year.

I'll be back for my senior year, though — and maybe then some. This is an adventure definitely worth taking. My host family is wonderful, and I've come fully prepared. I packed my mountain bike, my rollerblades and, of course, my skateboard and a yo-yo. I don't think I stick out too much more than I did at UNC, so I'm all right.

One final note: Did you ever wonder why Japan is called the "Land of the Rising Sun"? Well, it's because it comes blasting into my room every morning at 5:30!

Ken Russell is a junior business major from Stuart, Fla., studying abroad in Japan this year.



## THE DAILY TAR HEEL

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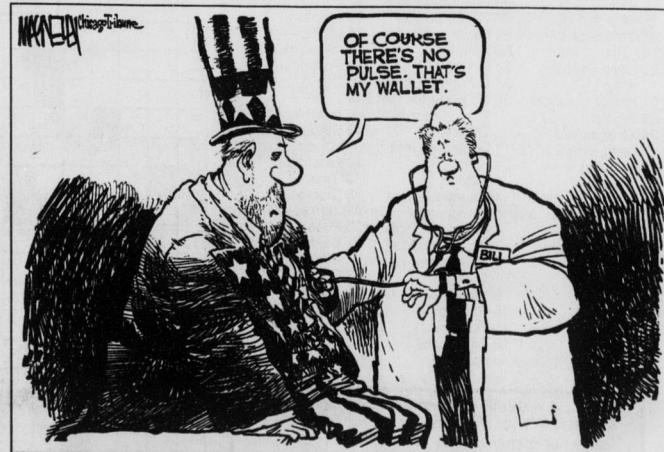
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### Columns Policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes guest column submissions from our readers. Interested writers should contact Dana Pope at 962-0245 between 3:30 p.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays.

Please follow these guidelines:

- Limit column length to 800 words.
- All columns should be signed and typed double spaced.
- If you are a student, please include your class, major, hometown and phone number.
- If you are on faculty or staff, please include your title and phone number.
- Alumni should include their year of graduation, current address and phone number.
- Others should include their hometown and phone number.
- The DTH reserves the right to edit guest columns for space, clarity and vulgarity.



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