

The Daily Tar Heel

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BOARD EDITORIALS

Wired questions

Two words: cable television.
Two more words: lung disease.
What do these two things have in common? Hopefully nothing, but when the University began the gradual installation of cable television and data link wiring in South Campus residence halls, it knew that it would deal with the removal of a dangerous building material called asbestos. Prolonged exposure to these toxic fibers can cause lung disease.
While it is greatly appreciated that the University has taken a step to improve the quality of life for students in on-campus housing by upgrading their television viewing potential, the failure to address student concerns about potential health risks caused by the installation is unfortunate.
Several students observed that the rooms being cleaned for asbestos were covered in plastic sheeting, but that there were holes visible in the containment, which were re-covered with duct tape. Larry Herringdine, assistant director of Facilities Management for the Department

of University Housing, offered reassurance, "This is done under full containment. There should be no health problems whatsoever."
Regardless of whether the installation is being handled in a safe and responsible manner, the University should have tried to communicate better with students before got the project underway. Several students have expressed genuine fears when they are caught off guard by a sign warning them to avoid inhaling near construction sites. These fears need to be addressed. It is, after all, these individuals who live in these buildings.
The installation of cable and data links on campus is a welcome move that students both support and appreciate. Perhaps in future projects rewiring more residence halls, University Housing will be sure to keep the lines of communication open to all students.
Answering students' concerns should be a top priority, and effective communication with students is the only way to assure that it is treated as such.

Something stinks: jury's decision chills media

Bleach should be used to whiten whites. It should not be used to freshen spoiled meat.
For all the flack justifiably hurled at journalists, "PrimeTime Live"'s investigation of unsanitary food handling at Food Lion supermarkets should have left the critics cheering. Instead, it was used as a weapon to silence society's watchdogs, to the detriment of consumers.
And unfortunately, when a North Carolina jury decided Wednesday to award Food Lion more than \$5.5 million, they placed legal shenanigans and corporate greed ahead of truth and consumer safety.
The facts: Two producers for ABC's "PrimeTime Live" news magazine show, Susan Barnett and Lynn Dale, went undercover at North Carolina and South Carolina Food Lion supermarkets in 1992 to verify reports of unsanitary food-handling practices. To gather evidence, the producers lied on application forms and wore wigs to conceal hidden video cameras.
The producers filmed several Food Lion employees bleaching and selling old meat and repackaging rat-contaminated cheese. The "PrimeTime Live" broadcast aired on Nov. 5, 1992.
Food Lion did not dispute the validity of the claims in court. Instead, it avoided the truth and sued for trespassing, fraud and breach of duty of loyalty.
Last month, a jury ordered ABC to pay Food Lion \$1,402 in actual damages, the amount it estimated Food Lion spent to train and replace the ABC producers.
While Food Lion had asked for as much as \$1.9 billion in punitive damages, the \$5.5 million settlement will send a chill across the nation's press corps.
Journalists take undercover work seriously. It is dangerous, stressful and often unpopular

and unprofitable. Television producers and newspaper editors plan undercover investigations only after considerable deliberation.
Robert Johnson, a noted ethics professor, said recently that investigations must have an overriding public importance, should be used only as a last resort and the undercover tactics must be revealed when the broadcast airs. "PrimeTime Live" met all three of Johnson's criteria.
Without the mass exposure, Food Lion could have continued the potentially life-threatening practices.
If "PrimeTime Live" had approached Food Lion without the undercover video footage, the supermarket chain would certainly have denied the charges and temporarily cleaned up their act.
Any notice of an investigation, undercover or not, and Food Lion could have curtailed the practices for a short time and then reinstated them when the heat died down. Employee testimonials help bolster a story, but on their own don't have the impact or the credibility of video footage.
But the broadcast, which caused Food Lion's sales to plummet, not only reformed Food Lion, but showed any other food retailers that toying with the public's safety had severe consequences.
While the "PrimeTime Live" broadcast easily fulfilled the overriding public importance criterion, the jury's decision alerts potential delinquent food retailers — or any other purveyor of deception — that no one is



GRAHAM BRINK
MANAGING EDITOR

watching.
What news organization, especially small news outlets, would risk a potentially bankrupting lawsuit for reporting a truthful story? The decision allows large corporations like Food Lion to avoid scrutiny by playing the bully.
Food Lion should have accepted its wrongdoing and corrected the problems. But corporations rarely accept full responsibility if legal loopholes exist to squirm through. The jury's specious decision widened the loophole.
The press should compensate victims of libelous reporting, but the press should not pay for telling the truth. The "PrimeTime Live" story saved consumers more than just stomach aches or nausea — it re-confirmed the importance of having a fair and watchful press corps.
Undercover investigations in the past have revealed everything from banking fraud to corrupt politicians. Such investigations increased public safety and created a more humane environment.
Large news organizations like ABC will continue to undertake undercover investigations, but only after weighing the new legal consequences. Similar legal precedents will undoubtedly erode, if not eliminate, such investigations at small and mid-sized news organizations.
Which stories will the press pass up? Unsafe veterans' hospitals? Racially motivated law enforcement? Child abuse at day-care centers?
The settlement hurts ABC's bottom line, but more importantly, it leaves the public vulnerable to corporations willing to disregard personal responsibility.

Graham Brink is a second-year master's student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication from Vancouver, British Columbia.

IN MY OPINION

Finding freedom for self-expression

Pornography, like politics, makes strange bedfellows. It divides women's rights activists between those who recoil at its degradation of women, and those who rejoice at its celebration of their sexuality. Conservative Bible thumpers join radical feminists in urging censorship. Over accusations of exploitation and liberation to be exploited, however, we must remember the covering umbrella of the First Amendment.
I have Larry Flynt and the makers of "The People vs. Larry Flynt" to thank for bringing this undying issue to light again, although that remains almost all I would thank him for. (The rest is that in his offensiveness he secured constitutional protection for parodies of public figures — all he won in his celebrated court case.)
I believe certain forms of pornography are very harmful for women, either by directly encouraging abuse, or by indirectly reinforcing images of women-as-objects waiting for a man's whim. Pornography that depicts rapes, bloody mutilation and domination all carry frightening suggestions.
But despite the repugnance of such material, our freedom of expression is more important than protecting women from such trash. Doing so reinforces the concept of women as helpless victims, in need of a man's protection.

More importantly, though, our First Amendment freedoms dictate that it be tolerated, for who exactly has the right to determine what is natural and healthy sexual expression and what is unnatural and dangerous?
It would be all too easy for harmless or even beneficial forms of sexual expression to be snatched from the public eye.
Few would deny that works by lesbian artists such as elin o'Hara slavick ("Art vs. censorship," Jan. 21) portray erotic art. Many call it pornographic. But countless works by male artists foreshadow hers, showing women in erotic and sexually explicit poses, an object for their male viewers. In this context, I see erotic art by women as an aesthetic triumph of women's liberation.
But in the end, perhaps all that counts is that sexual choices are just that: personal choices that each individual should make for her or himself.



JULIA CORBIN
EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR



BAROMETER

Rotten vandals

Missing posters, smashed walls, shattered windows ... and Hector's owners are thinking about cutting late-night hours? Not all of us like fried chicken at 2 a.m. Cool it, kids.

Four down ...

President Bill Clinton's second inauguration means we're completely done with elections, but with hovering ethics charges, he could well find his next term interminable

Just clip, highlight, deposit for campus safety

When I volunteered as a tour guide my freshman year, one question which parents invariably asked me was "Do you feel safe on this campus?" In response, I would stutter "Um ... well ... sorta" as I frantically searched for the nearest yellow telephone (here's a hint: there are none visible from McCorkle Place). Needless to say, Jackson Hall did not hire me on a full-time basis. But the question did make me stop and think — exactly how safe are we on this campus?
I know Chapel Hill is hardly Central L.A., but most students I talk to have a hard time expressing 100 percent satisfaction with campus safety. The UNC police are well aware of this situation, and — in addition to several recent improvements in campus security — they have placed suggestion boxes in Lenoir Dining Hall, Davis Library and the Undergraduate Library. So now it is time for us to do our part by letting them know what areas of UNC safety still need work.
(I am aware that Carolina students are usually pressed for time, so to facilitate communication with the campus police I have made some suggestions in capital letters. If you think that these improvements need to be made, feel free to highlight them, clip this article, and drop it off in one of the boxes. Or if you have other ideas, please put them in a note to the chief of campus police. If nothing else, the volume will send a loud message.)
In all fairness, I must concede that UNC does have several safety features — like Point-2-Point — which make this campus more secure.
But, if you miss one van, the 14-minute nighttime wait is hardly soothing. Especially since several of the P2P stops (i.e., Rosemary Street) are poorly lit and sparsely traveled. Not to mention the fact that there are no emergency phones at any P2P stop.
To fix these conditions, the administration needs to put lights and phones at every P2P stop.
In addition to the P2P service, campus

safety is also bolstered by the SAFE Escort golf carts, which provide lone females with rides from the libraries to their residence halls. The reason the service is only available to lone females is because everybody knows that a gunman would never shoot at two people. This service is provided until 1 a.m. because at 1:05, the streets of Chapel Hill are absolved of all crime until the next sunrise.
But, for the benefit of all the males angered by the sexism in today's society, we need to expand the services (and hours) of SAFE Escort.
Another safety feature provided by this campus is the locks on our residence halls, complete with alarms. I
I'm not sure exactly why they bother with the locks, because if you wait outside of a residence hall long enough, someone is bound to let you inside.
Heaven forbid we should enact a campaign to increase awareness of the purpose of the lock and alarms on the residence hall doors.
This attempt to dissuade trespassing is not limited to residence halls. My favorite security measure is the Undergrad's policy of requiring patrons to show student identification after midnight. I have this mental picture of dozens of hoodlums and ne'er-do-wells casually strolling into the library at 11:55 p.m. knowing that they will be allowed in without a hassle.
Pity the rapsallion who was running late, for, come midnight, we do not want his type in our library. For his sake, we ought to require that identification be shown at all times when entering the library.
Now, in case anyone were to think that



ANDREA MAIN
WATCH OUT, YOU'RE NEXT

campus safety issues are limited to escorts and locks, I feel the need to discuss UNC's fire safety. As a former Morrison Residence Hall resident, my first instinct when I heard the alarm (for the 20th time that year) was to hide in my room.
Despite threats of a \$500 fine, the call of the pillow was usually far too irresistible. Admittedly, sleeping through the drills was stupid; but I was not the only one staying inside. Had there been a real fire, I (and several others) would have been, well, burnt.
This realization leads me to push for stricter enforcement of fire evacuation policies and, while we are at it, harsher punishments for pulling fire "false alarms."
At least Morrison had fire alarms.
Some buildings, such as Dey Hall, do not even have that luxury. According to a classmate, last November when Dey Hall had a fire drill, the procedure was as follows: 1. call the secretaries on each floor and inform them of the fire, 2. have the secretaries inform everyone on their respective floors of the fire and 3. evacuate the building.
I can't wait to see what happens one day when a secretary is out of the office.
To keep this thought a mere speculation, we should install adequate alarms and sprinklers in all buildings.
UNC has made a lot of progress since my freshman year in improving campus safety (without the new blue lights). But the progress should continue until we all feel 100 percent safe.
Until then we need to write, highlight, complain and do whatever is necessary to let the UNC police and administration know which areas need improvement.
And we should continue to bother them until everyone can respond to the question "How safe do you feel on UNC's campus?" with the answer "Completely."

Andrea Main is a political science major from Raleigh who wonders how much protection is really offered by an inanimate blue light.

THE DAILY TAR HEEL
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