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The Daily Tar Heel

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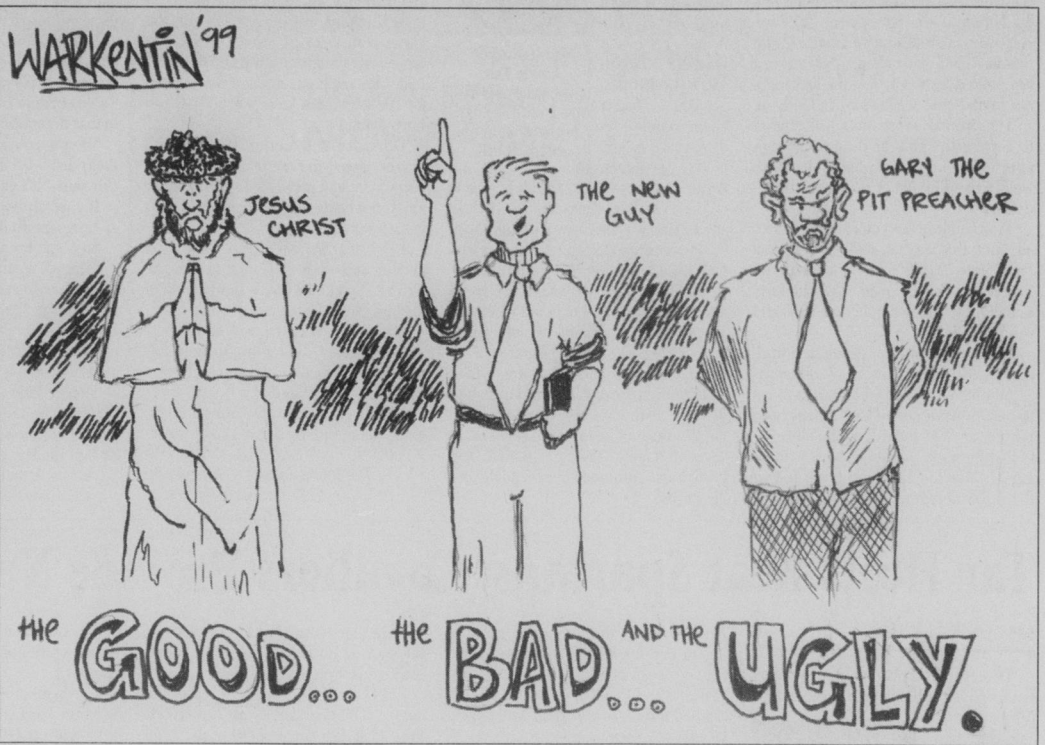
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BOARD EDITORIALS

Lame Excuses

For years, the old tale about the hare and the tortoise has taught us that "slow and steady" wins the race. Apparently, somebody at the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid misinterpreted the story as teaching that "slow, lazy and completely irresponsible" wins the race. This fall, some students who had received financial aid packages were left without refund checks to cover the costs of textbooks, off-campus rent, transportation and food. "I applied for an emergency loan, but they wouldn't give me the loan because I was getting a refund check," said Jennifer Painter, a freshman who said she was lucky to get her books. "I went to the cashier's office and they didn't know who I was." Shirley Ort, director of the student aid office, said delays in distributing the checks were the result of office renovations, electronic filing system problems and short-staffing. By the way, the office handles \$100 million in scholarship money every year. Shirley, we students really do feel bad for you - but not half as bad as we do for those kids who had to start class without textbooks. Office renovations? What kind of excuse is that? Unless the financial aid office workers were the ones on the eight-foot ladders installing air-conditioning ducts and hanging

wallpaper, there is absolutely no reason why they could not get their work done. Having the workplace redone is certainly an inconvenience to the employees. It is not, however, a valid excuse for falling so far behind. Electronic filing system problems? That one isn't going to cut it either. Find the problem, fix the problem. The student aid office uses its computers for basic filing, not launching shuttles out of Cape Canaveral. There is no way it should take the same amount of time to work out a minor filing problem as it does to pass a kidney stone. In terms of lameness, Ort's short-staffing excuse takes the cake. So she lost a couple of employees over the summer. Heaven forbid that Ort or her employees pick up the slack and do more normal. Ort has said that during the next six months the office would fill the empty staff positions, reorganize the office to increase efficiency and conduct a student satisfaction survey. The results ought to be interesting. Anytime unexpected setbacks arise, some decrease in productivity is understandable. But office renovations, computer glitches and the loss of a few employees do not justify the degree to which the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid has failed in its \$100-million obligation to the students.



Injecting Some Debate

It should never be said that the little guy doesn't count. With the brouhaha surrounding the execution of Harvey Lee Green scheduled for today, more attention has been paid to summertime moratoriums on executions passed by the municipalities of Chapel Hill, Carrboro and Durham. Only two other such resolutions have been passed nationwide. This move by local leaders has drawn the spotlight to the continuing debate over the death penalty in North Carolina. From a protest on the steps of the Franklin Street Post Office to class discussions on campus, students and local residents have been forced to examine their stance on this heated issue. Even though these Triangle lawmakers do not have the authority to enact such a mandate, the moratorium is intended to send a clear signal to the big dogs in the N.C. General Assembly who make the decisions regarding capital punishment. Though their collective voice represents only a small part of North Carolina, their stance is important. The resolutions supposedly reflect the opinion of thousands of North Carolinians.

Not all cities are moratorium opponents, however. Aberdeen passed a resolution that weighed in favor of the death penalty. But if a large percentage of local governments took a stand on this issue, state lawmakers would have a better idea of how the state felt about capital punishment. The road to change has to have its beginning somewhere. Perhaps the resolutions passed by these three localities is that first step toward a statewide change in policy; then again, perhaps not. Either way, it has sparked meaningful discussion within these towns and across North Carolina. And any attention that gets drawn to such a controversial issue is beneficial. It gets the public talking, debating amongst each other and thinking about a topic that is far from cut and dry. Regardless of your personal opinion on the death penalty, the local resolutions show that ordinary citizens can work with local leaders to be proactive in the debate over state policy. When the little guys voice their opinions, they force us to think about and defend our position on moral issues. And soul-searching never killed anyone.

Floyd Over-Reaction? Wait for Y2K

Sept. 16 was one of the most beautiful days of the year, sunny and cool, with a certain rain-washed clarity to the light and the air. **ANDREW S. UTSCHIG**
GUEST COLUMNIST

Campus, normally clogged with students, professors and staff bustling from one place to another, was mostly empty, a bit windswept but soothingly calm. In the wake of this mundane result to the much-heralded Hurricane Floyd, it is easy to forget the hysteria which preceded the storm. Let us review. Public hand-wringing and Chicken Little sermonizing and emotions were rampant the Tuesday and Wednesday before, from the highest to the lowest levels. Banner headlines about the "mean" and destructive hurricane screamed from the regional dailies; Gov. Jim Hunt talked of drawing up a disaster relief bill in advance; President Clinton preemptively declared two states disaster areas; UNC canceled classes for a day and a half. At the grocery store on a routine trip, I found nary a loaf of bread or, for some reason, a single banana. Shopping became grueling as hordes of panicked consumers descended on the aisles and choked off the check-outs. At my house, sometime in the wee hours of Wednesday morning, four of us drew up essays, a little competition to predict the course of the storm. One roommate, already well into, shall we say, the festive spirit, wrote: "I will dominate the world!! We will see the second coming of Jesus! God forgive us! May someone survive." Another, with more literal but perhaps less figurative sobriety, predicted that the power would be out for 10-days-plus. His point of view was standard. In point of fact, quite a bit of rain fell, there was a gusty wind and the Triangle went through a rehearsal for Y2K which did not bode well. Cultural critic David Harvey once wrote that it is "the deep chaos of modern life and

its intractability before rational thought" which best defines contemporary living. In the wake of the latest public breast-beating it seems we've come to relish that chaos and irrationality, that we can't live without it and that we ourselves are its producers. We created a chaos where there was none, and we were persistently irrational in doing so. Indeed, a hurricane is a chaotic force, but by far the greatest effect this one had in the Triangle was psychological; we shut ourselves up and hunkered down for the apocalypse because of a little dampness in the air. We can claim safety must be our first concern, but I am frankly disturbed when public officials take the initiative to make decisions we should be making ourselves - for example, if you don't feel safe going to work or class, don't go. There was no cause for canceling classes Thursday. While the result might have been pleasant for us, it is worrisome when our resolve in the face of adversity becomes so weak and our reaction to comparatively minor events so out of scale. Consider too that this mass hysteria might be quite expensive to us, the public: the actions of both Clinton and Hunt carry hefty financial strings. All this based on a storm which was many miles away and whose chance of hitting the Triangle squarely was vanishingly small. Remember that Fran wrought destruction only because, by chance, it hit the coast at the closest point to us and, again by chance, happened to drive straight for us like a battering ram. And we survived rather nicely. For Floyd, there were hurricane warnings from the tip of Florida to Cape Cod. Was it really rational for the entire eastern seaboard

population of the United States to storm their grocery stores and cancel all and sundry public events? It was not. The irrational, joyfully panicked, overwrought response to the vague threat of Floyd was shameful. Have we lost all sense of proportion? It is readily apparent from the public and private reaction to the storm that we are woefully short on events; we treated this little rain-storm like a miniature war. Are we so desperate for excitement and meaning? Y2K is being billed as a public disaster of far greater scale. My prediction would be that the actual computer event will be similar to Floyd: all hype, little payoff. However, hype is important, and its psychological effect more so, and therefore we can expect mass chaos far worse than Floyd - based on nothing. In our inability to rationally respond to the world around us or to see it calmly, exacerbated by a hyperbolic media which are our own demands for sensationalism have created, we are fueling a feverish public culture. The public event of Y2K, like Floyd, might well be quite significant and very undesirable in its construction. Irrationality, chaos. One leads to the other, and we convince ourselves more and more fully of their presence. They become part of a self-fulfilling prophecy by which we lose track of the small things and live our lives on the level of a spectacle. Our impressions of Thursday's weather left buildings boarded up, shops closed. The reality of Thursday's weather was lovely and calm. What's the forecast for Jan. 1? Andrew S. Utschig is a graduate student in political science from Appleton, Wisc. Reach him at utschig@email.unc.edu. Friday columnist Josh Fennell will return next week.

Want to Blow Off Some Steam?
Write a guest column for The Daily Tar Heel. Guest columns typically appear every Monday on the op-ed page. Submissions should be about 800 words in length. Bring typed copies to the DTH office in Suite 104 of the Student Union or e-mail them to dth@unc.edu. Include your name, class, hometown and e-mail address at which you can be reached.
For more information, call Editorial Page Editor Scott Hicks at 962-0245.

BAROMETER

- Candidate Found**
After weeks without a peep, GOP presidential candidate Elizabeth Dole has resurfaced. Unfortunately, it was to push a sketchy idea that would make it easier to search high school students' lockers.
- Popularity Plus**
A new policy from the Carolina Athletic Association means it'll take more than popularity - or group clout - to become the next Mr. or Mrs. UNC.

- Sweatshop Blues**
Frank Gifford was on Capitol Hill on Wednesday to defend wife and talk-show hostess Kathie Lee from questions about sweatshop conditions in her clothing line. Unlike Nike, at least her stuff is cheap.
- Park This ...**
The town of Carrboro is auctioning off a fire truck. Imagine trying to get a hardship permit for a pumper - and where do you keep the dalmation?

TAR HEEL QUOTABLES

- "(ECU students) are going to come back for class in a week and see their town underwater. It's going to be morally devastating."
ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT GOVERNMENTS PRESIDENT JEFF NIEMAN
On Hurricane Floyd's aftermath in Greenville. If it's that bad for students, think what it must be like for the natives.
- "My older son thinks Ignacio's doctor is Patch Adams."
DENISE PEREZ ALBERT
Perez Albert's 7-year-old son, Ignacio, is currently being treated for leukemia at UNC Hospitals. Maybe Robin Williams is sneaking around incognito.
- "I'm terribly concerned that the first class to move in would like the new dorms so much that they would never move out."
ASSOCIATE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR STUDENT SERVICES DEAN BRESCIANI
On the new residence halls proposed for South Campus. There's nothing like sharing a bathroom with 12 people that makes one want to stay in residence halls forever.
- "Just Say No' is a ridiculous strategy."
ORANGE-CHATHAM DISTRICT ATTORNEY CARL FOX
Duh, Carl. Did anyone ever believe that Nancy Reagan could come up with a successful anti-drug campaign? On Sept. 24, if Harvey Lee Green


READERS' FORUM

Instead of Execution, State Should Force Guilty to Aid Victims
TO THE EDITOR:
When the state acts to kill a member of its society through a planned execution, a part of every other member is also sacrificed. The state's attempt to punish and bring retribution in this barbaric form of human sacrifice is both damning and deifying to those of us who are left behind. Ironically, this form of punishment takes the focus off the loss of the victim and places it on the plight of the one who committed the crime. Wouldn't our communities be better served by "Life Rows" where these offenders, like other inmates, were required to take responsible action in work programs that provided restitution to families of the victims or to organizations that benefit society? We all concede that our society is engaged in a war against crime, yet the city of Durham and the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro passed moratoriums on the death penalty. Evidently, there is an educated and organized consensus that weapons of revenge are not the answer.
On Sept. 24, if Harvey Lee Green

is poisoned to death by the state, how could I explain this to my children in a way that would reconcile this action by the state with the core values they have been taught? How will the state reconcile this action with the conscientious objections of people of faith who understand that vengeance has never been safe in imperfect human hands? This week a pulsating heart may be silenced by our state in the name of justice. Who among us feels worthy of administering the injection?
Dewanna Banks
Carrboro

Man on Death Row Deserves to Pay Price For His Actions
TO THE EDITOR:
Sigh. Where is it written that a society must drag its human garbage along in hopes that it will reform? I sure would like to take a look at that passage. Harvey Green, like so many others who are convicted of heinous crimes, deserves no second chance. The people he brutally murdered aren't going to get a second chance. Everyone talks of reform. He had

it tough growing up. He can change. He has skills that can benefit society. Bullshit. He took the lives of two people who were living day-to-day life and for what? A few hundred bucks? The protesters will tell you Harvey Green has a right to life. Well, so did the people he killed. The protesters say he can reform and benefit society. The people he murdered were benefiting society long before. The protesters will tell you we, as a society, can't take a life for a life. Harvey Green, and no one else, created the situation he was in and must pay the penalties for his actions. An eye for an eye, I say. I am so sickened by this society's stance on responsibility. When are we going to start holding people accountable for their actions? How many atrocities have to occur before we can rule out their bad home-life? People's actions are their own! They ultimately decide whether or not an event will take place. I think the protesters should spend some time with the victims' families. Perhaps then they'll understand how ridiculous they sound.
Richard Conrad Zink
Third-Year Graduate Student
Biostatistics


The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 400 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail forum to: dth@unc.edu.