

The Daily Tar Heel

75 Years of Editorial Freedom

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A Campus 'Honorary'— Anachronistic Tradition?

Sometime during the next few weeks, assuming campus history repeats itself, the eerie crashing of gongs will resound through women's residences in the dead of night and hooded figures will snatch half a dozen coeds from their beds to tap them for membership in the Valkyries, "Carolina's highest women's honorary."

Following the enactment of dark, mysterious ritual in equally dark and secret places, the chosen few will have the privilege of appearing on campus on designated days (including the 13th of the month) wearing special golden pendants. Occasionally, they and those who chose them will meet for picnics or "secret" confabs.

Then next spring they will sponsor the "Valkyrie Sing," an anachronistic occasion at which Carolina's look-alike, think-alike sorority girls will prove that they sin alike, as well.

And if history repeats itself, that is all that the Valkyries will do.

In short, the Valkyries is a self-perpetuating, non-democratic organization which exists only to sacred-cow tradition as a secret honorary.

The Valkyries is part of an American collegiate tradition that goes back to Yale's "Skull and Bones," the nation's oldest secret society. At campus after campus, these groups perform their annual rituals of "tapping" campus leaders, thereby endowing them with the recognition and prestige merited by their achievements. At best, such organizations may be useful, especially if they help develop common bonds between collegiate leaders and provide goals toward which potential leaders may aspire. At their worst, such honoraries may be negative influences, causing schisms and injured feelings.

The Valkyries is not yet a totally negative influence, but there are signs that it is unhealthy in some of its aspects.

For example, the Dean of Women's office has become perturbed in the past because the Valkyries' membership has failed to grow with the female population. Reportedly, the administration told the Valkyries that other women's honoraries would receive University approval unless the organization became slightly less selective.

A more disturbing trend may be seen in the career of one recent graduate. Having been elected or appointed to a series of increasingly important positions in Student Government and the judiciary, she found that she was slightly below the minimum academic average required for consideration by the Valkyries (reportedly a 2.5). She immediately revamped her academic schedule to include several "sure-fire" crib courses. Then she launched an ambitious "apple-polishing" effort, basing her requests for special consideration upon her "important extra-curricular responsibilities." When her Q.P. average had improved sufficiently, she was duly tapped — just as several of her sorority sisters had assured her she would be. Never mind that this coed prostituted her academic goals and did a mediocre job in the positions which she held — she was a Valkyrie.

These examples are distressing. But other, more basic questions

may be raised about every self-perpetuating "honorary." The most important is that any organization which sets its own standards, makes its own membership selections, and relies solely upon tradition to justify its existence fails to "honor" anyone. Its membership lists necessarily reflect the prejudices, whims and even the political attitudes of those within it. The Valkyries are nothing more than a gilded sorority.

No doubt these criticisms will bruise the feelings of many deserving coeds, past and present, for whom membership in the Valkyries has been a treasured part of a college career. But the deserving ones do not need the Valkyries, or anyone else, to honor them. They have created honor (and, perhaps incidentally, fame) for themselves by being unselfish, devoted members of the University community. They have accepted responsibility and handled it with skill and energy, while applying themselves diligently to their academic pursuits. They honor themselves by being themselves.

For such people — the only really "deserving" ones — membership in the Valkyries is a tawdry trinket. It is symbolic of the fact that a few like themselves, and many others far less worthy, had the audacity to decide to bless their presence on campus with a golden pendant.

A Frenchman who was once asked why the Eiffel Tower was built replied, "They built it so they could put a red light on it so the airplanes wouldn't run into it." The Valkyries exists for an equally worthy purpose.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

A headline in Wednesday's Raleigh News and Observer stated "Reagan Aware His Star Rising" and the story began: "Gov. Ronald Reagan frankly acknowledged Tuesday his sudden emergence into the front rank of potential Republican candidates for president."

The story went on to say that Reagan had declared that his prominence in the candidates race was "none of his doing."

Considering some of the statements Reagan has made lately, we would tend to believe that indeed his prominence is not of his doing.

Back in July, Reagan was quoted on the Vietnam war as saying that California was his beat, and "I have not declared war on Vietnam here in California."

That's true. Neither has the United States as a whole. Reagan was quoted further as saying: "The way to win a war is to win it." That statement may go down in the little book of quotable quotes as the least ambiguous of all time but it is hardly the type of political rhetoric from which presidential stuff is made.

We'll wait before hitching our wagon to Reagan's star.

Heel Prints

We heard a nickname for that brand new psychology building, Davie Hall: The Rat Palace. The moniker is reinforced by the plaque in the main lobby which shows a psychologist with — what else — a white rat.



Stone walls do a forced freshman coed study period make.

Letters To The Editor

A Brief Question For Otelia Connor

To The Editor of The Daily Tar Heel:
Dear Miss Otelia Connor in c-o the DTH: Doesn't a real lady ignore bad manners?

Sincerely yours,
Laurel Lee Shackelford

GM Policy Explained

Dear Editor:

I greatly appreciate the clarifying story about the Judy Collins—S.D.S. Concert that appeared in the DTH Tuesday, Sept. 19. What the policy is is more clearly understandable because of it. At this time I would like to help everyone understand why the policy is what it is.

Graham Memorial is the programming arm of Student Government. G.M. has as one of its prime responsibilities the task of providing a comprehensive selection of major cultural and entertainment programs. Some of these are presented free of charge and many carry on admission charge. Admission programs sometimes yield more revenue than the cost of the concert, sometimes less. Frequently they will not yield enough revenue to cover the cost if every ticket is sold. G.M. accepts this programming responsibility to provide adequate opportunities for UNC students year after year. Students control the programming and when profit occurs it is used for the benefit of all students through additional programming opportunities. When admission is charged, the G.M. policy is to make the charge as reasonable as possible in regard to costs of the attraction and the entire year's program. G.M. is for and by every student on the campus.

If other student organizations were to program in this major concert area many problems would arise. First, all student organizations would have to be eligible. Second, profits if made would accrue to a narrow segment of the total campus population rather than to the campus as a whole as when G.M. programs. Third, the comprehensive program now provided by G.M. would be rendered less effective if a profit seeking organization placed a program so near to one in the G.M. Series as to impair attendance. Fourth, private promoters could secure the use of University facilities through any campus organization. These promoters could offer the organizations "profit at no risk", but their motives are to make as much money as possible for themselves by making ticket prices as high as possible. Profit making is not wrong, but UNC facilities are best used as we now do—first priority for students at minimum cost to them for the benefit of all.

There are more reasons than these, including some of legal nature, but I will not take more space. If programming chaos is to be avoided, the existing policy is essential. It protects the interest of ALL UNC students from those who would

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Hugh Stevens

Mickey Mouse — What It's All About

(Editor's Note — We received the following letter recently:
Dear Editor of The Daily Tar Heel:

There is one American word I cannot understand its meaning: It is the word "Mickey Mouse." I see sometimes it used Derogatorily. To call something a "Mickey Mouse" is bad. But I have been understood that "Mickey Mouse" is a small hero of United States culture. Please can you explain this discrepancy to me and to others who have it difficult to understand.

I am sincerely yours,

Bharani Kuryat, Dept. of Physics.

We asked the worldly philosopher and columnist-about-town Hugh Stevens to answer Mr. Kuryat's letter. His reply follows.)

Your letter asks a question, but it also serves as a commentary on the aspect of American culture which you find so baffling—our tendency to burn our heroes behind us. Your statement that Mickey Mouse is a "small hero of United States culture" would be more accurate if couched in the past tense.

Mickey was an American hero—of sorts—but he was the symbol of a less sophisticated age, and our psychedelic culture no longer has a place for him. In our urge to repudiate his times and his society, we vilify him by attaching his name to those things which we consider unduly trivial or smaltzy.

Mickey Mouse was born about the time of the Great Depression, when a young cartoonist named Walt Disney brought him to life through the medium of animated movies. During the 1930's, when Mickey was indeed an American hero, movies provided escapist fare for millions. For very little money—perhaps a few cents—broke or unemployed Americans could lose themselves in a world where all the women were beautiful and all the men were rich.

In this haven of fantasy, Mickey Mouse epitomized the American ideal. He was friendly, sincere, cute and happy. His was a world of eternal bliss, whether he was piloting his choo-choo train through the bucolic countryside, or wooing the coy Minnie (whose relationship with him, fanciful as it was, never needed explaining). In Mickey's world, one need not even be rich to be happy—he simply was not concerned with money at all. He seldom worked—and if he did he whistled all the while. He did not stand in bread lines, he did not collect unemployment, and he did not worry.

Don Campbell

On Letters And Problems

We appreciate the interest that has been shown, by way of letter writing, in two major problems at the University: the parking sticker system and women's rules.

Unfortunately, many of those writing about the T sticker have chosen to try to be funny about the whole thing, (ie, putting stickers on shoes) rather than treat the subject with the seriousness it deserves.

The absurdity of one aspect of women's rules is pointed up most vividly by a letter from a freshman coed on this page. We would be willing to bet that more freshman men flunk out during their first year here than do freshman coeds. Yet, the freshman coed is virtually "locked" in her room for two and a half hours three nights each week, supposedly to study. Since the necessity of this practice is not clear to us, we can only ask why?

The letter writer says that "screches" of joy erupt at 10:30 each night in the frosh coed dorms when the forced study period is over. Perhaps the letter writer exaggerated somewhat, but the whole thing sounds a little inhuman to us.

about feeding his family. He ate cheese, he danced, and he smiled.

Mickey's world of fantasy is gone now; even his creator is with us no longer. And the creative corporation which Walt Disney left behind has adjusted to the high-pressure world of technology; now its chief products are movies about flying cars, and space-age amusement parks.

In short, Americans are no longer content to escape to a world of cartoons and dancing mice; one would feel slightly ridiculous to be found watching Mickey Mouse when the bomb drops. And so, iconoclasts that we are, we refuse to allow Mickey to fade away as the obsolete symbol of an obsolete era. Instead, we dredge up his name and attach it to a myriad of supposedly ridiculous things—Student Government, women's rules, loyalty oaths, sorority ritual, campus policemen. By so doing, we demonstrate our feelings that such things lack intrinsic worth—that they are idle pastimes or unnecessary impediments.

Your letter demonstrates that you have not yet become fully acquainted with the capacity of the average American to poke fun at himself. If we have any lasting virtue as a collective culture, it is this ability not to take ourselves too seriously. Thus, when we call something Mickey Mouse, we do not intend it as completely derogatory—we do not think it "bad" in the sense that it is evil or ugly. Our use of the term simply demonstrates that we recognize and tolerate our own foibles—or even like them.

"Mickey Mouse" has come to have highly stylized and specific con-American slang. All of us know, for instance, that Georgia Tech is "gritty" and East Carolina is "high school"—but those terms in themselves carry no trace of the disdain which we convey through them. By the same token, as a prospective lawyer I do not wish to be called "Perry Mason"—even though he never lost a case.

In conclusion, Mr. Kuryat, "Mickey Mouse" is a term whose meaning lies in the mind of the user and the hearer. And whatever else it may be, it is a symbol of the fact that in "hip" America nothing—not even Mickey Mouse the small American hero—is sacred.

"Ears to ya,
Hugh Stevens



'Sure there's meat left on the bones, but I'm not paying 70 cents!'