

The 'Daily Tar Heel' — 1893 to 1978

By **KIMBERLY PAINTER**
DTH Contributor

Just beyond a door in the Carolina Union posted "Staff Only" is a long, narrow room lined on one side by floor-to-ceiling windows and on the other side by bulletin boards and tiny offices. The high-filled room is cluttered with tables, telephones and manual typewriters that bear personal labels: "I'm old. My 'e' sticks ..."

In early morning, the room is still, but as the day progresses, staffers report in, and the quiet disappears. Typewriters, now filled with yellow paper, click incessantly; phones ring; people talk:

"Hey, can you throw me the rubber cement?" ... "I missed the bus this morning because the policeman made me take our dog, Drains, back home, and the dog catcher brought me to school." ... "I want to tell you something that's going to make you feel better, I failed that test." ... "You don't want to learn from her, you want to do it right." ... "You guys want to advise me on how to handle my column today?"

"Very carefully."
"Right. Keep your heads low as we enter the crossfire."

On a bulletin board is pinned a note: "To whom it may concern: Let it be known that we, the undersigned, have reached the breaking point; we're mad as hell, and we're not going to take it anymore." The note is signed by the managing editor and his assistants, both associate editors, and the news, sports and features editors of the *Daily Tar Heel*. The mock resignation has been on the board for over a month, and this Friday will be the last day of work for most of those persons.

As this week marks the end of one editorial staff's work, it also marks the end of the newspaper's 85th year.

Walter Spearman, professor in the School of Journalism here, was editor for the *Daily Tar Heel* during 1928-29, and it was under him that the *DTH* became a daily. He has been a lecturer off and on for more than 40 years in the journalism school and has been friend and adviser to

many *Tar Heel* editors along the way. He will retire from teaching this year.

"I love to start the day reading the *DTH*," Spearman said. "Of course, there have been changes from year to year. The most exciting periods in the *Tar Heel's* history have been when exciting things happened on campus. The newspaper also tends to reflect the national trend — bland during the Eisenhower years, reactionary during the backward Nixon administration. Weak years were usually when someone who had no experience came in as editor. The editor needs experience working on the newspaper, working the desk, working his way up from a reporter.

"Through the years, the students who have worked for the newspaper have been characterized by a lively curiosity. I think the best years have been when the editors were in tune to the students' attitudes. But the *DTHs* are sort of like old wines, some vintages are better than others."

Volume One, Number One of the *Tar Heel* was published on Feb. 23, 1893. Charles Baskerville, who later taught chemistry at UNC, was the first editor, and he, along with the other editors of the first issue, admitted that they embarked "with no little trepidation." They went on to conclude, "... we invite honest criticism and any aid in the advancement of this new project will be appreciated." The *Tar Heel* was then a weekly paper published under the auspices of the University Athletic Association which supported the newspaper financially for the next 30 years.

First in *Tar Heel* history were the first photographs in 1901 under editor Ehringhaus, the first regular sports page in 1928, the first "extra" edition in 1945 at Roosevelt's death and the first comic strip in 1950.

Those first *Tar Heels* contained descriptions like this, "... the noon train brought several angels from the West, and the night train another heavenly choir ... Miss Isabella Davidson of Hillsboro wore pink faille point lace, garnets." Each lady who attended the German Club dance that evening with a Carolina student had the details about her gown and her jewels printed on the front page the following Thursday. That was life in the village.

But by 1901, one of the angels had come down to earth to join the *Tar Heel* staff, and

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Past 'DTH' editors, writers have impressive records

"Obscurity is not to be found in the ranks of those who wielded the editor's pen," wrote a *Tar Heel* staff member in a 1944 issue. "Although *DTH* editors since 1893 have felt that that martyred seat led but to the grave, the record reveals that the route almost invariably detoured to the door of eminence before hitting its destination."

Though they still make less than minimum wage (but a little better than the two-dollar-a-week salary of the 1944 editors), recent editors view the position with a lot less self-pity than the "martyred" editors of old.

Some past *Tar Heel* editors and writers have included:

- Jimmy Wallace** — The Chapel Hill mayor wrote a column called "Students Listen" in 1943-44, and ran for editor (and lost) twice.
- Clifton Daniel** — rose from editorial writer for the *Tar Heel* in 1932-33 to associate editor of the *New York Times*.
- Louis Harris** — the public opinion analyst was

- on the *DTH* staff during World War II.
- Charles Kuralt** — the CBS newscaster was editor during 1945, and wrote a famous editorial favoring desegregation.
- Curry Kirkpatrick** — staff writer and sports editor for the *DTH* in the early '60s, now a sports writer for *Sports Illustrated*.
- Vernon Royster** — *DTH* editorial board member in 1935 and former editor of the *Wall Street Journal*. He also taught at the School of Journalism here.
- Jonathan Daniels** — Raleigh *News and Observer* editor and publisher, *Tar Heel* editor 1918-1921.
- Orville Campbell** — *DTH* editor 1940-42 and editor and publisher of the *Chapel Hill Newspaper*.
- Thomas Wolfe** — novelist
- Tam Wicker** — *New York Times* columnist
- McNeill Smith** — candidate for U.S. Senate
- Larry Keith** — sportswriter for *Sports Illustrated*
- Jonathan Yardley** — novelist, and regular contributor to *Sports Illustrated*.

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