

Carson not withstanding, bottled waters flow freely

By DINITA JAMES

When Johnny Carson does a spoof of a product's commercial "the way we wish it were done—just once," the promoters of the product know their item is in vogue.

So, when the Tonight show aired a take-off commercial for "Perriyeech—from the toilet bowls of America," no doubt, the person who engineered the media blitz for Perrier mineral water was sitting by his TV set grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

Bottled mineral water is usually associated with the "California Mellow" lifestyle, but it also has become quite a fad in less metropolitan areas. Many stores in Chapel Hill stock a modest supply of domestic and imported mineral waters, and it is a rare occasion when dust collects on the bottles.

Is there a difference between bottled waters and vintage-University Lake water?

"Papa" Nash Collier, a professor in the UNC chemistry department, says maybe.

"Water flows over areas where minerals in the soil are dissolved," Collier says. "This imparts a different taste for different waters."

"If a city's supply come from a river with a number of manufacturing plants upstream, pollutants can contaminate the water, give it an unpleasant taste and introduce dangerous chemicals—even carcinogens—into the water."

Chapel Hill's water does not have

these undesirable contaminants, Collier said.

"Chapel Hill's water is nice in that it is runoff from a controlled land area—an area with few septic tanks," he says. "It has a moderate mineral content which makes it not really hard."

Bottled water is taken from a place that has desirable minerals or is purified and removed of all minerals, Collier says. If the water is purified, pleasant-tasting minerals are added to enhance the flavor.

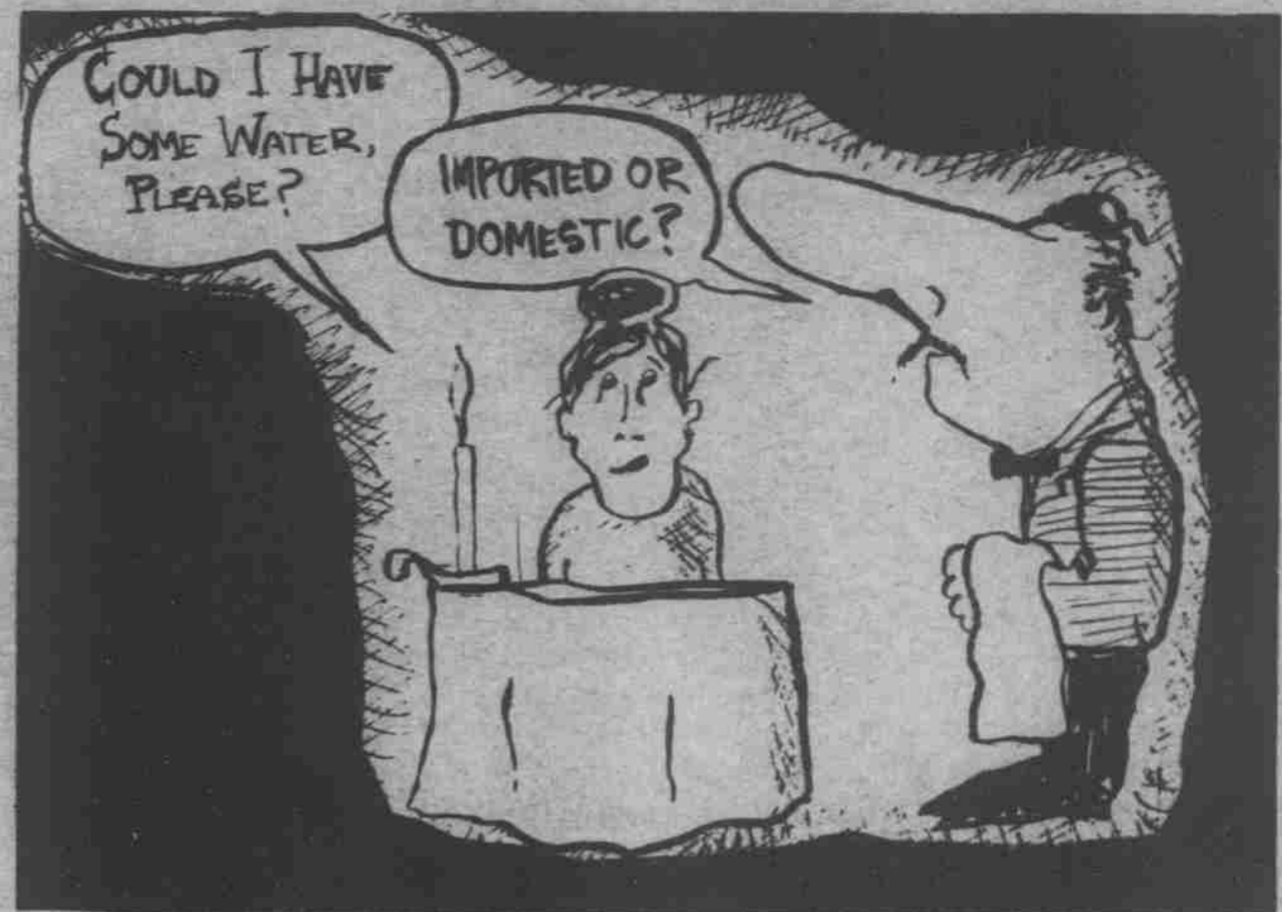
To determine whether bottled water is more pleasant-tasting than Chapel Hill water, seven UNC students, well-versed in the taste of beverages, were asked to sample six types of water, one of which came from a tap in the Carolina Union.

After everyone burped and thought it over, each taster identified the sample which came from the tap.

The majority of the tasters preferred tap water to any of the bottled varieties. The favorite among bottled waters was Ramlosa, a Swedish mineral water which advertises itself to be "free from iron, free from lime, slightly carbonated and contains no calories."

Others selected as tasty were Apollinaris, a West German water "bottled and carbonated with its own natural gas" and Perrier, France's own "naturally sparkling mineral water."

Comments ranged from "That's good," "This has no taste at all. It's like dring wet air," and "No bitter aftertaste," to "That's the pits," "I



think we're going to have diarrhea tomorrow," and "How could people spend money buying this stuff?"

The following list contains bottled waters available in the the Chapel Hill area. The list is in no way complete. Prices are approximate and subject to change, and they vary by store.

- Apollinaris (West Germany), \$1.50 a quart.
- Canada Dry Club Soda (U.S.), 50 cents a quart.
- Celestine Vichy (France), \$1 for 31 ounces.
- Crodo (Italy), 90 cents for 31 ounces.
- Fiuggi (Italy), non-sparkling, \$1.30 a quart.

- Gerolsteiner Sprudel (West Germany), 90 cents a quart.
- Perrier (France), 89 cents for 23 ounces.
- Ramlosa (Sweden), 69 cents for 13½ ounces.
- San Benedetto (Italy), 55 cents a liter.
- Sangemini (Italy), \$1.10 a quart.
- San Pellegrino (Italy), \$1 for 30 ounces.
- Staatl Fachingen (West Germany), 90 cents for 12 ounces.
- Schweppes (U.S.), 75 cents for 28 ounces.

Dinita James is Weekender editor.

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