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sions — and there's nothing called tenure — Smith is an anomaly.

"Less than 1 percent of all Division I college coaches finish their careers in coaching," Smith says. "If you want to be a college football or basketball coach, you'll probably have to change vocations somewhere along the line."

On the surface, Smith's winning record alone would seem to justify his longevity. Now — and for more than a decade — as an established winner, it is true, but early during his Carolina career, Tar Heel fans that now revere him wanted him gone.

"I think the only time when quite a few people wanted to fire me went back to expectations," he says. "It was my fourth year, and we had two real good players in Bobby Lewis and (Billy) Cunningham. We went on the road and lost some, and they were after me."

TWO years later, Smith coached the Tar Heels to the first of three straight NCAA East Regional championships, and his detractors, if there were any during the time, weren't people with an affinity for Carolina.

"So far, I'm one that has beaten the odds," Smith says.

He also credits the philosophy of the University and the athletic department through the years, an approach that has avoided a "win at all costs" attitude.

"Long ago, this University made a decision that we're going to do it the right way, even if we don't win. We've been fortunate to be winning and graduating people and admitting them properly."

At schools where rules are broken and coaches are fired for not winning, Smith says the blame should be placed on the schools' administrators, not only their athletic officials.

"You have 270 presidents of schools and they think all they need is five good players and they can make the Final Four. And then you get all the money — \$350,000 and the national exposure.

"But you have 270 schools trying to do the same thing. If each president thinks he is going to do that, and only four can, then you have a lot of people who are unhappy. That's where you have problems."

But Smith has reached the Final Four five times — more than anyone except John Wooden and the late Adolph Rupp — won the ACC regular-season title nine times and the league's tournament title seven times.

A national championship, the pinnacle of college basketball, has not come Smith's way, but he maintains reaching the Final Four more than once is more difficult than winning the NCAA title.

And with the victories comes attention. Smith will not label himself as modest, but insists he knows himself well. "I honestly believe there is too much attention for the college coach, both football and basketball. Writers tell me it's because we're constant. They players are there only four years."

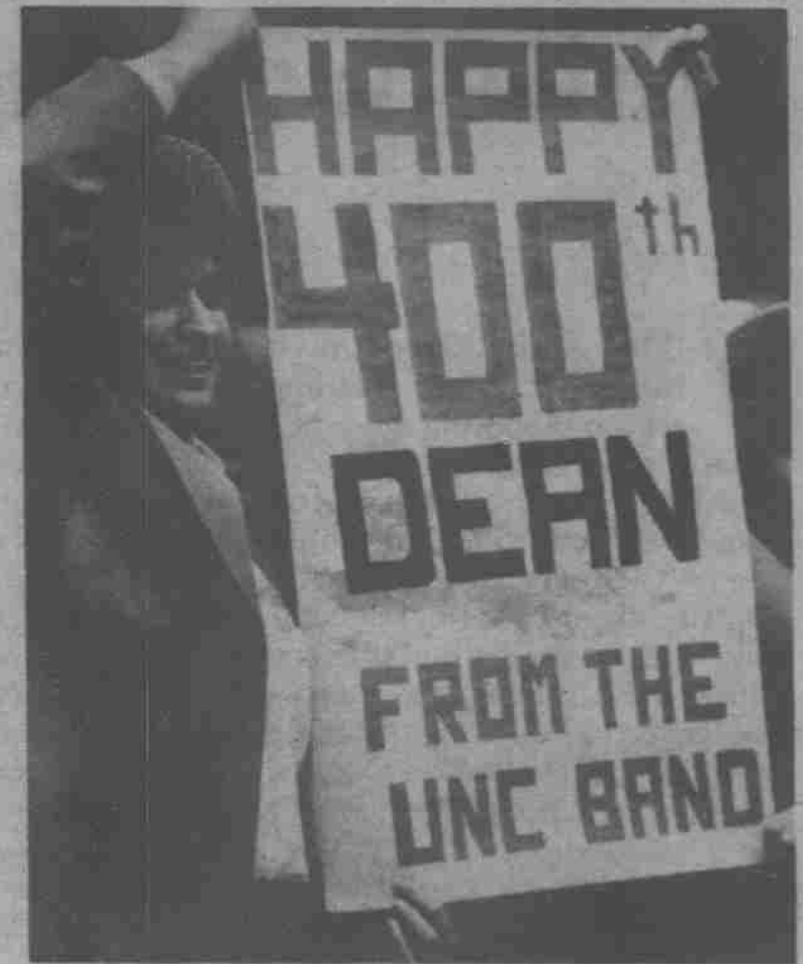
In Chapel Hill, players or the coach seldom get stopped for autographs, but when they go to other North Carolina towns, they'll likely be asked for a signature or two.

"That's what television does," Smith says. "And that can be bad if you start believing it as a player or a coach. You've got to realize it's very fleeting. At the Olympic game this summer, there were Phil Ford, Mitch Kupchak, Tommy LaGarde and Walter Davis, and I think the biggest applause went to Al Wood. He was the one that was current. That always keeps things in perspective."

In Smith's case, he is both current and past, but leaning toward the classical.



Left, Dean Smith gives instructions. Right, a salute after 400th career win



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