

The Daily Tar Heel

91st year of editorial freedom

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From a gay's perspective

Editor's note: The following interview was conducted between staff writer Kevin Johnston and a freshman UNC student. The name was withheld upon request.

Do you feel different because you are gay? Do you have a special "lease on life" that I don't have?

Um, I feel that most gay people have a higher awareness of where they are, an earlier sense of "self" because they know they are different. They know what they are thinking is different than some of their straight friends.

Do they just accept the difference?

Some do and some don't. That is why you have so many screwy straight people (who think they might be gay and are refusing to acknowledge that fact). A lot of divorces come from that; they finally reconcile themselves after they have gone through a marriage that's bad.

Because you have handled "coming out," do you think that makes you a more stable person?

You can't, at this point, compare me to another straight person; it would have to be another gay person. I feel that I am more stable than a lot of gays. It is not really a fair comparison. I am like anyone else.

Would you say that causes straight people to look upon gays as more unstable?

No. Because if a straight person knows that someone is gay then he has to come to grips with it. I think that there are people who are having problems with their sexuality.

Would you say that a lot of gay people at UNC picked this school because it has such a large gay community?

I don't know. It is too hard to say.

But could they pick this place as a liberal place where gays could go?

Yeah, a liberal place, that's a reason. But a lot of them are so young that it is not a reason; they don't identify with it (homosexuality) yet. UNC-G has a large gay population also, so does Charlotte. So I don't think that just because it's liberal and there are a lot of gays around that someone would just pick it (for that reason).

Do homosexuals congregate together for the most part?

I would say yes. It's a protective thing; you could more readily identify with someone else like you, naturally. If it is someone who is more sympathetic; then they fit in as well. It's out of fear. For strength and support you just go with people who are like you.

Are you suppressed here? Is there a time when you feel like saying, "I'm gay; why can't you accept me?"

No, I don't think so. I have never had any problems with people threatening me, mainly because I keep my mouth shut. I don't say anything because I don't think it is anybody's business and there's also a fear of threat. You never know. I can trust you, but I can never know who you will say something to, and then I never know who that person will say something to. Further down the line he could be the one who decides to beat somebody up, saying, "Oh, he's the one, okay, let's get him." That is a fear of the gay community.

But you could get that if you were a real smart person in class. That could happen to anybody. I go a little bit out on a limb, but not too far because people tend to go and

get the ones that are too strange. You can hope the people will be understanding. I'm positive about the way I am. But if the situation demanded it, I would protect myself before my integrity.

What kind of people would give the gay community problems here? The ignorant?

I think it's the people that are afraid, and the ones that aren't educated; the ones that just don't care about people's rights. You can dislike someone but that doesn't mean that you have to go out and hurt them. If you don't like someone you should just leave them alone. Someone is always going to dislike you for some reason.

Is there a fear in the gay community of meeting someone who is not gay, becoming friends, and then losing that friendship because they find out that you are gay?

Sure. It's a fear of not being liked. That fear is a part of anyone. I don't care if someone likes the way I look or what music I listen to. But being rejected for who I am — that really hurts. It is not a fear of making friends, it is the fear of having them turn against you.

Do you think that homosexuality is immoral? What is your concept of morality?

I don't think that it is immoral. I think that it's immoral to deny something that you feel. You must be honest with yourself and the way you feel.

How, or why, do people become gay? Do you just wake up one morning and say, "I'm gay!"

You just don't wake up and feel it. I think that everyone develops his or her sexuality while they are very young.

What is "coming out" and how hard is it for most homosexuals?

It depends on the family environment and the individual. I have heard horror stories of some people being disowned when they were young. It is a three-step process:

- you admit it to yourself
- you admit it to your friends
- you admit it to your family.

Telling your family is the hardest part. It's sort of a "point of no return."

There is a stereotype that many people have about gay men. Is it true that gay men by and large are weak, overly feminine and limp wristed?

I don't think that's totally true, but stereotypes are based on fact. In the past, it probably was that way — we had no role models, no feeling that we didn't have to be the way society pictures us to be. Since society pictures us that way, many homosexuals fall into that trap. Women used to be overly emotional because no one told them they didn't have to be. There wasn't any one around to tell blacks that they didn't have to be lazy; no one to say, "You can get a job, you can be president of a company." It was what society dictated in the past. Now it is different.

How many blacks are there in the gay community at Chapel Hill? More, or less, than whites?

There are predominantly whites and males. Blacks are in the minority.

Are there many activities for homosexuals in the area? We do pretty well, though not as well as New York or Atlanta.

Do gays by and large feel differently in a group of heterosexuals?

No. Everyone is different, but basically the only difference is sexual.

Is sex the line of differentiation?

I think so, otherwise we want the same things everyone else does — a home, love, security. The difference is comparable to the difference between blacks and whites; skin color.

A lot of people compare gay men to heterosexual women, is there any basis for that comparison?

I think that we are like women in that they are more in touch with their emotions. And, like women, there is a higher appreciation of beauty — pretty things.

So, to say that a gay man is effeminate is not an untruth.

Well, saying it like that is a little harsh. They are more in touch with their feminine side. Women have male hormones, men have female hormones — all men could be more feminine. It's just that our society looks down upon male femininity — men have always been in charge.

Do you find women attractive?

Sure.

But not in a sexual sense?

No. By in large, I don't think that a true gay man finds women attractive.

Would you demand that you live with a gay roommate?

No. I could live with anyone as long as they could accept my homosexuality. They would have to know. What are you going to do, sneak your date in?

Is there a message you would like to give, anything you would like to add? Is there a solution to the problems that you and your friends are encountering?

Yeah. Just don't worry about it (homosexuality). Accept what it is. We are no different than anyone except that our sexual preference is different.

Do you like who you are?

Oh, yes.

And how do most of your friends feel?

My friends and myself are dissatisfied about the way we have to hide our lives. Some would say that it is our fault, but it is the fault of the people who suppress us, forcing us to be secretive. I don't care how others feel about their own preference; why should they bother me about mine?

Is there one final note that you would like to conclude with?

Yes. I would like to change the attitudes that straight people have about gays. If they can't handle their feelings they should just leave us alone. Unless, of course, someone bothers you. But no one should do anything to anyone else out of ignorance.

Dress code

Today, hundreds — perhaps thousands — of UNC students are wearing khakis or corduroys. That's because today is Blue Jeans Day. The Carolina Gay Association has asked that all gay men and women, and anyone who supports the gay rights movement, wear blue jeans.

Blue Jeans Day marks the close of Gay Awareness Week, an annual event designed to help increase student awareness of homosexuality. Seminars each year include workshops on different aspects of gay life in the Triangle area. But it's Blue Jeans Day that never fails to draw the most attention, creating the largest controversy.

By identifying the UNC gay population, Blue Jeans Day and the rest of Gay Awareness Week increases students' homophobia, a fear of homosexuality. Just look at yesterday's *Daily Tar Heel*. Many of the letters to the editor alluded to what was called the perversity of homosexuality, and to the CGA's "quest for attention and recognition" with Blue Jeans Day. Many students look at homosexuality as some strange, perhaps contagious disease. They avoid it whenever possible. That's why they're wearing khakis.

But what they don't realize is that their next door neighbor, classmate or close friend may be gay. According to the Kinsey Institute Report, 8 percent of all males are exclusively homosexual at some period during their lives.

Gay Awareness Week's approach is an idealistic one. If the event's only objective was to heighten awareness of homosexuality, it succeeded with Blue Jeans Day. But if another aim was to educate and inform students about homosexuality, it failed. Most students still won't understand. Instead, they will be insulted or threatened. When they got up this morning, showered and brushed their teeth, they had to think twice before putting on their pants. They probably cursed the "queers" who kept them from wearing a pair of comfortable jeans.

Blue Jeans Day is not, as many claim, a day for gays to pick each other up. Ironically, many will specifically refrain from wearing jeans so as not to bring attention to themselves or make anybody mad. They don't want to be hassled.

According to CGA president Joseph Carter, the rationale behind Blue Jeans Day is "to turn the tables on the 'straight' community" by forcing straight people to "decide whether or not to wear their jeans and 'risk' being identified as a gay person or a gay sympathizer." The rationale is logical, with good intent, but Blue Jeans Day is destined to breed animosity. It's a shame that most students will curse the CGA for a minor inconvenience and fail to realize that their feelings of confinement and fear are an everyday reality for the homosexual.

Testing quality

On March 2, the UNC Board of Governors and the North Carolina Board of Educators approved a proposal that would require education majors to pass an entrance examination by the end of their sophomore year. The exam, including questions from the National Teachers' Examination, will place a new emphasis on students' competency before they become teachers, making it an effective means of improving classroom education in North Carolina.

The exam is part of the Quality Assurance Program, which is designed to upgrade the qualifications of those persons seeking teacher certification in the N.C. public schools. The program was begun in 1978 when state educators after conducting a review of classroom teachers found the present procedures regarding teachers' competency inadequate. The standards apply to each school in the 16-campus UNC system as well as the state private schools.

Critics of the Quality Assurance Program have argued that new requirements may force a future shortage in school teachers. This is unlikely, however, given the present number of unemployed certified teachers in North Carolina. In addition, because of a decreasing number of school-age children, most schools now face cuts in teaching positions.

Instead, the program will eliminate the least qualified candidates for the job. New emphasis will be placed on who is to be admitted to teacher education programs and who is certified to teach. As UNC president William C. Friday said, the new resolutions will help develop a teaching program in league with the legal and medical professions.

The Quality Assurance Program by no means provides answers to all the problems facing teacher education in North Carolina. State educators perhaps should be more worried about keeping the qualified teachers in the classroom once they get them there. Because of a continued state salary freeze, many people no longer can afford to teach. New teaching requirements, however, should be an effective means of improving classroom education in North Carolina. By first increasing standards for the state's teachers, the program will ensure that quality education is continued for the students.

Reagan and House clash over defense spending

By CHRISTINE MANUEL

As President Ronald Reagan appealed to the American public for support of his defense budget Wednesday night, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a federal budget drawn up by the Democrats by a 229-196 vote. The plan, the first Democratic budget passed since Reagan took office, would slash the president's defense budget by \$30 billion and increase social spending by \$33 billion.

The vote came only 33 minutes before Reagan was scheduled to address the nation. In his speech, he outlined his new defense strategy and urged the American people to contact their congressmen and senators and voice their support for military spending. Reagan's new plan called for a technological approach to military development.

The two incidents may set up a classic confrontation between Reagan and the Democratically-controlled House. The president is sure to veto the House's legislation, but it remains to be seen if the House would attempt to override his veto.

The House vote was clearly partisan — only four Republicans joined the 225 Democrats who voted

for the bill, and only 36 Democrats opposed the budget.

Before the vote, Reagan had called the budget "a declaration of war" by the Democrats and their leader, Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts. And this was only the first battle.

French cabinet resigns

The entire French cabinet resigned Tuesday after President Francois Mitterrand's government devalued the franc for the third time. Mitterrand asked Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy to stay on and form another cabinet.

Dramshop still alive

The state House presented its version of Gov. Jim Hunt's Safe Roads Act to the floor Tuesday and may begin debate on the bill next week. The House bill is closer to the original bill submitted by Gov. Hunt than the Senate version. The House legislation contains the controversial dramshop provision which makes store and bar owners legally responsible for selling alcohol to intoxicated customers who later cause traffic accidents. The Senate had omitted that provision.

Apathy wins

Students had another chance to vote on the proposed increase in the Student Activity Fee Wednesday but again the votes will not be counted. Only 20 percent of the student body, or approximately 4,100 students, must vote in any campus election for the results to be valid. Still, a mere 9 percent actually cast their ballots. Once again, the issue remains unresolved.

Students have had the opportunity to vote on the proposal twice in the last two months, but their votes have never been counted. The first vote was thrown out by the Student Supreme Court citing that the Campus Governing Council had not allowed enough time before presenting the vote to the student body.

The fee increase is perhaps one of the most controversial issues to surface on campus this year. By not going to the polls, students demonstrated a lack of concern for the financial survival of many important campus organizations.

On Wednesday, apathy won the vote.

Christine Manuel, a sophomore journalism and political science major from Fayetteville, is state and national editor of *The Daily Tar Heel*.

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

A hero with a heart

Retired dentist Barney B. Clark, the world's first artificial heart recipient, died late Wednesday night. It was his 112th day with the new heart. By being the first man to voluntarily use the new device, Clark provided the medical field with a rare opportunity to improve cardiovascular technology.

Before receiving his new heart, Clark suffered from cardiomyopathy, a disease of the heart tissue which causes the heart to degenerate. He was near death before he received the revolutionary implant.

The knowledge gained from Clark's implantation may lead to many new developments in the medicine. His courage inspired a nation and gave hope to thousands of patients with heart conditions.

The resignations came after a French-German money crisis at a meeting of the European finance ministers in Brussels last weekend. World traders had been expected to trade weak francs for strong German marks and threatened to throw the European Economic Community into disarray. France had earlier threatened to withdraw its membership from the European Monetary System, which had been created to bring stability to the EEC.

Many former cabinet members cited France's growing economic problems, such as a widening deficit and unemployment, as their reasons for resigning. However, Finance Minister Jacques Delors is emerging as the key figure in the socialist government in its time of reorganization.

the "Southern Part of Heaven" publication. Use of a personal computer would provide instant access to these services.

Assuming that the personal computer would be used an average of 20 hours per week, SCAU estimates providing comparable service using the current University time-sharing system would cost on the order of \$4,000 per year. The IBM model requested by SCAU has a price tag of \$5,600, including all necessary peripherals. The impact of the machine would be immediate, given the complex nature of today's world. Moreover, this computer is expandable and will be able to serve the needs of student organizations for many years to come. Thus we feel that this expenditure is a small cost to incur once for so many large benefits to be reaped year after year.

Jack Mohr
 CGC Finance Committee
 District 23
 Darryll Hendricks
 SCAU computer project coordinator

Wear jeans anyway

To the editor:

There are those of us on the UNC campus who do not care what the CGA does. But we do not want our actions interpreted in the context of CGA quasi-activism. I, for one, always wear blue jeans, and the fact that I am wearing them today should not say anything at all to the world about the way I view the gay movement. I am opposed to the CGA's taking advantage of certain people's social consciousness to deny them freedom of choice in the way

they dress, if only for one day a year. I myself, make the choice of ignoring the CGA's call to blue jeans by acting as I always do — by wearing my blue jeans. If everyone else does the same, the gay blue jeans day will have the same effect on the minds of the populace as pouring a bucket of salt water into the ocean would have on the sea's salinity.

C. Alan Ross
 Carboro



All perverts gay?

To the editor:

Jase Valentine, in his letter condemning homosexuality ("Gay awareness activities under attack," *DTH*, March 24), characterized lesbians and gay men as those who "engage in acts that sicken both the mind and body" and "are sad and deviant people." Furthermore, he stated that homosexuality is "legally and morally a perversion."

This description is a violent affront to all homosexuals whose daily lives reflect none of these particular problems. However, the ignorance of his conclusions do not end there. Perhaps Valentine (and whoever it was with him that allowed him to use the first person plural) failed to realize that heterosexuals often exhibit these same deviant modes of behavior. It's true!

Printed directly above Valentine's letter was an article titled "When violence becomes a spectator sport" (*DTH*, March 24). It describes a woman being gang raped while 15 men cheered the attackers. Can we assume, from Valentine's description, that these attackers were homosexuals? They certainly have all the qualifications, but Valentine would probably choose to believe that these were just a few heterosexuals that tainted the majority. I would agree. I would also suggest to Valentine that he overcome his narrow-mindedness and judgemental character and think before he attacks. That, I hope, is part of the true spirit of Gay Awareness Week.

Pam Burwell
 Chapel Hill