

# COMMENTARY

## An afternoon date with Charles Kuralt

By GINIE LYNCH

He was dressed austere — blue sports coat, khakis and a tie. Sitting down and chatting with him in the antiquish decor of the Carolina Inn lobby, he seemed at ease but a bit tired. Still, there was the jovial, cagey grin. Throughout the ordeal of yet another interview with an eager, amateur journalist, he remained polite and thoughtful, analyzing and addressing each question with deliberate care.

Still, his eyes wandered off into space, unfocused at some spot at the top of my head when he spoke. He flicked the ashes of his cigarette with stubby fingers.

He could have been any local, North Carolina journalist, but he wasn't. He was Charles Kuralt.

Interviewing a journalist, especially a renowned one, is difficult. By their nature, journalists are precise with words and know the ropes of the interviewing game, which can result in a loss of spontaneity. Nevertheless, the afternoon date with Kuralt proved to be intriguing, if not dazzling.

Naturally, the conversation hovered about the subject of journalism. Kuralt said curiosity is the quality most important to a good journalist. "A sort of natural curiosity about things and people carries you a long way — to ask embarrassing questions to get to the heart of the matter — a certain quality that I don't have. That's why I like the features side of journalism so much. I was probably never suited by physique or temperament to be a real reporter — the type that covers wars and politics and riots."

Kuralt talked of attitudes in general toward journalists, namely the notion of why journalists have been viewed as liberals. "Are all journalists considered liberals?" Kuralt asked, rhetorically. "I know plenty of them at CBS that aren't. I think most good journalists are suspicious of such labels. It is true that journalists

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Charles Kuralt



tend to be liberal, then perhaps it is because they see a lot of suffering, economically. Don't they? And they probably see a good deal more of life's hardships than people in some other lines of work, like the wholesale grocery business.

The recent 60 Minutes trial and the question of the credibility of TV news reporting stirred a quick response from Kuralt. "My own opinion about that is that it was a case of good reporting, and even good reporters get sued from time to time."

"But I don't think there are any ramifications. CBS is always being sued by somebody; there are always 10 or 20 law suits going at once. I don't think people believe CBS any less because of Dr. Galloway's case."

Why, then did the press play up the issue so much? "Because it was Dan Rather. I don't think they overplayed the issue, I just don't think they did a particularly good job of reporting it. During the trial, the press went only on the days Rather was testifying and didn't cover the whole trial, so you did not get a very well-rounded piece of coverage."

Chapel Hill and his days at *The Daily Tar Heel* are among Kuralt's favorite recollections. Although he majored in history, not journalism, Kuralt said he had no trouble finding a job because he had been editor of *The Daily Tar Heel*, and it was understood that he would work for the *Charlotte Observer* afterward. In fact,

Kuralt said journalism majors weren't always so prevalent on the paper. "We tried to keep the journalism students off *The Daily Tar Heel* in my day, he said (jokingly?) "because we were afraid that they would try to take over the paper." Kuralt said that a journalism degree isn't necessary to go into journalism these days, but that it is certainly helpful in getting a job.

"*The Tar Heel* used to be a controversial paper, but it all depends on the editor. It varies year to year. Some years it's been very bland, some years very exciting, some years irresponsible."

Exposure to foreign cultures as a Latin American news correspondent in the early '60s has given the man a worldly view on issues and an added dimension to the personality of a reporter best known for his "On the Road" segments, feature pieces about American life. Still, it is a subject that elicits much enthusiasm from Kuralt.

"I got a kick out of living in Latin America. One country is so different from another down there. People think it is all the same throughout Latin America, that they are all guys with sombreros. They don't understand that Mexico is not a bit like Columbia and that Columbia is not a bit like Chile and so on."

"There's never been much interest in Latin America up here, but this will change if American troops end up in El Salvador. I found it very frustrating to work down

there because you'd have a pretty good story, but unless you had 'Fidel Castro' in the lead you'd have trouble getting it on the air. Mere changes in the government, unless they were accompanied by the words 'communist' and 'violence', just didn't interest the networks."

Kuralt blinked sleepily and looked at his watch. It was almost time for him to leave to catch his plane back to life in the fast-lane city of New York.

"What are the most redeeming qualities of American life Kuralt has witnessed over the years?" So many things. The possibility for changes for the better. The Civil Rights Movement, The Women's Movement, environmental issues, consumerism. This is a much more just and humane country today, I think, than it was 20 years ago. And that is the nature of America — there is always that movement in this country towards becoming more fair and living up to ideals. You don't always find this in older countries."

Many television personalities suffer from overblown egos, but such is not the case with Kuralt. Indeed he exhibits almost boyish delight when signing autographs outside of Hamilton Hall for students, after addressing the N.C. Scholastic Press Association Convocation Monday.

He is a breath of fresh air — a man with a heart and sensitivity in a world sometimes beleaguered by abrasive reporters.

Kuralt's final words, true to his character, were optimistic. Yes, he has enjoyed his career in journalism. "It's a wonderful way to spend life, and I've certainly never been bored. And there's a lot to be said just for that. Journalism is a chance to open up people's eyes a bit and their minds and sometimes their hearts."

*Genie Lynch, a senior Latin American Studies from Richmond, Va. is associate editor of The Tar Heel.*

## THE WEEK IN REVIEW

# Lt. Gov. Green charged with 6 counts of bribery

By JEFF HIDAY

Big news around the state this week is Lt. Gov. Jimmy Green's indictment Monday on six counts of accepting bribes and conspiring to accept bribes. On Tuesday, Green surrendered to state officials (who made three copies of his fingerprints and took two mug shots) and was released into his attorney's custody without bail. No trial date has been set.

Green, who has said that only death will keep him from running for governor in 1984, seems nonplussed by the situation. Just before the indictment was handed down Monday, Green told supporters, "I have not let you down. And I don't intend to." That's his closest statement to a denial of wrongdoing.

Instead, Green blames his troubles on political harassment and biased reporting. He cries for due process, and rightly so. But the lieutenant governor also laments the considerable tarnishing his image has undergone. Considering his past actions, Green deserves it.

In 1978, Green was linked to the fraudulent practices of a Virginia tobacco warehouse. Green acknowledged that in 1977 he accepted \$4,774 in cash from a contractor who had done paving at one of Green's warehouses and had been paid about the same amount for the job. Green said he spent the cash for personal expenses.

Ironically, this time Green is accused of consenting to receive a \$10,000 bribe from a fictitious organization called Americans for Quality Government.

### Hold on tight

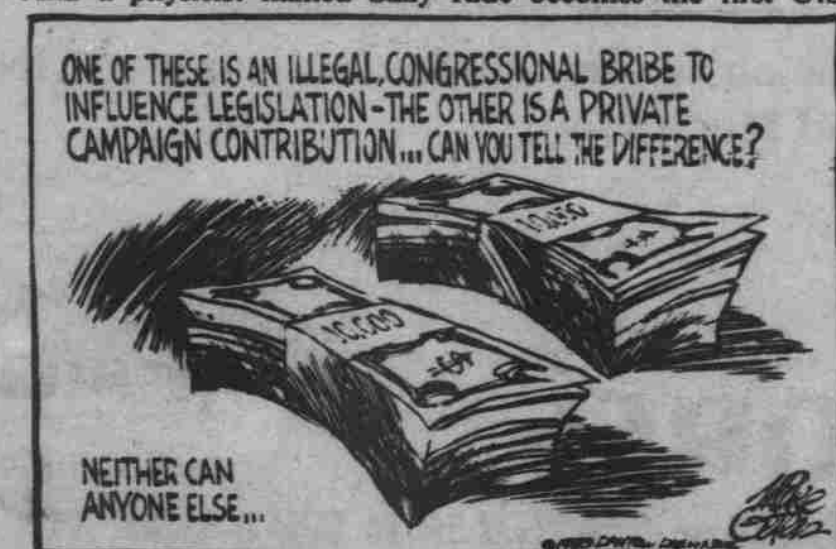
President Reagan appointed Paul A. Volcker to a second four-year term as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board Saturday and declared that Volcker is "as dedicated as I am to continuing the fight against inflation."

Volcker, known for his tight restrictions on the supply of money to the nation's banks, is expected to win easy confirmation by the Senate. But critics blame him for overkill in battling inflation and say his policies caused more business bankruptcies and higher unemployment than the country had experienced in 40 years.

Nevertheless, the reappointment will ensure fiscal continuity and avoid a breaking-in period for a new chairman. Economic analysts predict the reappointment will mean a stronger recovery this year, continuing into 1984.

### Far out

A space probe exits the solar system for galaxies unknown. And a physicist named Sally Ride becomes the first U.S.



woman in space. Those two "firsts" make up the incredibly successful formula for intense media coverage and increased public interest in the great Blue Yonder.

The space shuttle Challenger sped toward its final days in orbit so smoothly Tuesday that NASA had to dip into the dictionary for some fresh superlatives. The flight ceased to be "perfectly nominal," but instead "spectacular."

The shuttle, set to land Friday at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Fla., carried two communications satellites, an assortment of scientific experiments and a West German satellite with which the crew played a 16,000 mph game of tag — chasing then recapturing the 1½-ton satellite from the spacecraft's cargo bay.

### Pope in Poland

Pope John Paul II visited his countrymen in Poland this week in an attempt to secure freedom for Poles. Still, the government clings to martial law and warned the Roman Catholic Church that continued opposition demonstrations during the pope's visit would harm church-state relations and delay the lifting of military rule.

In their most overt act of censorship of the papal visit, Poland's Communist authorities briefly suspended closed-circuit television broadcasting of events at a mine that is a stronghold for the outlawed Solidarity union. "Polish TV will not broadcast the activities of the political opposition," a government official explained.

At least, they're sitting up and taking notice.

*Jeff Hiday, a junior journalism and political science major from Charlotte, is editor of The Tar Heel.*