

The Daily Tar Heel

91st year of editorial freedom

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King's Day

When Congress last week approved a bill to make Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday, the lawmakers rose above the mud-slinging of ultra-conservatives by rightfully recognizing the slain civil rights leader. From 1986 on, every third Monday in January will be set aside to honor a man who fought for equality for all people.

The new holiday did not pass easily through the Senate chamber. Background information dredged up last week harped on the fact that a couple of King's close friends were believed to be high-level communists, the same information that enabled Attorney General Robert Kennedy to authorize FBI wiretapping of King in 1963. The records of the wiretapped conversation have been court sealed, not to be opened until 2027.

Sen. Jesse Helms didn't want to wait that long to get into the sealed documents, which he's convinced would reveal King to be a communist. He argued against the holiday on the ground that King's communist associations made him unworthy of such an honor.

It was Robert Kennedy's brother, Massachusetts Sen. Edward Kennedy who objected to Helms' arguments, and rightfully so. When King was wiretapped in 1963, his right to privacy was destroyed. Here was a man working for civil rights for all people and his private life was under surveillance.

Helms' fear of communism should not overshadow King's accomplishments. He refused to use violence as a way to fight for his cause. Instead, he used moral persuasion to help settle a lifetime of conflict between blacks and whites. Helms isn't considering the moral implications behind the holiday — which is that nonviolent action for social and political progress is vital.

Joke's on whom?

Q. Why did God make man before he made woman? A. Because he didn't want any advice on how to do it.

That's one of the jokes used by psychologists at Antioch University in Los Angeles who are trying to match senses of humor with personality types. And, although tamer by comparison, it's just like those in a pair of obnoxious jokebooks that have grabbed a firm hold on the book-buying market both nationally and in Chapel Hill. *Truly Tasteless Jokes* and *Truly Tasteless Jokes Two* have been on *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* best-seller lists since last spring.

Does such success illuminate a normally dark side of society? Critics say yes, that the success of the once-taboo volumes is a reflection of declining standards. The psychologists say that men who enjoy jokes such as the one above — or women who like similar jokes about men — are said to have "tough poise" personalities, characteristic of aloof people who believe sexual stereotypes are true. Barbara Tuchman, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, says, "All these terribly tasteless, disgusting books and films represent a breakdown of decency and of standards of taste."

It may be so, but the jokes in these books have been around for years. Many of us heard them first from our parents or older siblings. And the technique of singling out a group and making fun of its characteristics has been practiced for ages. That doesn't make it right, of course, but neither does it lend credence to some who charge that the jokebooks are "a sad testament to the taste of this country."

Q. Is sex dirty? A. Yes, if it's done right.

The jokes are typically a paragraph or two in length. They use slang and often are filled with sexual references. They frequently employ ethnic and racial epithets. Punch lines commonly depict members of minority groups as shiftless or stupid, as connivers or drunkards. They include chapters about blacks, Jews, Poles and white Protestants, as well as jokes about homosexuals, the handicapped and the blind.

Publishers, of course, think that critics are taking the books too seriously. As Sandy Bodner, a spokesman for Ballantine Books, publisher of the two best-selling collections, said, "We're not interested in making any grand statements about American culture, but the books seem to have struck a chord because they are selling, and we haven't gotten any letters of protest."

The publishers are correct in saying that, no, the books do not reflect an overall immoral culture. However, before any of us laughs at the next joke, perhaps we should consider what makes that joke funny. Inequalities and prejudice certainly continue to exist today. And that's nothing to laugh about.

The Daily Tar Heel

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Revenge of passion

By JEFF HIDAY

Saturday night, it being the last free night before the end of Fall Break — a "vacation" for catching up on school work — found me at home. I had to study. I had to catch up. Only one night left.

Sifting through the pile of textbooks I was supposed to read over the break, I picked out a novel and dusted it off. It was supposed to be the easiest one we had to read in this particular class. I stretched out on my bed and settled in.

Thirty minutes and three pages later, I decided it was time for a break. So I walked into my sister's bedroom, turned on the TV and flipped around until I found the Cable News Network. I got comfortable.

Fifteen minutes and 30 news stories later, CNN trumpeted an upcoming interview with Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, supposedly his first television interview in 12 years.

I'd about dozed off, but then Burger was on the screen talking about how he does not believe the public's need for revenge against criminals is "totally wrong."

That perked my ears, as I knew this was the sort of thing that would send my boss here, Kerry, through the ceiling. So I sat up.

"There was a time," Burger was saying, "when I shared the view that retribution, which some call revenge, was totally wrong. I'm not so sure."

I'm not either. But even as I expected a more straight answer from the chief justice of the United States, I was nevertheless heartened by Burger's flexibility, his display of very human nature.

Conviction of the heart, and of the mind, is a characteristic valued highly by society. It is considered a strong, virtuous trait. For a man with power, a leader, it can be dangerous to display a lack of resolve.

That's what Burger is doing when he says he's not "so sure" about an issue considered by many to be

clear-cut, one that separates, in many eyes, the conservatives from the liberals, the Americans from the Commies and Pinkos, the men from the boys. But the chief justice, of course, cannot be expected to come up with all the answers — none of us can. He and his associates are asked every day to answer questions of great or far-reaching consequences. Still, the justices can do no more than the rest of us, simply to consider and weigh carefully the issue at hand.

"Retribution has got to be a factor," Burger went on to say. "When a terrible crime is committed in a community, there is a feeling of outrage on the part of decent people. That must have some outlet."

So true, but so un-liberal. I could see the bleeding-hearts cringing in horror.

communities today, especially the smaller, more closely knit ones, would be above rounding up a deadly posse and meting out their own justice to, say, a sexual molester. Their revenge, although highly illegal, might still win public approval because of its "admirable" intentions: elimination of a threat to society.

We just can't ignore emotions. If you have a younger brother or sister, you undoubtedly know how difficult it is to be "mature" when the kid interrupts your long-distance call to a girlfriend; kicks, slaps and bites you; and otherwise does everything possible to be a pest and get your attention. Mom says you should bring the kid up to your level and not let him bring you down to his level.

It's an issue considered by many to be clear-cut, one that separates the conservatives from the liberals, the Americans from the Commies and Pinkos, the men from the boys.

Burger, 75, is generally regarded as a conservative judge. Even so, columnist James J. Kilpatrick has highlighted facets of Burger that belie the justice's right-wing image. "If by 'conservative' we mean someone who prefers the old and tried to the new and untried, Burger is practically a Bolshevik."

His commentary on punishment and retribution certainly is reasonable. The "outlet" Burger speaks of has been created by dictates of human nature. In the old days, when cowboys caught a rustler or a murderer, their outlet was the lynching tree. Not only was it for the cowboys a fulfilling release of anger and hatred, but in addition it served as an effective deterrent to would-be rustlers and murderers.

Today we might consider that sort of punishment barbaric, besides being illegal. But we are not above taking the law into our own hands. Few American

Careful extrapolation from the big brother-little sister situation will produce a scenario that similarly typifies societal reaction to a close-to-home, violent crime.

Burger addressed the problem. He doesn't provide the definitive answer, but he has reached a most reasonable and helpful conclusion. While revenge cannot "realistically" be ruled out, the chief justice said, "it should not be the dominant factor. The dominant factor should be what is good for society as a whole, and what's good for society as a whole must take into account the particular."

Jeff Hiday, a junior journalism and history major from Charlotte, is associate editor of The Daily Tar Heel.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Without BSM, no cultural outlet

To the editor:

In the letter titled "Why BSM priority?" (*DTH*, Oct. 14) Robert Bates and John Downing speak of the irony that the Black Student Movement attempts to segregate itself from the "University community in sheltered meeting locations and closed environments." Obviously Bates and Downing know little about the organization.

The BSM is not working toward segregation but works to ensure that the presence and culture of blacks shall always exist on this campus. Without the BSM,

the concerns and interests of most of those students who belong to the organization (and most black students here) would not be met. The choral groups, the dance groups and the dramatic oral performing arts groups in this university community exclude black content. Without the BSM, such cultural materials would be unavailable to black students on this campus. Thus, the BSM is not segregating itself, it is responding to a culturally and academically segregated situation which always has existed at UNC.

To clear the air of misconceptions, the

membership of the BSM is open to all UNC students, faculty and administrators.

As for meetings, they are held in Upen-do Lounge on the first floor of Chase. I invite Bates and Downing as well as the rest of the "University community" to come to a BSM meeting or visit a rehearsal or performance of one of the BSM sub-groups: Opeyo Dancers, Ebony Readers or Gospel Choir.

You may find that there is something to be learned in the black cultural experience.

And then, too, maybe you will be able to understand that the BSM should be given space, not "priority" in the new South Campus Union.

Bates and Downing, in their call for "equality," are other examples of those whites on this campus who would prefer that blacks have absolutely nothing.

Smith Turner
Carboro

Quit moaning

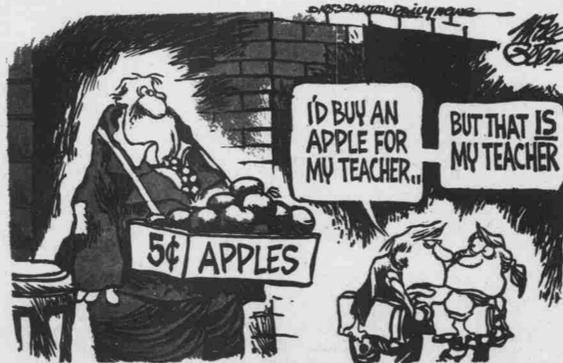
To the editor:

I am writing in response to Mr. "I-hate-Flashdance-fashion" ("Sick of tacky shirts," *DTH*, Oct. 14). Where does Balram get off moaning about how "tacky" the latest fashion is? I don't like getting up for my 8 o'clock classes, but I don't moan about it. If he is such an authority on what looks good and what is acceptable to wear, then maybe his future lies at the New York Institute of Fashions and Design.

Anyone can tell you that cut-offs are a

fad, and fads are what make the fashion industry alive and innovative. Fortunately for Balram, cut shirts, like miniskirts, will eventually wear themselves out. In the meantime, Balram should keep his conservative train of thought to himself. In addition, he should take a more careful look around, because there are some very good-looking people wearing his so-called "cheap and tacky" styles.

Virginia Augusta
Hinton James



Punish W.G. thieves

To the editor:

I doubt that I shall be applauded for my belief that the theft of Woollen and Fetzer gym T-shirts is an honor offense and should be treated as such. I am not amused, as most students seem to be, by the fact that it is so incredibly common to see students wearing the gray W.G. and F.G. T-shirts around campus.

Any clothing store would press charges for theft of this sort, for the simple reason that it costs a great deal of money to allow this practice to continue. The same principle is true at UNC, except in this case the taxpayers of North Carolina bear the cost.

However important the economic rationale for a crackdown on T-shirt

theft may be, the most important reason is moral obligation. In addition to the University's commitment to education, it also shares a responsibility for its students' development of an ethical perspective. When the University does nothing about theft as epidemic as the gym T-shirt problem, it is silently condoning it and therefore reneging on its responsibility to the students.

For these reasons, I suggest that students caught wearing W.G. and F.G. T-shirts and sweatshirts be turned in to the honor committee and severe punishment be exacted.

G. Patrick Fields
Granville West

An interesting education

By DOUGLAS LANDAU

America — a land of opportunity and intellectual freedom — is rich in educational resources. Institutions of higher education abound. Our universities with their solemn buildings, their competitive admission policies and their glossy brochures seem to offer each potential student an environment conducive to learning. Supposedly, academics reign supreme in our sacred havens of higher learning.

Each year, numerous serious students enter the college experience with similar expectations. As such a student, I contend that each student is inevitably in for a rude awakening. Many find college a place of higher recreation (as opposed to higher education) due to an environment that is filled with distractions.

Many of today's campuses resemble fully equipped recreational facilities. In a typical dorm, the television offers instant gratification and an escape from the workload and added responsibility of college life. Music, from acid rock to classical, can be heard emanating from various rooms in what seems to be an endless barrage of musical tastes. Our stomachs are cared for by businesses who often cater to college students by offering free delivery. A simple telephone call and signature on a check is all that is required to satisfy a pang of hunger. Consistent with the fact that humans are gregarious animals, parties are not difficult to find, for they often occur. The non-stop revelry, the pounding music and the freely flowing beer serve to release college tensions. Somehow, just as one is getting prepared to work, some fellow student offers temptation in the form of playing tennis or taking a swim at the pool. Although these examples are generalizations, they are representative of typical college distractions that tend to create a struggle between the academic and recreational aspects of college life.

Granted that the college environment is filled with distractions, it is important to evaluate what causes many students to yield to these distractions. Academic pressure to perform, coupled with the adjustment to the added responsibilities of college life, is certainly a valid claim that is common to virtually all new students. College work often requires focusing one's energies at a higher level of concentration. This high level can be easily disrupted, and it is often difficult to regain that level of concentration

again without a strong mental effort. And so, it is time for a "study break." A study break often takes the form of a recreational activity. The 1978 edition of *The Random House Dictionary* defines recreation as "a pastime, sport, or exercise as a means to refresh one's body or mind." Therefore, recreation can be viewed as fuel for the mind that will enable a student to resume his studying with renewed intensity. Yet there still exist a struggle between the academic and recreational aspects of college life. Overindulgence in recreational activity can be detrimental. The key appears to be moderation.

Admittedly, there are some students who seem to over-indulge in recreational activity and still manage to keep a good academic standing. Perhaps these students possess a great deal of natural ability, or maybe these students just spend their time at study more efficiently than most. It is more likely, however, that since we are all individuals, the line between moderation and overindulgence differs from person to person. What may be too much recreation for one person may be too little for another. Therefore, I contend that recreation can be advantageous to the person who participates within his or her personal boundaries of moderation.

College officials are aware that recreation is an essential part of the college experience. They know that recreation can have a positive effect when the privilege is not abused. This is why recreation is made accessible to students. College academics and recreational activity do not have to work against each other. Together, they can improve a student's work performance and make his free time more enjoyable and satisfying. If the college's role is to shape individuals into well-rounded, well-adjusted adults, then recreation is a means to that end in that it gives each student the responsibility of budgeting time, choosing priorities and learning the value of moderation.

Douglas Landau is a freshman business major from West Hempstead, N.Y.

Q. A keg or a can:
Which represents overindulgent recreation?

A. It depends on the individual.