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The Daily Tar Heel

92nd year of editorial freedom

The beef may not matter after all

Frank Bruni

The Ferret's Wheel

Yet none of these advertisements has made quite the impression of a commercial that, to the best of my knowledge, debuted some six or seven weeks ago. That commercial, of course, is the one for Wendy's hamburgers. It is a simple television spot: Three elderly women stand in the well-lit, antiseptic atmosphere of a not too mythical fast-food restaurant and exchange elliptical remarks about a gargantuan hamburger bun with, lo and behold, no hamburger inside of it. What has propelled this commercial into the national limelight is not so much the humorous befuddlement expressed by the most exasperated of the three women, but the very three words through which she conveys her amazement and vents her frustration. Her query — "Where's the beef?" — has overnight become *The* question applicable to any situation in which the promise exceeds its fulfillment, or the showcase transcends the show.

The creators of the Wendy's commercial have, no doubt, tapped into something more in the American character than mere dissatisfaction with many of the nation's fast-food chains. "Where's the beef?" has already become the criticism of

anything or anybody seemingly devoid of substance, a criticism most vividly displayed by former Vice President Walter Mondale in his attack on Sen. Gary Hart, whose New Ideas platform, I suppose, is the bun, and whose alleged dearth of real ideas would, by extrapolation of the metaphor, be the missing burger. In light of the phrase's ever-spreading popularity, an argument could be made that the simple question of the Wendy's woman is the lament of a generation weaned on empty promises and subjected to endless public deceptions. Or that the question represents a bare-bones indictment of the superficiality and ostentation of contemporary American society. And such arguments will undoubtedly be made, but not here. I'll leave that to Susan Sontag or some other self-proclaimed critic of contemporary culture.

What I find most interesting about the "Where's the beef?" query is the irony of its inclusion in an advertisement. After all, advertising is the business of garnishing, of promising and seducing. Successful advertising campaigns concern themselves not so much with the product, "the beef," but with its packaging, its showcase, the fluffy bun upon which it is presented. The Wendy's commercial is a paradigm of advertising at its most effective.

And no one, especially those working in the corporations that pay millions for it every year, would argue that the bun doesn't make a difference. As advertisers know all too well, in part because their very existence thrives upon it, the bun often matters much more than the beef. Without the appealing showcase, the product stands the chance of never even being tried, let alone preferred. Advertising campaigns that zero in on the merits of the product itself — the soporific explanation that four out of five dentists recommend Trident sugarless gum for patients who chew gum, for example — are often the most easily forgotten. The Pepsi people certainly seem to ascribe to this belief; their flashy new commercials featuring pop superstar Michael Jackson represent a striking departure from the clinical "Pepsi Challenges" of yesterday.

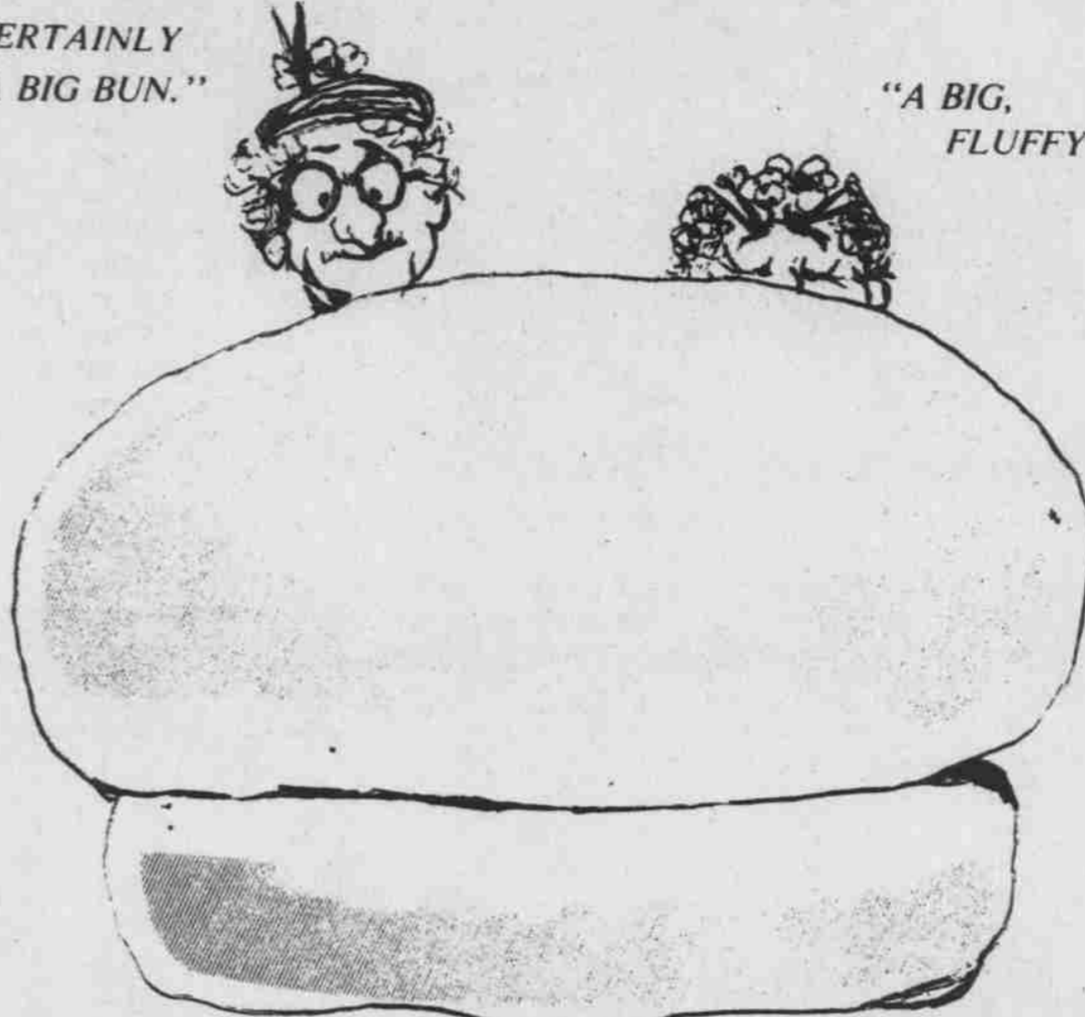
So it is not so surprising that we come away from the Wendy's commercial with little knowledge about the Wendy's hamburger but with a distinct memory of an irresistible elderly woman and her short question. I have been told that the face of the Wendy's woman will soon appear on mugs and t-shirts. I don't doubt that her visage will also find its way to posters and other prominent displays, and that the words she has made famous — "Where's the beef?" — will be printed below her face, wherever it appears. The people at Wendy's are onto something, and they know it. They've got one of the grandest, fluffiest buns the advertising industry has ever cooked up. The beef may not wind up mattering much at all.

Frank Bruni, a sophomore English major from Avon, Conn., is associate editor of *The Daily Tar Heel*.

Contemporary culture has certainly not lacked for memorable advertising campaigns. Who can ever forget the Alka Seltzer man, face contorted and feet pointed in the direction of the nearest bathroom, expressing his disbelief over having eaten "the whole thing"? Or the hefty middle-aged woman sobbing over the expense of reaching out and touching her far-away son in MCI's brilliant send-up of the late Ma Bell's pleas for long distance intimacy? Or the haunting, sinister catch phrases for such films as *Alien* ("In space, no one can hear you scream") or the otherwise negligible *Jaws II* ("Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...")?

As a matter of sad fact, the rare times I regret watching so little television usually come about because I hear friends discussing commercials, not programs, that I've yet to see. I can remember suffering through an entire evening of sitcoms, all of which seemed populated by either precocious prepubescents or borderline senility cases, in an attempt to get just one brief glimpse of messy Marvin, the boy whose passion for Nestle's Quick was only eclipsed in notoriety by his ability to engineer household havoc. Although weeks elapsed between my first efforts to meet Marvin and my ultimate prime-time encounter with him, I was entertained during my wait by the pompous, aloof mechanics in Midas muffler commercials and the rambunctious bar crowd in the series of commercials for Lite beer from Miller.

"IT CERTAINLY IS A BIG BUN."



"A BIG, FLUFFY BUN."

Perceptions mold standards

Integrity and propriety are two virtues we expect of law enforcement officials; indeed, they should be as far above blame as possible. The Attorney General, the nation's top cop as head of the Justice Department, should have an especially sterling reputation. With the possible exception of Supreme Court justices, the Attorney General is the foremost official forming standards for the behavior of all government officials. The mere perception of misconduct by this cabinet officer, then, can be as damaging as the reality. White House Counselor Edwin Meese III, President Reagan's appointee to the soon-to-be-vacated job, is heavily tainted by suspicions of wrongdoing. His appointment to the Attorney General position should not be confirmed by the Senate judiciary committee.

The president is usually granted the cabinet level officers of his choice, provided they meet minimal standards of propriety. Meese, however, while possessing adequate law enforcement experience, meets no such ethical standards. He stands accused of unethical, if not necessarily illegal, conduct in his own financial dealings, in his alleged use of influence to secure jobs for friends, and in his activities in the 1980 presidential campaign. Specifically, the suspicions are that:

- In violation of the Ethics in Government Act, Meese underreported his income in financial disclosure statements by more than \$10,000 in 1980 and 1981.

- Meese failed to disclose a \$15,000 interest-free loan from an assistant, Edwin Thomas, to his wife. Possibly acting on inside information, she then invested the money in a company which subsequently received a special government exemption to get a \$5-million loan. It is il-

legal to speculate in stock on the basis of concrete knowledge not available to the general public.

- Thomas himself was later named a regional administrator in San Francisco for the General Services Administration. His wife Gretchen got a federal job in the Merit Systems Protection Board, which is headed by a long-time friend of Meese.
- After organizing a \$60,000 loan for Meese, the White House counselor's accountant was appointed chairman of the U.S. Postal Service's Board of Governors.

- Developer Thomas Barrack took a \$32,500 loss for Meese in handling the sale of Meese's house in California. Barrack has since become a deputy undersecretary of Interior.

- Bank officers, who gave Meese \$480,000 in loans and tolerated 15 missed mortgage payments, also got government jobs in Washington.

- While Meese claims he played no part in the Reagan campaign's procurement of key Carter campaign documents, Meese's recently released campaign files show that he received a detailed description of Carter's election eve appeal — three days before the election.

Cynics argue that patronage has always been part of Washington politics. But, drop by drop, the slow flow of coincidences uncovered by the Senate is dissolving trust in Meese. The perception is growing in the public's mind that the man Reagan wants in charge of justice has skeletons in his closet. And when it comes to public trust and standards for officials' behavior, perceptions often outweigh even the truth. The shadows clinging to Meese's name make him unfit to serve as the next Attorney General.

Forced conservatism

It's almost enough to make you feel sorry for them. After having to deal with the financial mess they found themselves in last week, Campus Governing Council members must now turn around and begin the laborious two-week process of budgeting money for next year.

The task always has its unpleasant moments; inevitably, programs or entire student organizations have to be cut, and that's not popular. But this year, and for this particular CGC, the job promises to be especially difficult. For one thing, there's not enough money to go around. When the CGC Finance Committee begins its quantitative hearings today, it will be considering requests for funding from 35 organizations — three more than last year — and there will be no General Reserve to supplement the revenues it expects from student fees. The \$70,000 the council took from the reserve last year, the failure of the student fee increase and the \$60,000 loss from last year's Carolina Concert for Children have left the well dry. As CGC speaker Reggie Holley puts it, "This year

there's no cookie jar to dip into."

What all this means, of course, is that the CGC must be extremely cautious with what funds it does have available; the temptation is to give full funding to any program that has a degree of merit.

The temptation for this year's CGC may be even greater. Now that the ultra-conservative members of two years ago have left the council, and with the election of eight SEEDS members to the council last month, the ideological bent of the council has taken a definite, more liberal turn.

Of course, being politically liberal does not necessarily translate into being fiscally liberal, and most of the CGC members appear to understand the distinction. While Holley says he will advise against "cutting for the sake of cutting," he also says that the CGC knows it must exercise some type of fiscal responsibility. "We don't have the choice of being liberal," he said.

If all the CGC members come to that realization, the council can't help but produce an equitable budget.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Feminists not raving man-haters

To the editor:

It's hard to believe that in 1984, someone can dismiss women and men rallying against women's oppression as a bunch of lesbians and braburners. I'm referring to Jennifer Keller's article, "Fanaticism unhealthy and offensive" (*DTH*, March 23). These were common terms used to dismiss the women's movement in the early '70s. (In fact, no one ever did burn their bras even back then). Those opposed to women's liberation have always

dismissed feminists as fanatical, raving man-haters and tried to make them look silly and unimportant. It reminds me of the rednecks who shouted "Commie dykes go home," to the women at the Seneca peace encampment who dared to be angry over the prospect of nuclear war. While Keller says she is for women's rights, by making these comments she is falling into a long anti-feminist tradition.

As one of the organizers of the ral-

To the editor:

Why is it that when something of real significance happens the *DTH* never fails to either completely miss it or completely miss the point of it? I'm speaking specifically about the coverage (or lack of) the *DTH* gave to a speak-out against women's oppression on March 15. The coverage took the form of a column ridiculing the women who spoke out against this very real oppression ("Fanaticism unhealthy and offensive," *DTH*, March 23). Now the reason they were attacked was precisely because they did speak out against the oppression of women and not about something acceptable like the Equal Rights Amendment. The speakers at the rally spoke to the very real fact that

women are denied any equitable standing in society.

I'm sure the justification for this goes something like, "if you can keep half the people down you must be doing something right." It's time women and men say they've had enough of this whole history of oppression and demand something more than just equal pay for equal work. That demand has to be a society free of exploitation in which all its members are equal participants.

Because this oppression is the oldest and because present society is so closely tied up in its existence, it is no wonder that those who see it clearly and rightfully speak out against it are attacked. At the rally the speakers were attacked by reactionaries, but many more gathered in support of the message the rally gave. To be attacked in the *DTH* is not a big deal; it means the speakers must have been doing something right. But in the article, the speakers were accused of oversimplification, and I think this is in fact what the author is guilty of. If the author thinks the complex problem of women's oppression can be solved by equal pay or the ERA, well, then she's wrong. Finally, I'd like to thank the speakers for having the courage to strongly take a stand on this very difficult issue, it would have been refreshing if the *DTH* had done the same.

Craig Carlson
Carrboro

ly, I think over our list of speakers and wonder what Keller is talking about when she says there were no "hard facts" presented. Is she talking about the woman who spoke of her experiences as a peace corps worker in Benin, or of the woman who read from the Winter Soldier Investigations about the treatment of Vietnamese women by American soldiers, or about Holly Near discussing her trip to Nicaragua and the participation of women in the revolution there, — what is Keller talking about? When she characterizes the rally as "condemning all men," I wonder if she heard law student Rob Gelblum speak or the guy who spoke as a Vietnam vet.

Both men talked about how they supported the rally and how important it is for men to fight against women's oppression. Several men helped to organize the rally. These men recognize that men often play the role of oppressor in relation to women, but they reject that role and fight against it. Besides the fact that the rally mainly targeted institutional sexism and not individual men.

As far as "raving emotions," yes not individual men.

As far as "raving emotions," yes we were emotional, angry, sad, outraged. Since Keller summarizes the fight for women's liberation as "equal pay for equal work," it's no wonder that she's not too emotional.

However, at the rally we spoke against rape (the New Bedford case specifically), imperialism and Third World women, lesbian oppression, wife beating, sexual harassment on the job and in the streets, women's lack of political power and economic opportunities, women's lack of control over their bodies and violence against women in the media, to name a few. The only sane response to these outrages is anger.

It was announced three times at the rally that there was going to be an evening program where we could examine these issues in more depth, since it's hard to really have a dialogue in the Pit. However, Keller probably didn't hear this either.

I would invite Keller to really examine women's struggles, to read feminist writers like Brownmiller, Dworkin, Barbara Smith, Ellen Willis, Cherrie Moraga, Rowbotham, to name a few, and see if she's not left feeling angry. I would also invite her to discuss women's situation at length with the fellow who said, "They're all lesbians," and I bet she'll find that someone who would make such an ignorant and homophobic remark, actually opposes women's liberation no matter how rationally and politely you make the case.

Marilyn Ghezzi
Chapel Hill

One bad apple...

To the editor:

Let me be the first to give credit where credit is due and thank Joe Simpson and all his "fellow-escorts" for their many hours of "concern," not to mention the walks home. ("Escort Enlightened," *DTH*, March 19). I really do believe that most guys are genuinely interested in the safety and welfare of their female friends and acquaintances, even female strangers. It is just a shame that a few bad apples can spoil the whole bunch. Take it from me guys, once you've had a bad apple you don't add apple-bobbing to your list of new hobbies. Maybe the reason you don't get

more appreciation is because no one knows who you are! Lots of girls would rather risk making it home alone than calling a perfect stranger to walk with them. Why ask for trouble? It's nothing personal, but you can't blame a girl for being choosy about her protector. We've all heard of the "wolf in sheep's clothing."

Really, you are appreciated, and my only regret is that there are not more around just like you. Joe Simpson, you are a credit to your gender.

M. Sloan Barnhill
Hinton James

Aswering for dollars

To the editor:

Thank you for your article ("Survey sent out to evaluate libraries," *DTH*, March 19) concerning the questionnaires on library services at UNC, which we have recently distributed.

I would like to make a few more points about our survey.

First, in addition to the 800 faculty members and 800 undergraduate students you mentioned, 800 graduate students have been sent questionnaires. Slightly different

questionnaires were prepared for each of the three groups, and recipients were selected at random from official campus mailing lists.

Second, undergraduate and graduate students who complete and return their questionnaires will be eligible for a \$50 cash prize to be awarded at a drawing April 26, 10:30 a.m., in Davis Library. You do not have to be present to win.

Finally, questionnaires can be returned through Campus Mail to Willy Owen, Collection Development

Department, Davis Library or they can be deposited in specially designated drop boxes at Davis Library circulation desk, Undergraduate Library circulation desk, Wilson Library exit control desk, Art library, Brauer Library, Chapin Library, Chemistry library, Couch Library, Geology library, Library Science library and Music library. Recipients are urged to return their questionnaires by March 30.

Bob Anthony
Task Force on User Needs.

Where everybody's a winner

By KIMBALL CROSSLEY

I am depressed.

My Tar Heels were victims of a one Knight stand, and now I have no one to root for, no team to quench my unending thirst for sports.

I tried very hard this weekend to find a substitute for Dean Smith's team. God knows how I tried. I decided to root for Wake Forest, figuring that if they want all the way they would make it three in a row for North Carolina teams.

It was fun for a while, even if it was aggravating. I learned how hard it was to rely on the amazing inconsistencies of Delahey Rudd (off the foot one minute in the bottom of the net the next). After Friday night's game, I also had to deal with the guilt that followed as I successfully rooted Ray Meyer's team out of the tourney once and for all.

Then Sunday my new team took the big fall also. Akeem "the Dream" Olajuwon playing the starring role in Wake's nightmare.

Sunday night my predicament became more apparent. Four teams left: the "they-play-like-they're-off-the-streets-of-New-York-but-they're-really-off-the-streets-of-Nigeria" Houston Cougars; the so-called "Best-team-that-money-can-buy" Kentucky Wildcats; the Georgetown Hoyas, who I thought would make a nice bridesmaid to UNC once again; and the "Ha-Ha-We-beat-the-team-that-beat-you" Virginia Cavaliers.

Not much of a choice, huh?

Thoughts of Othell Wilson cutting down the nets in Seattle are not going to keep me going for a whole week.

I chose Virginia. I even rooted for them to beat Indiana. I hope the Ralph-less Cavs give the ACC its third straight NCAA title, even if I do have to listen to my friends from UVa. for a whole year.

But you see, I did it reluctantly. That's why I'm writing this. I can't be reluctant about such things. Thoughts of Othell Wilson cutting down the nets in Seattle are not going to keep me going for a whole week.

I need something else.

The NIT is not the answer (who's heard of Southwest Louisiana?). The USFL is not the answer — I can't name two players on the San Antonio Gunslingers. Baseball is not the answer; its real season is still a week away, and I can't stand the false impressions given by spring training (example: My beloved Mets are 10-7 in the Grapefruit League.) Should I make reservations for the World Series?

Wait.

I've got it.

The NBA.

Of course. Why didn't I think of that before? The NBA, where everyone wins, no one is disappointed. Twenty-win seasons for all! At least one victory over the team of your choice nearly every year. You talk about post-season berths? Nearly 70 percent of the teams get them in the NBA. And no shocking upset exits in the NBA. No tears. No one Knight stands. At least three strikes and you're out in the NBA.

Go NBA!

Heck. At least in the NBA, if my team loses, I can laugh at 'em.

Kimball Crossley, a junior dramatic art and RTVMP major from New York, N.Y., is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.