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The Daily Tar Heel

92nd year of editorial freedom

Politics and priests

It seems that in 24 years some progress could be made in divorcing religion from political campaigns, but apparently that may be too much to ask, judging from the intense attacks that vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro has come under recently for her views on abortion. Ironically, the harshest criticism came last week when Ferraro spoke on the anniversary of John F. Kennedy's 1960 pledge that his religion would not interfere with his governmental duties. Ferraro restated her personal agreement with Roman Catholic doctrine, which opposes abortion without exception, but said that she would not impose her views on others — a position that polls show is held by the majority of Catholics. Only half an hour later, the Bishop James C. Timlin of Scranton, Pa., where Ferraro

was speaking, called her views absurd and said her position wasn't rational.

Not rational? Whether you agree with her not, her stance is far from irrational. In fact, it makes perfectly good sense. If elected, Ferraro will have to serve a nation that is comprised of numerous types of people of all different religions. Can she best represent all of them by imposing her personal beliefs on their private lives? By jeopardizing their rights to freedom of religion? The answer is clearly no.

Pro-life proponents will say that the unborn baby also has rights. Perhaps, but the decision for a woman or couple to have an abortion is one that they must reconcile with God, not with their vice president.

Adding up to zero

If you need a nice break from reality, don't mess with mind-altering drugs. Just tune into the Senate race between Jim Hunt and Jesse Helms.

The latest detour from reality came in a fund-raising letter from Helms. In the letter, Helms describes recent advertising purchases by the Hunt campaign as "the most gigantic purchase of political TV commercials these eyes have ever seen." Helms obviously has taken off his thick glasses when he's looked over his own spending, if he's done so at all. Figures gathered by the *News and Observer* of Raleigh show Helms spent \$2.3 million for about 11,000 television spots between July 1983 and mid-August of this year, while Hunt spent \$1.1 million for 4,000 spots during the same period. And, according to the most recent federal campaign spending reports, Hunt has raised \$5.2 million and spent \$3.9 million in his campaign, while Helms has raised \$8.7 million and spent \$9 million.

Considering the facts, Helms' letter boggles the mind. "My opponent has already bought the best commercial time

in the most popular TV shows; we have to choose from what's left," the letter states. Helms, running the most expensive Senate campaign in history, makes it sound as if his re-election effort is being operated from the back of a gas station somewhere and can barely fork over money to run "Where do you stand, Jim?" ads on Sunrise Semester.

Hunt, too, has displayed some creative accounting. During the first televised debate between the candidates, Hunt said that Helms had spent \$9 billion, raising hopes that Helms would lend his direct-mail services to the federal government. Hunt claimed pauper status during the most recent debate when Helms challenged him to run ads supporting the King holiday in papers across the state. The governor pleaded with Helms to let him spend his "little" campaign money where he wished. Makes you wish you were one of Hunt's kids so you could bug Dad for a "little" spending money.

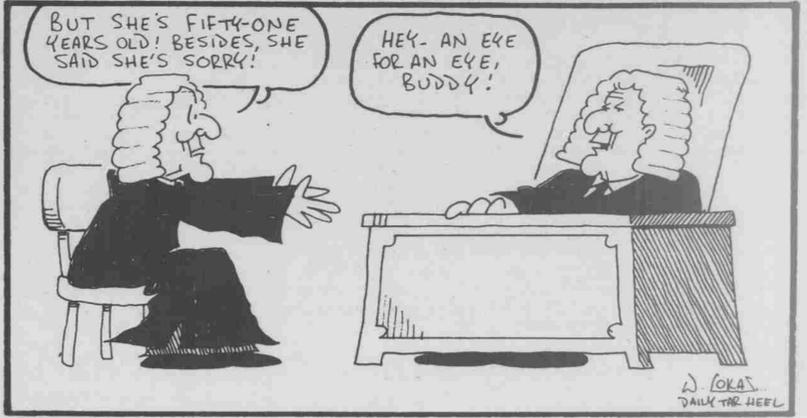
With such human calculators running for the Senate, we're afraid the federal budget deficit may be with us awhile. Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

Should Barfield be spared?

Editor's note: The scheduled execution of Margie Velma Barfield may add a potentially explosive element to the Senate race between Gov. Jim Hunt and Sen. Jesse Helms. Barfield is scheduled to be put to death Nov. 2, four days before the election. She has appealed to the governor for clemency, and Hunt is expected to make a decision before the end of the month.

Barfield, a 51-year-old grandmother, was convicted in 1978 of killing her fiance with rat poison and has confessed to killing three other people with arsenic. If she is put to death as scheduled, Barfield will become the first woman executed in the United States in more than 20 years.

Two UNC students offered their contrasting views on whether Barfield's life should be spared.



Appropriate punishment

By VANCE TREFETHEN

"Nobody wants to die." That's the conclusion Margie Velma Barfield reached after confessing to the murders of four people and being confronted with the very real possibility of execution in November. I wonder if she thought about that concept before she poisoned four people.

I also wonder if Barfield would have considered her actions more carefully if North Carolina had a consistently enforced death penalty. If Barfield had known that she would face certain execution for her actions, perhaps she wouldn't be contemplating the death chamber now. The death penalty often fails to deter "crimes of passion," but poisoning people on several distinct occasions hardly qualifies as a temporary flare-up of anger in an over-heated moment. You have to plan pretty carefully to pull off a job like that.

But, as those pleading for clemency point out, Barfield was under the influence of drugs when she committed the murders. Can you imagine the civil war that would erupt if everyone who took medication or drugs decided to commit multiple murders tomorrow morning? Whether she took drugs, or it was hot that day, or rainy, or cold, or if she burned her toast that morning, the fact is that Barfield, like all the rest of us, had the responsibility to conform her conduct to what is expected of civilized people in a civilized society. The question now is: Should Barfield be called to face the consequences of her actions? In order to answer that question, we must decide what the appropriate consequences of murder should be.

The question of capital punishment is an issue that has to be judged rationally rather than by quick emotional response. Too often, those who favor capital punishment are believed to be sick creatures who derive some sadistic pleasure from "seeing people fry." Opponents of the death penalty are often depicted as "soft on crime" and uncaring about the victims of violent criminals. More often than not, both of those views are inaccurate. My support for capital punishment stems, not from a grotesque fascination with death, but instead from a deep concern for the standards that this society sets for itself in its treatment of human life.

Society, through the criminal justice system (however imperfect it may be), establishes its collective morality by placing sanctions on

improper activity. Those sanctions vary based on the severity of the impact that those actions have when inflicted by one individual on the rest of society. That's why a parking ticket costs you \$25 and armed robbery costs you 25 years in prison. If everyone parked illegally, we would all be inconvenienced, but society would not fall apart. If everyone committed armed robberies, society would probably collapse.

When a murderer kills someone and is allowed to live, society makes a statement that the murderer's life is more valuable than the life of the person he or she killed.

When a murder is committed, two issues have to be resolved. First, what effect does murder have on society? Second, what value does society place on innocent life?

The answer to the first question seems obvious to any rational person. Murder is a crime that strikes at the very heart of a civilized people. No society can exist in peace unless it defends itself against this crime. But more importantly, society must express in the strongest way possible its disapproval of this crime. The death penalty is a signal for all members of society that its citizens disapprove of murder so strongly that those who commit the crime will not be allowed to live.

The second question involves a comparison between the crime and the punishment. When a murderer kills someone and is allowed to live, society makes a statement that the murderer's life is more valuable than the life of the person he killed. In a fair and equal society, that concept is abhorrent. The only punishment that adequately upholds the principle of equality is capital punishment.

There are other arguments for capital punishment, some of them dubious, some of them reasonable. But none of them carry more weight than the fact that capital punishment is simply the right thing for a society that values human life to do.

Barfield may or may not have reformed and she may or may not be truly sorry for what she did. No one besides Barfield herself can ever possibly know those things for certain. But one thing is sure. Barfield committed acts that demonstrated absolutely no regard for anyone's life besides her own. It's a little scary when society has to think twice before executing someone like that.

Vance Trefethen, a junior economics major from Bangor, Maine, is the business editor of The Daily Tar Heel.

Every life of value

By MATTHEW TIEDEMANN

The Margie Velma Barfield Support Committee is asking North Carolinians to urge Gov. Hunt to exercise his power of clemency in Barfield's case. The committee feels her sentence should be commuted because she is "a woman who has proven her value." That a human being should have to prove the value of his or her life is an appalling commentary on the state of our society. Worse still, Barfield's establishment of a worthy life has granted her nothing more than the slimmest hope that the government will not end her life.

The suggestion that the death penalty serves as a deterrent to murder and other violent crimes is an understandable, if insensate, concern. The facts, though, simply do not support this contention. No comprehensive study in the United States or in other nations has ever proven the efficacy of the death penalty as a deterrent. Most murders are committed by people overcome with passion or whose rational ability is impaired by drugs or some other mental inadequacy; deterrence is not a factor in these cases.

Many also cite the economic burden life imprisonment places on society. Even considered from a selfish standpoint, this argument collapses. The cost of a typical capital case — covering the expenses of public defenders, district attorneys and court paperwork at each level of appeal, along with the cost of segregating death row prisoners — readily exceeds the cost of life imprisonment.

Our nation's tacit racism and discrimination against the poor becomes blatant on death row. Fifty-four percent of those executed in the United States since 1933 have been black; the average black population during that time has been 9 percent. Nearly 55 percent of murder victims are black; only 13 percent of the inmates on death row have committed crimes against black people. Since 1972, more than 60 percent of death row inmates have been unskilled or unemployed workers. These poor inmates must rely on state-appointed lawyers and usually cannot receive this legal help beyond a trial and direct appeals.

All inmates suffer emotional and mental pain during the agonizing stay on death row, a stay that lasts an average of 32.6 months per inmate. All methods of execution cause some intense physical pain, often for a number of minutes.

The punishment of execution is irrevocable. There have been cases in which innocent citizens have been wrongly executed. No matter how one may justify capital punishment for guilty criminals, such mistakes indisputably constitute unlawful killing, a common definition for murder.

Putting aside these disturbing facts, why is the intrinsic value of human life not enough of an issue? This value is affirmed by nearly

The violence and brutality of killing, by a state or by individuals, serves only to perpetuate the violence and brutality we strive to eliminate.

every civilized religion. The "unalienable" right to life is a truth the founders of our nation held to be "self-evident."

Murder is a heinous crime, often even more grisly than Barfield's poisoning of four people. But, the death penalty is not the answer. Instead, our prison and judicial systems should be revamped, especially in the assignment of parole and the abbreviation of life sentences.

Despite facing the prospect of a life sentence or execution, an occasional prisoner does "prove" his or her value as a human being. Some of the most violent and brutal killers have had total conversions or gained a sense of life's preciousness while in prison. Such people have become informal ministers or educators for their fellow inmates. These people see a life sentence as their just due and dedicate their lives to helping others.

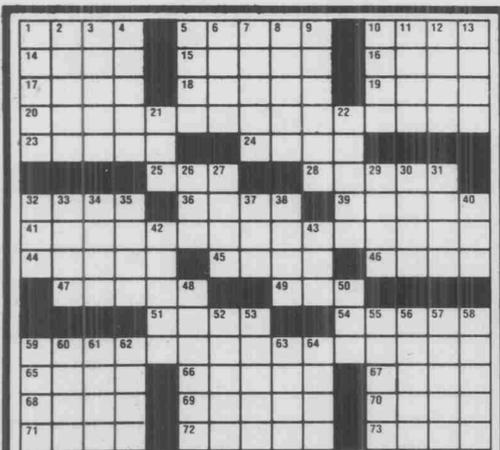
Margie Velma Barfield is one such inmate. In prison she has been freed from a decade of drug dependency. Letters of support from inmates and former prison employees attest to her new faith and the healing influence of her love.

Such uncommon "proofs" of human worth should not be what convinces us that capital punishment is unjust. These cases should encourage us to take hope in the potential of human life, even in the lives of the "worst" people under the worst conditions, and reaffirm our convictions of the sanctity and dignity of human life. Let us transcend our barbaric tendency toward purposeless revenge in the judicial system. The violence and brutality of killing, by a state or by individuals, serves only to perpetuate the violence and brutality we strive to eliminate.

Matthew Tiedemann is a freshman majoring in political science and peace, war and defense.

THE Daily Crossword By Judson G. Trent

- ACROSS**
- Treat with scorn
 - "It's — unusual day"
 - Queeg's rank: abbr.
 - Stockings
 - Gr. coins
 - Agalloch
 - Tucson's state: abbr.
 - Scoff
 - Ascertained
 - Advice to a crook?
 - Good golf score
 - Nick's dog
 - Spinner
 - Overcharge
 - Puzzled
 - Pro —
 - Jeweled headdress
 - Advice to keep going
 - acid
 - Eng. author of old
 - Egyptian killers
 - Talent or cub
 - Evergreen
 - "Give us — day..."
 - Embers
 - Grow prosperous!
 - Spindle
 - Marriage —
 - Chi-chi
 - Fad
 - Battery part
 - Angler's gear
 - Arab land
 - over (helps in a pinch)
 - Being: Lat.



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Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:



- DOWN**
- Layered rock
 - Water wheel
 - Exerting
 - Cutting tool edge
 - "They — serve..."
 - Totals
 - Ambler or Blore
 - Part of A.D.
 - Test
 - In a fit way
 - Dunderhead
 - Shaver
 - Bread
 - "Casey at —"
 - Strife
 - Modern Persian
 - Church body
 - Springe
 - "— to you!"
 - Kefauver
 - Fashion
 - Gambling game
 - School chore
 - Pond plant
 - Adolescent
 - Wave: Fr.
 - Exploits

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Deadheads: Arise and be counted

To the editor: Congratulations Grateful Dead fans! What you have been waiting for and dreaming about for so long is finally becoming a reality. This semester will witness the organization of an energetic group called "The Carolina Grateful

Dead Society." At this point, what's needed most is student involvement. Here's how you can help. There will be an informational and organizational meeting for interested students and non-students on Thursday at 7:00 p.m. in the Union. The

purpose of this meeting is multifold. We want to get a "head" count, discuss the function of the group, possibly elect officers, make plans for the October 5th and 6th (Friday and Saturday) Charlotte and Richmond shows, and anything else you want to discuss. The goals of the CGDS are to have an organized and accurate method of disseminating concert information and to plan trips of all sorts. We also hope to establish an extensive information bank of student album and tape collections.

So, deadheads, be sure to mark your calendars for next Thursday night. Bring yourselves, other deadheads, suggestions, and ideas to the Union. I've heard only positive things so far from those with whom I've spoken. If you have any questions or advice, please call me. My phone number is 942—DEAD.

David N. Berlin
Chapel Hill

Na, na, na, na, na

To the editor: Your editorial Monday called me immature. ("Fraternities not just Joshin," *DTH*, Sept. 17) I am not immature, and besides: Twinkle, twinkle, little star, what you say is what you are.

Harold Berger
President
Tau Epsilon Phi Fraternity

Bloom County



Peanuts

