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# The Daily Tar Heel

92nd year of editorial freedom

## Slowing the countdown?

The hoopla surrounding renewed arms control talks in Geneva this week far exceeded chances for achieving a substantive weapons agreement with the Soviets anytime soon. Despite the geniality that seemed to surround two days of talks between Secretary of State Schultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, the arms negotiations — if they can be sustained — may stretch on for years after the throng of reporters currently gathered in Geneva has dwindled to a handful.

The distance between the two nations is made obvious by the fact that the talks between Schultz and Gromyko were not really about controlling arms at all. Both sides were merely hoping to reach agreement on a format under which future arms negotiations can take place. They needed talks to decide what to talk about.

For all the cordiality in evidence in Geneva, superpower relations are marked by wariness and suspicion. Just before the opening of the talks, Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko warned the United States against using the meetings as a cover for a heightened arms buildup. Secretary Schultz vowed that the United States would walk away from a "lousy deal." Other Reagan administration officials openly questioned whether the Soviet Union would live up to a new arms deal and charged that the Russians are violating agreements already in place.

Still, the renewal of serious arms talks gives a glimmer of hope to a world living under the constant threat of nuclear extinction. The willingness of the Soviets to return to the table after a 13-month absence provides some vindication for the hard-line stance taken by the Reagan

administration. Reagan apparently has successfully called the Russians' bluff on arms talks. The Soviets stormed away from talks in late 1983 to protest the U.S. deployment of new medium-range missiles in Europe, but Reagan was unshaken in his resolve to counter the 300 Soviet medium-range missiles already in place there. Reagan seems to have made good on his promise to make the Russians return to the table on American terms.

But now that both parties have returned to that table, Reagan seems unable to take the kind of bold action that could earn him his much-desired goal of becoming known as a "peace president." He flatly refuses to use his proposed space-based missile defense system as a bargaining chip to get the Soviets to agree to cuts in strategic nuclear forces. Some experts believe some trade-off involving the proposed "star wars" system offers the best hope for an agreement within the next four years. It would cause the nation little harm to at least talk about not producing a system that could turn out to be a trillion-dollar pipe dream. But Reagan continues to pursue this far-fetched technology, claiming that it will lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons, just as past leaders have claimed each war would be the last.

Never having to face another election, Reagan should be able to free himself of ideological constraints to take a visionary stroke toward global security. Keeping weapons from space would be just that kind of move. Reagan's boldness in the current arms talks may determine whether he will be remembered as a world statesman or just another politician.

## Mission impossible attained

Just before Christmas Break, 20 or so members of the Student Activities Center's hallowed Steering Committee met to decide who sits where. That's important business for UNC's new Blue Heaven, considering that the 22,000 seats must be shared by students, faculty and, of course, those who chipped in pride — along with more than \$33 million — to build the place.

They've had these meetings before. About this time three years ago, UNC students opposing the seating arrangement of the day planned to publicize their efforts in a three-minute "silent time" at the tip-off in Carolina's last home game of the season. Students then, as now, complained that on-court seating paled proportionally in comparison with what they had in Carmichael Auditorium. In addition, there was an unclear designation between student, faculty and staff seating areas. Oh, and there was the absence of student input into early seating arrangements.

None of this endeared the Rams Club to the student body. No, ever since the

Educational Foundation was turned loose to raise money for the coliseum a few years back, Rams Clubbers have had an increasingly tough go of it trying to win over public sentiment. But a respite is in order. The SAC Steering Committee, well populated by Clubbers, came off as the epitome of compromise last month when it moved to give over to students choice half-court seats. News of their decree appears on today's front page.

We're still concerned that Rams Clubbers are perhaps hogging too much of the SAC's lower level, relegating most students to the nosebleed seats, and that student enthusiasm in the spacious arena might therefore be diminished. But, heck, the way they've worked it a full third of us can fit into the coliseum along with everyone else. We can't help but make noise.

No, we certainly don't need more seats — we need the quality. That's what, surprisingly enough, the Rams Clubbers have given us.

## The King is gone, but the PR lives on

By DICK ANDERSON

It's over. Let us breathe a collective sigh of relief.

No, I'm not talking about 1984. Or the holidays. And certainly not the long-passe elections. I'm talking about the passing of Jan. 8... Elvis Presley's 50th birthday.

Elvis. The King. The man whose suede image graces many a would-be Graceland across rural America.

Don't get me wrong, now. I bear no personal grudge against the man. "Before he discovered carbohydrates," as *Saturday Night Live* once so astutely put it, Presley made his share of memorable records and not-so-memorable motion pictures.

But the man himself would, well, die if he saw what had transpired since his unexpected death on Aug. 16, 1977... and what we've been deluged with on what would have been his golden anniversary.

Elvis car tags. Elvis bubble gum cards. Elvis souvenir edition newspapers. Elvis impersonators. My personal favorite, the "Elvis Coat Show." Etc., etc., *ad nauseum*.

I've had it up to my Elvovs with Elvis. Certainly it wasn't his fault for being born when he was, but someone must be to blame for the bonanza of birthday effluvia.

Why not the media? Yes, us... er, them. (This is the first you've read of Presley in the *DTH*.) Certainly Elvis was an American folk hero, a rock 'n' roll original, but we know that already!

We do have something to thank the commercial networks for: no Elvis extravaganzas. No, you have to pay the price to enjoy such cable gems as "Elvis Presley's Graceland," in which ex-wife Priscilla, *Dallas'* Jenna Wade, takes viewers on a see-all, tell-all tour of her one-time hubby's Memphis mecca, and shows us such marvels as the last piano he played, his many gold records and his favorite refrigerator. This special, as well as an HBO concert, boasts never-before-seen footage. Makes you wonder, doesn't it — where do they keep getting this stuff? Probably in canisters marked "never before seen."



Elvis or more Elvis: some choice

But television's not the only guilty party. Elvis's longtime label, RCA Records, continues to churn out King compilations, the latest of which is a Valentine's album due later this month. Come on guys, are we talking aesthetics here... or merely a few extra bucks?

Elvis Presley's death triggered a teletype tremor. Many a tree has given its life in the interests of Elvismania. The *National Enquirer* created a stir with it splashed ill-gotten pix of the King lying in state across its front page. Albert Goldman's *Elvis* was a druggie and a pervert — and wasn't received with the warmest of

adulation. True Elvites overlook his later shortcomings and 44-inch waistline; when they think of Presley, they see a young rockabilly whose pelvic gyrations were too taboo for Ed Sullivan's television audience.

But we've heard all this before. And again and again and again. The Elvis craze, like a well-worn record, should be put to rest... and only brought out for an occasional play.

Dick Anderson, a junior journalism major from Rutherfordton and an editorial writer for The Daily Tar Heel, turns 21 in May. He's awaiting the media blitz.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### For the sake of harmony — integrate

To the editor:

Well, the issue has come up again and it must not be avoided any longer. This, of course, is the "racial gap" between North and South Campuses.

Let's take an inside look at South Campus. It is obvious that most black students live there. Why? I talked to some students on South Campus, most of whom were black, and they told me that they chose to live on South Campus because they felt like they belonged there. They chose to live on South Campus because of the large number of black students who have lived there in the past.

Now let's take an inside view of North Campus. The lack of black students on North Campus gives our school a very negative image. I believe that having more blacks

on North Campus would have a very tangible effect on students, and would be a step towards racial harmony at UNC.

Did I hear someone say that if blacks choose to live on South Campus, then that is where they ought to be? I believe that the goal to achieve racial harmony overrides a student's ability to choose where he or she wants to live.

The Housing Department thinks that if a student is unable to choose where he or she wants to live on campus, then he or she would choose to live off campus, and the dorms would be vacant. I find that hard to believe. There is a large number of off-campus students who would like to live on campus.

The president of the Black Student Movement, Sherrod Banks, very much opposes the integration

of blacks on North Campus. He told me that the integration of blacks on North Campus would destroy the "black culture" on South Campus. But he was unable to define "black culture." If integration did occur, each culture could make a strong, positive contribution to each other. I respect the Black Student Movement's goal to preserve the black culture on South Campus. Yet integration, typically, does not destroy, but rather, improves culture. I know, I am black and I live on North Campus.

I believe the present condition of North and South Campuses is a reflection of the UNC administration. The administration should not just say they hope for racial harmony on this campus, but they should do something about it.

The administration should know

the black and white ratio of South Campus is 70 percent white and 30 percent black. Big surprise, South Campus is integrated! Why not North Campus?

The integration of blacks on North Campus might deprive them of their political unity on South Campus, so I propose that the administration develop a gradual program of integration that would not entirely deprive blacks of their political power.

I know there will be several negative responses to this letter; however, I hope the students and the administration will realize that racism can, should, and will be overcome at this university.

Wade Lewis  
 Chapel Hill

## To fish or not to fish

To the editor:

Harold Geneen has insulted the fish and remarked harshly of the retired. I feel we should protect the honor of both the fish and the ever-increasing population of retirees in the Carolinas.

Considering retirement, Geneen remarked: "I'd hate to spend the rest of my life trying to outwit an 18-inch fish." So he races on now in a second career.

What a demeaning insult to the fish and Izaak Walton.

Harold Geneen may have been the dynamic ruler of the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation; however, all mere mortals, including the exalted Harold, are but equal before the fish. Even the briefest encounter with the simplest member of the finny tribe tends to reduce a man's ego and makes a mockery of greed and profit.

Fishing inspires meekness, inspiration, and restfulness to the soul — qualities, one might presume, foreign to the nature of the Corporate Cobras. Little wonder he is contemptuous of the fish.

There is more than a hint, one fears, that Geneen and those of his corporate breed have come to regard business, money-making and material improvements as taking on the aspects of moral virtues.

Is there no more to his life than that?

As for Geneen's concern over "watching the physical and mental skills of his (retired) peers atrophy from too much leisure," such is purely a matter of how that leisure is spent. As for fishing, however, somewhere in an Assyrian tablet of 2000 B.C. it states, "The Gods do not subtract from the allotted span of man's lives the hours spent fishing."



Long after Geneen has gone — wherever it is that he will go without his money bags — Izaak Walton, the delightful Englishman of a piscatorial fame far greater than any glory Geneen might ever aspire to, will still be remembered for his

pleasant memories of happy encounters with the finny tribe.

And just what will Geneen be remembered for?

Edwin S. James  
 UNC Class of '47  
 Rock Hill, S.C.

## Big-bucks libel: intimidating the media?

By MATT CAMPBELL

In the past couple of months there has been a great deal in the news about libel. With two of the biggest and most widely covered libel cases that the 80s have seen — the Gen. Westmoreland vs. CBS and Ariel Sharon vs. Time magazine cases — it is a good time to talk about the current libel laws and the consequent effects on the press. Because of the tremendous cost of litigation in a libel case and the increasingly conservative outlook of the Supreme Court towards libel, many publications and other forms of the media are practicing self-censorship. That is, editors are not allowing controversial information to be published or aired because of the fear that someone might sue for libel, regardless of whether they would have a good case.

Libel is basically any published or broadcasted defamation of a person's character. In regard to public officials, it also means that this defamation has been done in reckless disregard of the truth. Over the past decade the libel laws, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, have become more strict. In fact, the Burger Court has never ruled in favor of the press. Juries have been awarding damages to 90 percent of all libel plaintiffs, and the number of suits brought against the press has increased dramatically as a result of the possibility of winning large sums of money.

Regardless of whether the media wins or loses a particular suit, it still loses. Litigation of libel

suits is very expensive, and if the plaintiff wins, the damage can be devastating. The most threatened media are smaller hometown publications and broadcasting companies. These smaller businesses can often be put out of business by involvement in one libel suit, even if they win.

The Supreme Court did something else that may have greatly increased the number of cases brought to trial. In the 1979 case of *Hutchinson vs. Proxmire*, the Court's majority opinion questioned the idea of summary judgment. Summary judgment is the legal principle that allowed the press to go to a judge and ask for a libel suit, which is frivolous or harassing on the face, to be dismissed. It is estimated up to 75 percent of all libel suits are dismissed this way before trial. Many authorities believe the Court's opinion in that case may have prompted an increase in the number of cases brought to court.

These aspects of libel suits should cause public concern because they are forcing the press to practice self-censorship. This is not a bad idea when the purpose is to kill stories over which a plaintiff would have a reasonable chance of winning a libel suit. But editors are constantly asking the question "will he sue?" according to Martin Garbus, an attorney who frequently represents libel litigants. This is a threat to our right to the free flow of information — the media is often avoiding tough investigative reporting and controversial information. Many papers have a full-time legal staff which plays an prevalent role in the editorial policy of these

papers. Attorneys read over articles and columns and delete the ones that might attract litigation. And this is done in regard to whether an individual would sue, not if he could win the case.

When considering the issue of libel, it is important to remember there are two sides of the issue. The damage done to individuals who really have been libeled against cannot and should not go unnoticed — legitimate claims should receive some sort of retribution. But, at the same time, plaintiffs should not receive millions for damage to their reputations, unless they can somehow prove that that loss hurt them financially. Damages should be awarded primarily on the basis of financial loss and then to a lesser extent for reputational loss.

If we want to keep our First Amendment rights, then steps must be taken to protect them. President Reagan will, in all likelihood, get several chances to appoint Supreme Court justices during his next term — there is little doubt that they will be fairly conservative. And conservatives often view the press as a threat.

One thing is clear — if it is true that a well-informed populace is necessary for the maintenance of a responsible democracy, then steps must be taken to ensure press freedom in the future. Everytime a libel suit is brought against the press, self-censorship gains more prevalence in editorial policy.

Matt Campbell, a sophomore journalism and economics major from Greensboro, is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

## The Daily Tar Heel

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