

# The Tar Heel

## Broadcast media: The minuses and minuses of television news

**Editorial**  
**Jim Greenhill**

After a period of relative calm melodrama broke out again on Cable News Network Tuesday night. The viewer sitting in front of the television with his or her dinner was taken to the latest troubles in South Africa. We saw large crowds of blacks at what we were told was a funeral. The tension, it seemed, was present all along. At the end of the funeral it surfaced in violence. We were shown film of a car burning and of two critically injured men.

A device the necessity for which I've never understood was used. We were shown the same film more than once in the short news report. A device the necessity for which I've never understood was used. We were shown the same film more than once in the short news report. The film that was repeated was that of the burning car and the two injured men. The conclusion we derive from this is that CNN was short of footage. However it is somewhat disturbing in its effect on the viewer. Presumably that was the only burning car and those two were the only critically injured men. Repeat that three times and we get three burning cars and six critically injured men. I just not. That is the effect on the viewer.

But there are other problems with a news report such as this. It gets, at most, two minutes of air time. There's not a whole lot that you can do with two minutes — especially if the first is occupied with the 'talking head' anchorperson saying exactly what the on-the-spot reporter will say for the next minute. This

is Television-For-The-Extremely-Retarded. Twice we are told that there was violence in South Africa at a funeral — a continuation of previous violence (could this be a golden opportunity for film?) Blacks are apparently violent against each other, resulting in the destruction of a car and the critical injury of two people. We see no police in the film and, significantly, no whites.

So what are we supposed to conclude? Where is South Africa? What is all this protest about? (No, what is it really about?) Should we be judging this from our perspective or does it appear different to a South African? What is the historical background? What measures are being taken, and by whom, in response? What are the blacks really trying to get across? How about talking to some of them? And how do the minority whites really feel? What can we as Americans do, if anything, about the problems of South Africa? It is this last question that television (especially) so often leaves unasked, let alone answered.

Let us take a hypothetical scenario. Multiple fatalities on I-501. Local station gets a camera on the scene within minutes — very possibly ahead of the emergency services, in which case they could still be relied upon to give film footage priority over helping the injured. Lots of blood and gore. Great footage. Initial investigations suggest alcohol was involved. Three people were killed. Cue arm hanging out of mangled wreckage, blood-soaked blanket over lump on stretcher, hysterical wife (how about a close-up of her tearing at her hair and weeping uncontrollably?) Good grief! That's worth a clip at the opening of the news, a still just before the ads, and a two minute report narrated by a reporter at the scene in a freshly laundered suit. Hmm. Why don't we follow that with a segment of advertising? Lessee. Well, there's still the Bud ad to run and we could follow that with the trailer for *Rambo: First Blood Part II*. Real life horror followed by a reminder of how great it is to drink followed by elaborately staged movie horror. Which was real and which was make believe? What was that last news report about anyway? Come to think of it, are we still in the ads or are we back in the program?

It doesn't really matter what was fact and what was fiction anyway. After all, what can deaths on the highway or in South Africa or some civilians held on a distant runway against their will or the continuing saga of (is it or isn't it?) bones in Brazil mean to us more than soap opera? Who shot J.R.? My goodness! Did Bobby Ewing really die in such a horrible and

tragic way? Which is fantasy and which is reality? Who cares anyway, providing it makes for good footage.

And what can we do? First, turn to the more reliable elements of the print media for your news. Read several different accounts of major

events. Ask yourself if a hyped-up event is really as important as it's made out to be (for example, hostages in Beirut). Second, how about giving up TV for a month? Third, read Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments For The Elimination of Television*. It may help you see things from a different perspective.

"I'M AFRAID THE UNIVERSITY WON'T RELEASE YOUR TRANSCRIPTS. IT SEEMS YOU FORGOT TO PAY YOUR POLKA CLASS FEES BEFORE YOU LEFT."



### Letter

To the Editor:

As a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I appreciate the relatively low-cost education I receive, and I am willing to pay modest tuition increases to complete my education here. But recently it seems that tuition increases have been more than simply modest, and I deplore the actions by Gov. James Grubbs Martin and the UNC Board of Trustees to enact a 10 percent surcharge on tuition. This situation makes me want to throw up.

Today the UNC Board has the power to reduce tuition. The Internal Revenue Service sent \$6.6 million in tax refunds and interest to UNC-CH (see the *Raleigh News and Observer*, 6/25/85). From personal experience, I can attest to the uniqueness of this event; the IRS rarely surrenders 6.6 cents, much less that many million dollars.

Therefore, I think the Board should show its ability to be kind to us students, who after graduation will be asked to contribute to numerous funds, such as the Sustaining Fund. The Board can show its kindness by applying the \$6.6 million toward an across-the-board reduction in tuition.

This reduction would accomplish two things. First, it would show students that the UNC Board of Trustees has one collective heart, something many students doubt after the meal plan rape last year. Second, and more important, the tuition reduction would save me money.

I hope that the Board seizes this opportunity and reduces tuition.

Pete Austin  
 Raleigh

### For the record

In the May 30 issue of *The Tar Heel* the editorial 'News Media: Bias meets bias; can anyone win?' neglected to identify Dolan. Tony Dolan, Chief Speechwriter for the White House in 1983, spoke on the panel 'The Making of a Political Issue' at the 1983 American Political Journalism Conference in Washington D.C.

In the June 20 issue the article 'Powell receives North Carolinian Society Award' incorrectly identified the North Carolinian Society as the North Carolinian Society.

We apologize for these errors.

## The Tar Heel

93rd year of editorial freedom

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### THE Daily Crossword by Bernice Gordon

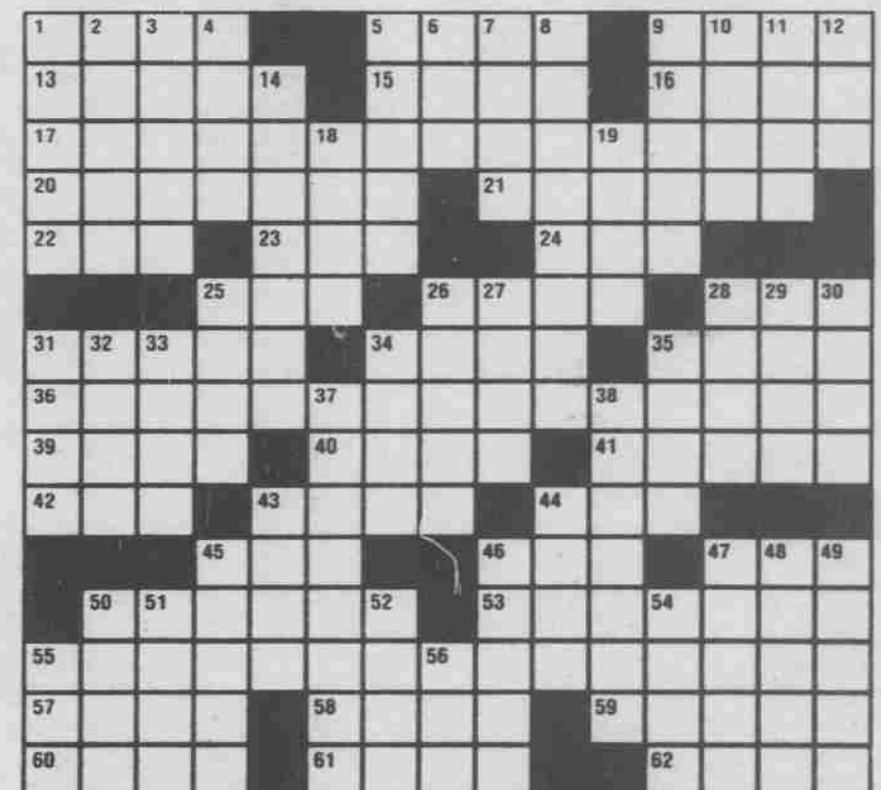
See Solution on page 5

**ACROSS**

- 1 Sikkim servant
- 5 Overturns
- 9 Cupola
- 13 Pulp fruit
- 15 "See no —"
- 16 Netherlands town
- 17 Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Kramden
- 20 Small bird
- 21 Attraction
- 22 Female ruff
- 23 Plank used in shipbuilding
- 24 Saloon in Soho
- 25 Cry of triumph
- 26 Egyptian goddess
- 28 Supply weapons
- 31 — acid
- 34 Pay up
- 35 Lost
- 36 A June event
- 39 Field of study
- 40 Algerian port
- 41 Trunk artery
- 42 Verily!
- 43 Hep to

**DOWN**

- 1 Thesplan
- 2 US skier Phil
- 3 Rugged ridge
- 4 Santa's laugh
- 5 Wee
- 6 A league
- 7 Kind of cotton
- 8 More careless
- 9 Star in Cygnus
- 10 Old Gr. theaters
- 11 Earthy deposit
- 12 Ger. river
- 14 Famous ballet group
- 18 Darling dog
- 19 Musical work
- 25 Forever — day
- 26 Peruvian
- 27 Br. carbine
- 28 Early stringed instrument
- 29 Ripped
- 30 Yucatan native
- 31 Not at home
- 32 Nothing more than
- 33 Brainchild
- 34 Soil: comb. form
- 35 Minor prophet
- 37 Trifles
- 38 Designate funds
- 43 Jot
- 44 Mock
- 45 Composer Saint—



- 46 Serious play
- 47 Look fixedly
- 48 Thesaurus name
- 49 Combat place
- 50 Vast desert
- 51 Ellipsoidal
- 52 Genesis garden
- 54 O'Flaherty
- 55 Moon vehicle
- 56 — alive!