

The Daily Tar Heel

93rd year of editorial freedom

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Coke — the national drinking pastime?

By KEVIN MEREDITH

Sandwiched in between the summer's biggest stories — the Beirut hostage crisis and Reagan's cancerous polyp — there was the Coca-Cola snafu. With each incident, there seemed to be a lesson. The hostage crisis taught us that the American media can be manipulated by terrorists. Reagan's cancer showed us that our president is mortal, perhaps even "old." But we haven't yet come to grips with what the Coca-Cola affair really means. While most journalists wrote an essay or two simply acknowledging the power of the people vs. the Great Big Corporation, few addressed the central issue: Why did people care anyway?

consume. Throughout history and around the world, national drinks have been an acquired taste, something people often don't appreciate until early adulthood. It is a source of identity for a nation. It should not be a drink foreigners take easily to.

Vodka is the best example. Russians drink it straight and in astounding quantities, while foreigners dilute it with non-alcoholic mixers such as orange juice.

Dark beer is something of a national drink for the British Isles. Most Americans have never seen real dark beer, which probably wouldn't go over well here. Real dark beer looks and tastes like maple syrup, except without the sugar, which has been replaced with old coffee grounds. But they drink it over there; they probably even like it.

The South, while not a nation in a political sense, but still large and distinct, used to have moonshine, and might still in some places where staple crops won't grow. Like the song about the little town in Tennessee says:

*Ain't no corn can grow on Rocky Top
Ground's too rocky for far.
That's why all the folks on Rocky Top*

Get their corn from a jar.
We can assume that "jarred corn," weighing in at about 160 proof for a good batch, is an acquired taste. Yankees and other foreigners don't automatically appreciate.

So how can I compare Coke with vodka, moonshine or dark beer? Coke, after all, is sweet, non-alcoholic and, most of all, comes



in a red can. True, but like its alcoholic partners, Coke has a bite. It stings. It's not as easy to drink as Pepsi, or Sprite, or orange juice, for that matter.

And like other national drinks, it's bad for you. While it doesn't leave you with a hangover, it contains caffeine, carbonation and plenty of calories. I've been told that a penny soaked in Coke for a certain amount of time will come out shiny. (What's in that secret formula, anyway — hydrochloric acid?)

Most of all, Coke does what any good national drink should do: It implies a toughness of national character. That's what the folks at Coca-Cola tried to take away, and that's what the people fought to keep. Imagine what would have happened if Coca-Cola had announced, on the other hand, that the new Coke would be harder to drink, with less sugar and more bite.

Bill Cosby might have come on television and said, "You know, I just can't drink this stuff anymore." Sales might not have shot up, but I don't think the masses would have rebelled the way they did, either.

Or maybe sales would have gone up, Pepsi would have been wiped out and we would be spared any more transparent commercials about disillusioned teen-age girls discovering Pepsi, or square archeologists in a future Pepsi-state uttering the party line when asked about an old Coke artifact: "I haven't the slightest idea."

But Coke is back, still hard to drink, "classic" now. It won't affect your driving, but it's still tough enough for America, red can notwithstanding.

Kevin Meredith is a graduate student in journalism living in Chapel Hill.

The worst kind of business

Hijacked aircraft baking on Middle Eastern runways, bearded men waving sub-machine guns at a disorderly press conference, ruined buildings smoldering after a car bomb — these are the televised images most UNC students associate with terrorism. But such media spectacles veil a quietly growing aspect of today's politically motivated attacks by ununiformed civilians not affiliated to any government. Businesses and their bosses are now the targets. With the number of terrorist incidents worldwide now climbing 30% a year by one estimate, a tiny but appreciable risk of kidnapping, extortion threats, and violent death awaits students today planning international careers.

The State Department, using extremely conservative definitions, says close to 500 people died worldwide last year as a result of terrorist acts. The percentage of businessmen jumped by a half from 24% to 36%. Ransoms paid for kidnapping victims are funding further attacks while adding up to a hefty bill for multinationals. In the South American nation of Columbia alone companies are said to have shelled out \$100 million in 1984 to save their executives skins.

Several options are already discussed as responses to skyjackings. Retaliation with conventional military forces, for example, found many advocates after

the freeing of the 40 American men of TWA Flight 847 held in Beirut. But the hijackers local support notwithstanding, nobody has yet figured out on whom to take revenge. The terrorist bands hitting enterprises in Europe and Latin America are smaller and even more elusive — Spain's far left GRAPO seems to survive through its jailed leaders' recruitment of fellow prisoners soon to be released.

Howard Hunt admirers would prefer to put the U.S. government in the business of murdering people. Under such euphemisms as "assassination" and "physical liquidation," perceived terrorists would be killed by either intelligence agents or paid local groups. But both options are currently banned by an executive order and risk exposure, the death of innocent bystanders, and the beginning of a spiral of killings.

Where direct action doesn't work, preparation may. Both the State and Defence Departments keep anti-terrorist teams ready. Both have reservoirs of experience and analysis not available to many countries. Teams of roving experts should be funded by this country to advise foreign governments, just as Drug Enforcement Administration agents now counsel how to tackle the narcotics trade. A discrete name would help to avoid publicly implying anybody even has a terrorism problem. When they do, and someday you may too.

Other side of the headline

The news media are often criticized by the public for not reporting enough good news — too much of the depressing, tear jerking and anxiety provoking and not enough of the spirit lifting, heart warming and smile producing. The reply, more often than not, from us crankers-out-of-doam is something like, "Hey, that's the way it is," or that time-honored classic, "We don't make the news, we just report it." What these replies lack in sympathy, they sure do make up for in profundity, don't they? Well, we'd like to try a new approach.

Rationalization. Now before you scoff this off as another weak-kneed journalistic excuse for the true explanation of our sadistic tendencies, let us explain. First, keep these thoughts in mind — good news, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder; one man's calamity might be another's windfall; and the grass is always greener on the other side of the headline.

Now, of course, some stories are bad news. Period. There's just no getting around the fact that items about tornadoes destroying small towns rarely contain that "other side to the story," which, once understood, creates shouting matches over the good news/bad news question. Nevertheless, given a typical looks-like-good-and-bad-news-at-first-glance type of story, its not too difficult (with just a little rationalization) to see how some readers could find "bad" news to be nothing of the sort, and vice versa.

Let's take a quick perusal of yesterday's news to illustrate this point:

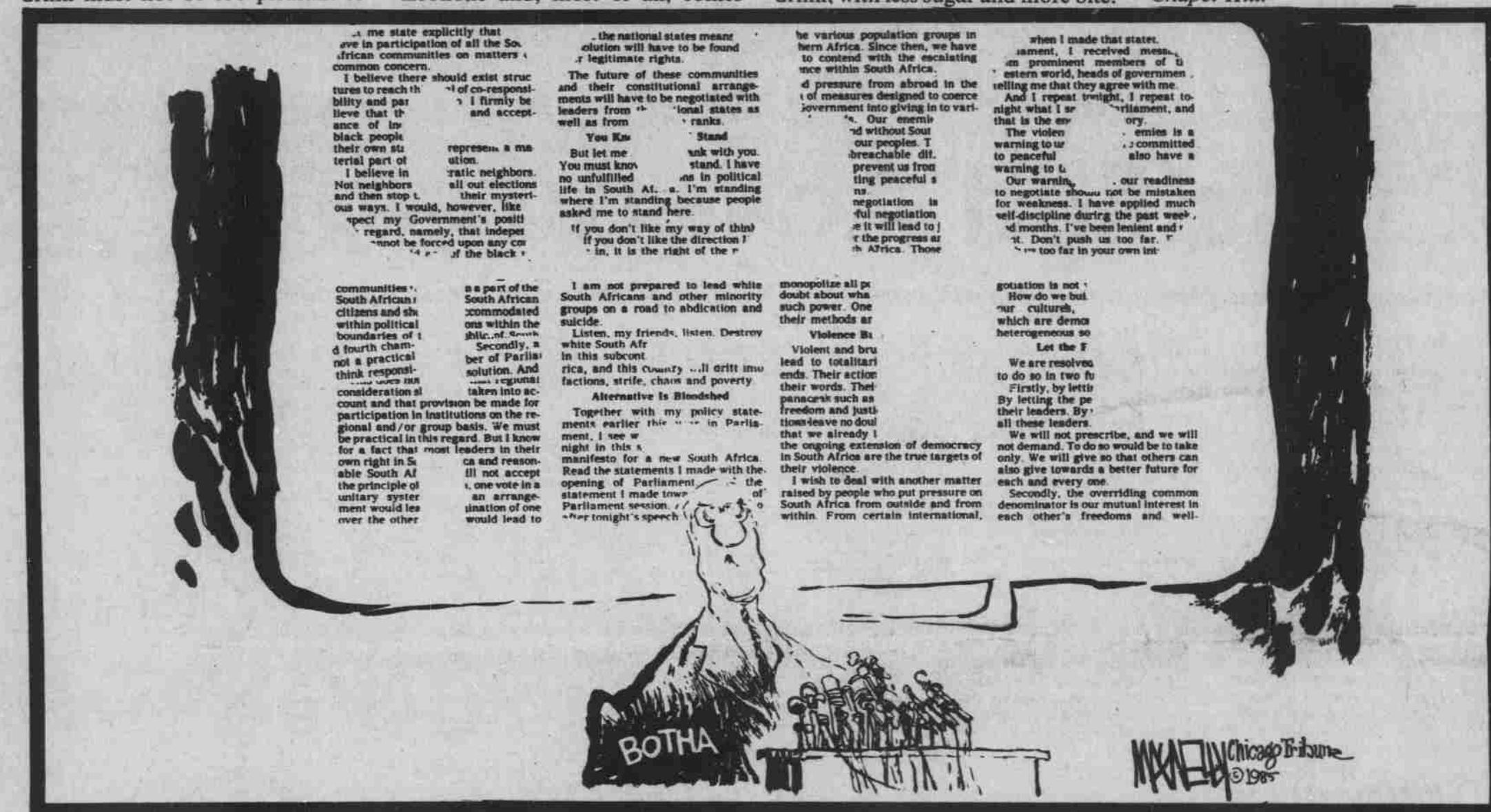
● "Fresh(wo)man class mostly female; average SAT score reaches record"

— Sounds good. A smarter incoming class means better students and indicates that the school is attracting an increasing quality of applicants, which should translate into a stronger reputation for the University; so what if that happens to include more females than males. Not so quick. Read a little bit further and you discover that this abundance of females also means that guys will act "cocky, self-absorbed and hard-to-get" and the women will be forced to search in faraway lands for dates. Not so good.

● "The SAC: Everyone wants to get in, but will it be ready in time?"

— Sounds bad. Our long-awaited, beautiful new sports center might not be ready and we'll all have to squeeze back into Carmichael for an unknown number of games. In addition to the sheer anticlimax of it all, those who got teary-eyed last year saying goodbye to good ol' Carmichael will feel pretty silly reflecting on their nostalgic bad timing. But wait. If we do go back to Carmichael those of us who missed the last game last year can go this year and make fun of our predecessors who thought they saw the final game and left for the real world bragging of their select status.

Maybe that's reaching just a touch, but you can't say we didn't try.



The American Dream goes to Europe

By JOHN GIBBS

Thanks to tolerant parents and a favorable exchange rate, I was able to join the flood of Americans traveling overseas this summer. In Europe we were treated to the usual whirlwind tour of cathedrals, castles, beer gardens, an Alp or two and, of course, a lot of train stations and airports. We walked around enjoying the local color, saw a lot of other Americans enjoying the local color, and snapped a bunch of pictures to be filed away in some desk drawer until the long-awaited photo album commemorating the Summer of '85 can be assembled.

My memories of those two months come back to me in a series of images. I recall the summer solstice festival in Austria, the Grand Bazaar in Florence, and the splendor of the Vatican. At times we felt lost and frightened. President Reagan told Americans in Europe not to fly out of the Athens airport because of the danger of terrorism, so we took the trains. Yet in Italy we were told that thieves had been known to gas train compartments and steal the passengers' money.

Yet the images that stand out strongest in my mind involve the reaction displayed by most of the Europeans toward the United States. In spite of the fact that a great many American tourists were loud, obnoxious and insensitive, we found that the Europeans we met maintained a strong belief in the wealth and power of this country. In England, a "large" landowner who farmed 1,500 acres of prime Lincolnshire pastureland marveled over the vastness of the American Midwest. In Greece, a friendly cafe owner claimed that he could only earn enough money to ensure that he would die in his local village, while in the United States he could be rich beyond his wildest dreams. And in Naples, a university student gazed out over the ragged Neapolitan skyline asking me if there were slums in America.

States occupies a unique position. The Horatio Alger ideals of the last century may be harder to achieve today, yet people can still succeed through hard work and determination. The same cannot be said of many of the European countries we visited.

Nonetheless, an important problem with the reaction we received in Europe is that it becomes easy to overstate its significance. Viewing the United States as a receptacle of hope for the free world, or a utopian society, seems just as unrealistic as calling us an imperialistic, warmongering nation. The fact is that we lie somewhere in between. Yet an entire summer of seeing Italian kids wear Washington Redskins T-shirts, or listening to Dutch students sing "Born in the USA," or hearing how lucky we are to live where we do, does tend to create a renewed sense of national importance. Although such a reaction might be unrealistic, knowing that the American Dream still exists is an extremely heartening feeling. And if it is not dead in Europe, then maybe it still has a chance here as well.

John Gibbs is a junior history major from Lynchville, Va.

Confessions of a 'DTH' journalist

By SHARON SHERIDAN

"I can't believe you're still here," said one of the editors as he left the DTH office at 3 a.m. "You must be crazy."

I suppose I was crazy to spend 10 hours in the newspaper office to ensure the special feature page I had organized was finished properly. But then, I'm a journalist. We do things like that.

I do things as a journalist I never would dream of doing as a normal human being. I ordinarily wouldn't volunteer to ride in a stunt plane, for example. I tend to get motion sickness just watching a car chase at the movies. But I'd seize the opportunity immediately if I thought I could get a good story out of it.

When I had a car accident, my editor shook his head. "You didn't need to do that," he said. "You already wrote a column this week."

Journalists are easy to spot. We're the ones watching out for everything but our own safety. We'll calmly descend into a volatile crowd of demonstrators as though our notepad or tape recorder were a talisman against bodily harm. We'll follow protestors into a nuclear power plant and get arrested for trespassing.

Some journalists have emptied their pockets of all identification, dressed as bums and wandered the streets to see what life was like for the homeless.

When I was a freshman, the dormitory fire alarm once went off about 4 a.m. Despite my roommates' protests, I refused to leave the room

until I had located a notepad and pen. If the building was on fire, I figured it was my duty as a DTH reporter to take notes. It didn't occur to me that I might burn up in the process.

My roommates decided the next time the alarm sounded they would drag me outside and argue later. I decided to start sleeping with a notepad and pen near my bed.

Journalists may take risks. They may work overtime to perfect a story. But they don't give articles early to their editors. It's probably a rule. Real men don't eat quiche. Real women don't pump gas. Real journalists don't finish articles early.

I know. I'm an editor. My writers are terrific, but they are more likely to wheedle an extension from me than turn in a story before deadline. And I know from years of writing that the preparation time for every article expands to fill the time available.

One of my favorite scenes in the *Lou Grant* TV series is where a reporter calls Lou and tells him he's got a great story in the making, but needs a little more time to work on it. "When," asks the editor, "have you ever called and not said you needed a little more time?"

Journalists also love to have people respond to their stories. It needn't be a complimentary response. Actually, I get excited when I receive any letters, whether or not they relate to anything I've written.

This summer, I wrote a story about life as a single woman in a particular city. My hypothesis was that it was difficult for single women, particularly professionals, to meet men they might like to date, especially if the women did not enjoy the bar scene.

I apparently struck a nerve. The phone calls started the morning after the story ran. Then came the letters.

I was surprised by the variety of responses, but I was glad to receive them. It meant people read what I wrote and cared enough to let me know what they thought about it.

People liked my article. People disagreed with my article. People liked it but thought it was depressing. Some wanted me to print the male point of view. Some wanted to know if I discovered any good places to meet people. Some men wanted to get in touch with some of the women I interviewed.

If nothing else, I discovered I had a future as a lonely hearts club adviser if I failed as a journalist.

Sharon Sheridan, a senior journalism major from East Setauket, N.Y., is features editor of The Daily Tar Heel.

Clip and save

DEAR DTH: Last January, you published a *Daily Tar Heel Planning Calendar* for the entire semester. It was a gem, a real time-saver, and I carried it in my purse with me everywhere I went. Over the summer, though, I left it in Lenoir Hall, and the rats chewed it up. Could you please run it again?

JUDY IN MORRISON

DEAR JUDY: Glad to oblige. In fact, some of our other readers might enjoy seeing it again.

August

1st Week: Go to your first class — or at least get the syllabus from someone who did.

2nd Week: Have good intentions of going to the library — until an all-campus party dictates a change in your plans.

September

1st Week: Stop someone you know and ask directions to your class.

2nd Week: Explore the possibility of declaring your semester Pass/Fail.

3rd Week: Look into extracurricular activities designed to kill additional study time.

4th Week: You can't put it off any longer. Go buy your textbooks from Student Stores.

October

1st Week: Call Mom and Dad to let them know you're still alive . . . and to beg for more money.

2nd Week: Check out the Undergraduate Library — for prospective dates to homecoming.

3rd Week: Use Fall Break to catch up on your sleep.

4th Week: Cut your Chem 11 lab to pick out a Halloween costume.

November

1st Week: For a change of pace, study.

2nd Week: Vow to cut back partying — next semester.

3rd Week: Special order caffeine rations in time for final exams.

4th Week: Make ski lodge reservations for the Christmas holidays before all the cheap spots are booked up.

December

1st Week: Grandmother unexpectedly "dies." Better tell teacher.

2nd Week: Consider alternate futures to law and medical school.

3rd Week: Good luck on exams. . . . And good luck this semester.