

A hunger for knowledge gives scholar satisfaction

By **CORIN ORTLAM**
Staff Writer

To speak of Michael Hooker is to speak of a man with a thirst for knowledge.

Graduating from UNC in 1969 with highest honors, Hooker has since carved his life and livelihood out of academia. Hooker is now the chancellor of the University of Maryland at Baltimore.

His birthplace in the mountains of southwestern Virginia and coal-mining family background made for an unlikely springboard for this scholar. Hooker said he realized the way to leave the coal mines of Virginia was through hard work toward scholarly pursuits.

"When I was a kid," Hooker said in an Oct. 1 *Christian Science Monitor* article, "I worked. I came home; I worked after school. I worked weekends — had a part-time job and if I wasn't at my part-time job I was mowing the lawn or taking out the garbage or doing something around the house."

That work ethic is evident as he continued his education after UNC, by earning his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Massachusetts. He taught at Harvard, was an academic administrator at Johns Hopkins and in 1982, became president of Bennington College in Vermont.

Hooker is also an editor of books on Descartes and Leibniz. "In Defense of the Principle for Deductibility of Justification" was his first published essay. He subsequently wrote a chapter titled "Deducing and Explaining the Character of Substance."

But this description of a Chapel Hill success story might possibly be called meaningless by Hooker. His concerns are much deeper and broader.

As a leading scholar, Hooker was one of the modern thinkers assembled for a conference this fall on the "Agenda for the 21st Century."

One of Hooker's concerns is reflected in a passage from a speech he delivered in that conference on universities in the 21st century. "We need to think about metaphysics," he said in the *Monitor* article. "We need to confront questions on a broad scale that we have never confronted before — such as 'What makes life worth living? What makes it meaningful? What is its human purpose?' And these are, of course, religious questions."

In the future, Hooker foresees a world that will be a high-tech wonderland with fewer diseases, less pollution and more comforts. Hooker is encouraged by these new developments, but he is also concerned with people leading incomplete, unchallenging lives because of the spare time the technological advances will bring. In short, Hooker said that human existence is not one of survival but rather the question of how one will spend his free time.

"What I'm concerned about is the people who don't dwell on the meaninglessness of their lives, or the meaningfulness of it — who just pursue mindless entertainment," he said.

Hooker sees evidence of the pursuit of "mindless entertainment" in today's children. "Kids today don't have that necessity of occupation," Hooker said in the *Monitor* article. "So an emptiness creeps in. That doesn't mean that my life is more meaningful than their lives. It's just that I had activity to fill it, so I didn't have time to dwell on the meaninglessness of my life, if you will."

Observing behavior at shopping malls, Hooker said that he was concerned about the emptiness in the lives of today's teen-agers.

"The shopping mall is a contemporary opium," Hooker said in the *Monitor* article. "Half of the kids that are there are stoned anyway, but the other half is stoned by the mall. The mall provides a kind of transfixing environment which takes their minds off of whatever their issues are. They walk around — you look in their eyes, and there's nobody home."

While Hooker was in Chapel Hill, his lifestyle was similarly reflective and concerned. Having attended the University during the Vietnam era, Hooker was deeply committed to both its protest and the protests of other controversial topics.

When the food service workers were exploited, Hooker helped to organize a takeover of the old Law School building to establish an alternative food service. Campus officials bargained with Hooker and his followers, and the workers were given their jobs back, though the University later switched to another food service.

Hooker was active in getting a lounge for honors students put into the library as well. However, Hooker said, "My most valuable service was as an intellectual." He and his friends professed what he called an "alternative lifestyle." They were beatniks, Bohemians, cultural revolutionists and political activists involved in the free speech cause and any other movement they deemed worthwhile.

Hooker still holds fond memories of UNC. "It may sound corny, but the campus contains a kind of magic that is very real."

As a student, Hooker found inspirations for his philosophy papers by walking all over campus. "I imagine that I was quite a spectacle in my Bohemian dress."

Even now he likes to slip into Chapel Hill unnoticed and walk around to "absorb the feeling." He can only describe what he feels as a "metaphysical experience."

Debut albums hit right note

Straight from Chatham County, N.C., and Hoboken, N.J., come stunning debut albums from two premiere bands. For locals, *Endlessly Rocks the Cradle* is Other Bright Colors' first release since its 1985 single "Circle Square." From Hoboken, *Leaving Time* is Winter Hours' fourth release in 12 months and its first full-length album. Both albums capture the power, beauty and emotion the bands express in live shows.

Alison Howard Albums

"Endlessly Rocks the Cradle" continues the bright folk-pop sound introduced by OBC on the "Circle Square" single. It continues some songs as well: "Circle Square" and "Stands to Reason" are both

back on this new vinyl. "Stands to Reason" has aged well and remains the jangly piece that first thrust OBC onto the Chapel Hill music scene.

"Confounded" is another jangly OBC tune that appears on its new album. A tight song, it is laden with

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