

The Daily Tar Heel

94th year of editorial freedom

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Editorials

Expensive expediency

An average visit to an average fast food restaurant would take the average person about 30 minutes to buy and eat an average-sized meal. Traveling at an average speed, people driving from Chapel Hill to Raleigh take an average of 30 minutes.

With that in mind, is it so much to ask the average Rams' Club member to wait an average of 30 minutes to exit the parking lot after games in the not-so-average Dean E. Smith Center?

No. It's entirely appropriate — which is why a proposal to build a thoroughfare via married student housing in Odum Village should be scrapped.

The Educational Foundation, Inc., UNC's athletic booster organization more commonly known as the Rams' Club, hired a Raleigh consulting firm to study ways to improve traffic conditions after Smith Center events. The proposal offers several ideas that the University would be well-advised to accept. Some of the ideas have already been implemented, such as a traffic plan that channels all Bowles Drive traffic after events in one direction. But amid the quality suggestions offered by the report is one suggestion that is not so hot.

Odum Village is a quaint, modest neighborhood tucked away on South Campus, across Manning Drive from the medical complex. Children play on

the slides and sandboxes dotting the yards between the 35 brick apartment buildings. It's not the kind of place that is conducive to traffic jams.

The 770 spaces in the F and Green parking lots, filled by Rams' Club members on the dozen or so home game days, are conveniently located on the arena's doorstep. The generosity of those members brought college basketball's finest facility to Chapel Hill. Those members paid for the right to park in those nearby lots. However, their payment did not include the right to impede on the quality of life for Odum Village residents.

In the post-game fervor of Tar Heel victories, car horns blow as Carolina fans show their excitement. The same can be said of rock fans after a rousing concert. Is it fair to inflict this intrusion on an area replete with newborn babies such as Odum Village?

After Sunday's basketball game, even the average Rams' Club member was gone in half an hour. The game ended at 3:05 p.m., and the 660-space F-lot was empty by 3:35. When 21,444 people converge on one spot, a 30-minute wait in traffic is to be expected.

In an intensely competitive housing market, few areas offer the convenience, affordability and peace of Odum Village. Saving a few minutes for the average, wealthy alumni is not worth damaging that.

Law does just so much

In celebrations marking the birth of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., there were memorials that would have been better left alone — the assaults, jeers, rocks and bottles.

In Cumming, Ga., a community in the northern suburbs of Atlanta, several hundred Ku Klux Klan members and sympathizers sidetracked a "brotherhood anti-intimidation" march, throwing stones, bottles and mud while screaming racial slurs. The demonstration had been planned to mark the King holiday, but the white hoods and hostile crowds made it a little too reminiscent of his work.

The repulsive incident does serve a purpose. Backgrounded by recent racial violence in New York City, it makes us realize that for many, only superficial changes have occurred in the last three decades. At heart, many Americans have only fear for anyone different.

Our parents were reared in a social system in which restaurants served seated white customers but refused blacks — or forced them to eat

standing. Blacks drank from their own water fountains, attended their own schools, lived in their own neighborhoods. And separation fed prejudice.

It still does. It is easier to hate the unknown, easier to consider a race subhuman before the next-door neighbor is a black with the intelligence, talent and honor to match or outpace any Anglo-Saxon. And Cumming, Ga. is an all-white community in an all-white county.

Unlike most memorials, today's holiday commemorating the efforts of Martin Luther King makes demands upon the conscience. Its very celebration has evoked violence and resurfaced hatreds. For that reason, perhaps it is one of this nation's most challenging holidays, for not only does it remind us of the work of a great man, but it forces us to confront the fact that his mission is far from complete.

And those who, like the residents of Cumming, prefer to use the celebration as an exercise of their own hatred, would do well to know the "enemy" first. They may find that in reality, the enemy is lurking inside their own skin.

The Daily Tar Heel

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Tar Heel Forum

On becoming an American

Pierre Tristam

Of Mice and Men

Over the Christmas holidays, I was fortunate enough to be naturalized as a citizen of this country.

The ceremony was dull and uninspiring, my 387 co-initiates generally edgy from waiting in line or on wooden benches almost three hours and falling victim to Brooklyn County's tart crop of immigration bureaucrats. We finally hummed the allegiance to the flag and heard the wearying, though well-meaning, words of a WASPish judge spill into or over us like watered-down patriotism at a veteran's ball.

But the vows over, I was happy, and others, anyone could easily see, were happier still. Walking out of the Federal Court Building and onto Camden Plaza East (certainly neither Brooklyn's prettiest nor most aromatic nook), I felt a blush of pride at the thought of now legitimately calling myself an American. Thankfully, that blush didn't outlast brunch with my parents (pride being, I think, the smaller shakes of something wildly fanatical). But lasting still, and powerfully so, is a sense of gratefulness I am not ready to abandon. "Why be so grateful?" I am asked, especially by fellow Americans who, lazing into their 20s, like to drink French wine and say "Paris" with the guttural "r."

Why? That's a question with which many countries are unfamiliar, let alone tolerant. Yet I'm not sure I can answer the question without tripping into a pool of clichés. I could easily say that the United States is a free country. I could repeat for the nth time that America is the land of opportunity. I could even be grateful for the absence of curfews, of snipers, of kidnappers and the relative absence of material insecurity or political barbarism.

The words may please a few patriotic ears, and I have no doubt they're true, but they would not be saying much. For any immigrant, America is a difficult country to contend with. Practically speaking, America is also among the few countries left to contend with, since Europe and Latin America either keep their borders tight or are no longer attractive to immigrants. And that is the immigrant's dilemma.

My country of origin is immaterial. I left that country, now a shredded patchwork of fiefdoms and a training ground to foreign armies and green mercenaries, with much relief.

A summer in Kingsport, Tenn. put me face to face with a society which dawdled in more boredom, waste and futility than Chekhov could ever have imagined. Paris, now that I was seeing it first-hand, was really as beautiful as the history books had claimed. But the arrogance of a Parisian is not mythical. And London . . . London quickly repulsed me, if only because of its overabundance of mosques and turbans, symptoms of a religious renaissance that so capably had contributed to my (former) country's ruin.

Then there was New York. The Wild West. An ode of steel and concrete (and flesh!) to America's extremes — mink-covered wives of corporate aristocrats literally sidestepping hordes of homeless delinquents, who sleep atop steam vents and inside burlap sacks to keep warm along the walls of newly renovated Carnegie Hall. Inside the walls, the melancholy sounds of a Beethoven string quartet evoke sadness, but for what? Listeners never dare ask. They clap and demand an encore, then walk out, maybe relishing a moment of self-gratifying sorrow in pitying the homeless on their way to the Russian Tea Room or the Plaza Hotel's Oyster Bar. They soon forget what they have just heard or seen.

Over a period of seven years, there are many places in New York where one can sidestep the homeless and indulge in pitiful reflection that won't change a thing. I've known several such places on many a sidestepping trip of my own. And I wondered at first how one could keep his conscience clean amidst such misery, just as I had wondered how powerful nations of the West could overlook genocide after genocide in the world, despite endless memorials granted the discriminately famous Holocaust. (I am thinking of the muted victims of Cambodia, of East Timor and of Lebanon, to name only a few and recent cases.)

I did not wonder long. It is as easy to sidestep a lump of stinking living flesh at the corner of Broadway and 57th Streets

as it is to glance over the picture of a mass grave of Cambodians in the Times and turn the page while dipping a corn muffin in coffee. Among the secrets of being an American is the ability to be indifferent, careless — or at least selfish. Enough to make Ayn Rand proud and the rest of the world critical, when not jealous.

I don't mean to be critical myself. Ethnocentrism is more American than apple pie, not by choice but by circumstance. The nation's borders are saltwater to the east and west, trees to the north, discounting a few Canadians who've never been more than a subsidiary industry in Washington's eyes. And when, to the south, the strange, bronze people of Mexico keep pouring into Texas and California, the reaction is predictable: deny their existence, *illegalize* them, bully them out. Perhaps, then, they'll go away.

Whatever cultures and conflicts lie beyond our borders matter only in terms of eccentric entertainment value on the evening news or intellectual exercise to fill university curricula. At any rate, most Americans will never need to bother with a foreign language or travel beyond the safe delivery distance of a Pizza Hut. What else can they be but ethnocentric?

I am, therefore, not surprised or troubled by what (to Europeans, at least) looks like a naive game of playing politics in this country.

I don't mean to be admiring, either. But trying to grant the United States the status of a utopia is self-defeating. Most immigrants, at first, tend to do exactly that. The word "America" is synonymous with a world of solutions, the way certain nations in turmoil expect any American intervention to eradicate their problems. But utopias can only be deceiving.

In the end, I still remain unsure of how to define my gratefulness for being an American. I suppose that living in a society where life is not a matter of luck, as it is where I grew up, should be reason enough. But after eight years here, one tends to forget the dangers of the past and to take for granted the peace and liberties at hand, as most Americans do. Comfortable ambivalence, to say the least.

Staff Columnist Pierre Tristam is a graduate history student from Carboro.

Celebrate another great

To the editor:

While everyone is celebrating Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday this weekend with the national holiday observed on Monday, we feel that another American hero's birthday — that of Robert E. Lee — should also be observed Jan. 19.

While we do not intend to take away from King's greatness, we feel that Lee should be remembered, for he is as much, if not more, an American hero than King.

Lee exemplified character traits distinguishing him from his contemporaries — namely the characteristics of duty and honor. Lee once said "there is a true glory and a true honor, the glory of duty done and honor of integrity of principles." These characteristics should be strived for by all of us.

Like King, Lee lived in troubled times. He hoped that solutions to the strife in 1860 could be found peacefully. When they were not, through his sense of duty, Lee followed Virginia into the Confederacy.

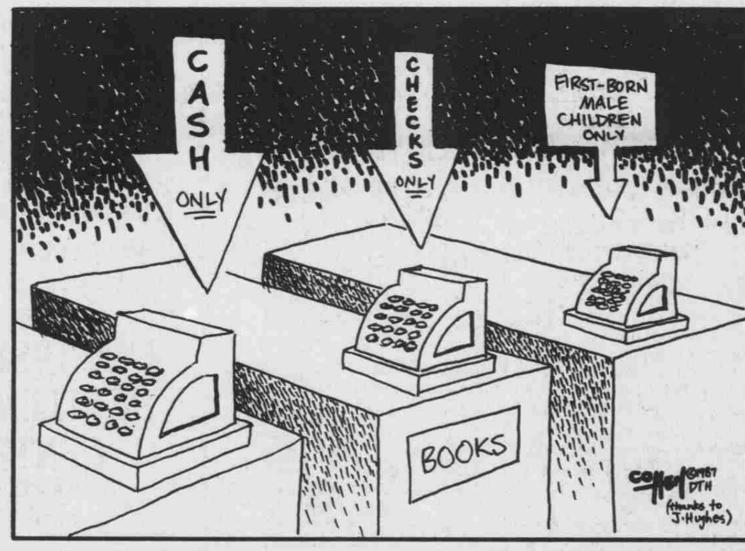
Four years later, in defeat, Lee achieved his highest level of greatness as he provided a role model for his fellow Southerners with his dignity. His petition for amnesty was not acted upon for more than a century after his death, when President Gerald Ford granted him citizenship in 1975.

Lee was an honorable man to whom more Americans should look for a model. He believed in excellence not only in academic endeavors while president of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University) but also in general conduct.

Lee's sense of honor and duty is best stated by himself: "Duty is the sublimest word in the language; you cannot do more than your duty; you should never wish to do less."

JULIE BANZET
 Sophomore
 History

TODD CAPITANO
 Sophomore
 Economics



More defenses of Coach Dean Smith

To the editor:

Everette Mills, as we read your recent letter in the Daily Tar Heel, were filled with disbelief and disgust. Not only did you have the gall to say that Dean (You're-the-greatest) Smith was no longer the best college basketball coach, but you went on to suggest that he was not even in the top five. Who are your top five?

College basketball has gotten better — evidence the 64-team tournament. The UNC teams have "reached down" just as many times as they ever have note the games against Duke, SMU and Jacksonville in 1986. And the hardest part of the schedule is clearly the last half of the season and the two major tournaments. Competition simply gets more intense.

And we cannot think how winning would make a coach lose his desire to win. Once a coach wins the big one, this must increase his desire to win it again.

Any lifetime Carolina fan can clearly see reality. So rest easy, fans. Your hope is well-founded. You, Everette Mills, are wrong.

JEFF KISER
 Junior
 Psychology

To the editor:

In response to Everette Mills letter ("Coach critique," Jan. 14), we feel that something is missing from his proposed avid Carolina spirit. Exactly what

was his purpose in submitting this letter?

Apparently, Mills is not satisfied with Dean Smith's performance, stating that he feels Smith is no longer one of the top five coaches in the nation. If this is the case, why then has Carolina consistently been ranked high in pre-season polls? A team which loses key players each season could not bounce back and be ranked so highly if it did not have an excellent coaching staff. New talent would not continue to sign with UNC's basketball program if potential players did not feel they could put faith in Smith's abilities.

Mills said that he has seen a slight decline in Smith's coaching abilities in recent years, and that on many occasions, the Tar Heels have lost to inferior teams. While this may be true, every team has their bad nights, and one cannot hold only the coach responsible for losses to any team, whether inferior or superior.

The tone of Mills' article indicates to us that winning every game is the purpose of Carolina's basketball program. In our opinion, the success of a program and its coach is not measured entirely by how many games the team wins. Losses tend to make players recognize and correct their mistakes while helping them improve their dispositions.

By the way, how can anyone not directly involved with the team judge when it has peaked?

Unexpected injuries can cause a team to choke. Is it the coach's fault?

Mills attempts to cover himself by listing Smith's many accomplishments. Again, Mills tends to measure a coach's ability only by his achievements. Mills fails to realize there is more to Smith's coaching than winning titles, having the SAC named after him, drawing a six-figure salary or being idolized. Coaching requires dedication and is much more personal than Mills makes it appear.

As for Smith having caught the "Fat Cat Syndrome," we feel Mills is totally off base in his accusation. Before the Tar Heels won the 1982 NCAA Championship, many people doubted Smith's capability to lead a team to that coveted crown. Rash assumptions about Smith should not be made.

We feel that Smith would not want students spending time arguing over his skills. He does, however, deserve more respect than Mills has given him. Our coach does not need to regain the desire to coach well; he never lost it. Mills asks, "What else is left to achieve?" Our answer: Do it again, Dean!

STACEE SINGER
 Sophomore
 Medical Technology

SUSAN WATSON
 Freshman
 Pharmacy