

# UNC folks climb up a new Hill

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Kevin Monroe always shakes hands. It's almost a trademark.

As legislative assistant to Terry Sanford, Kevin no doubt gets to shake a lot of hands these days.

Today, he is an aide, but four years ago he was a politician in his own right. Monroe was UNC's student body president for the 1983-84 school year. He is one of many recent UNC graduates who work on Capitol Hill.

Students at UNC may have a tendency to think of the Hill as an attainable career goal only for older politicians. Truth is, according to recent UNC graduates who work there, many people on Capitol Hill are fresh out of college.

While most of the graduates began as campaign volunteers while they were still here on campus, their present careers prove that political involvement does not have to stop there. They also prove it does not take a lifetime to get a desk in one of bureaucracy's havens.

"It's amazing how many people I've met up here who graduated from Carolina," 1986 graduate Karen Rindge said. Rindge, who majored in political science, is a legislative correspondent for Congressman Jamie Clarke (D-N.C.). She researches issues and legislation for the congressman and answers mail.

Rindge, 22, said most of the people in Clarke's office are under 30. "There's a lot of responsibility for the job, considering our ages," she said.

"There are tons of young people on the Hill," said Joseph Herrin, a UNC grad who now works for Jesse Helms.

"On our staff, there's about 25. I'd say one-fourth of them have been out of college less than two years," he said.

Herrin was a political science major who graduated in 1985. As Helms' special assistant, Herrin says he does not handle legislative work. "I'm the senator's scheduler and kind of like his personal aide. I take care of his appointments, a lot of his personal business, take care of the family, any detailed work for him personally."

Claude Allen, who graduated in 1982 with a degree in political science and linguistics, has also worked for Helms. But now he is deputy director of the Minorities Staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the first black person to hold that position.

His responsibilities as deputy director include keeping up with African affairs legislation and doing public relations for the Republican staff.

In most instances, the graduates got to know their various bosses by working on campaigns during college. But staff assistant Lynne Willhoit met David Price through another channel.

"David and I go to the same church," she said. Willhoit, who grew up in Chapel Hill, is a member of Binkley Baptist Church on Wil-low Drive. She is a 1985 graduate who majored in international studies.

She expedites passports for constituents, greets office visitors and sorts mail. "I do a lot of constituent chores," she said. "I didn't really want to be a secretary, but it's good experience. You find out how Congress works. It's exciting working here . . . more than just your normal run-of-the-mill-job."

Wyatt Closs also works in Price's office, but as a legislative assistant.

"Basically, I'm responsible for tracking research on . . . education and labor, the budget, ways and means, public works and transportation and veterans," he said.

Closs is not yet a graduate of UNC. During his junior year last year, Closs resigned as speaker for the Campus Governing Council and put school on hold to be field director for Price's 1986 campaign.

"I've kind of had a unique dilemma in having this great opportunity to work for a congressman, but having a year of school hanging over my head," he said.

Closs does not regret his decision to leave Carolina, but he does miss some things. "I feel like I gave up part of the Carolina experience," he said. "What I miss most is the friends."

He plans to return to Carolina for his final semester, but he expects his real world perspective to change

his attitude. "I won't have the same kind of experience (as other students)," he said.

Closs is what some would call a busy guy. He works from around 8:30 a.m. to around 6 p.m. and sometimes well into the night when the House is in session. He lives in Silver Springs, Md. so he can be close to the University of Maryland, where he is taking six hours of night classes this semester.

Closs also writes a column called "The American Brother" for "The Carolinian" newspaper.

Many students don't have jobs before they graduate, let alone on Capitol Hill. So how does it happen? How do UNC students end up in the nation's capital, advising or aiding the bigwigs most of us only see on television?

Involvement is perhaps the main factor. All of the graduates interviewed were involved politically on campus.

Willhoit was involved in the UNC Young Democrats. "I had a lot of contacts with the Democratic party and I've always been interested in politics," she said.

James Herrin campaigned for Helms in 1984, but he spent about two days a week volunteering for the Republican party before the campaign. Then, beginning in July of 1984, he spent about 45 hours a week campaigning for Helms.

After the campaign, Herrin began doing project work for Helms. Early last year, Helms appointed Herrin as his scheduler and personal aide.

Allen also campaigned for Jesse Helms in 1984. After the campaign, Allen went to Washington to work with Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) Later Helms recommended him for his present position.

While Allen campaigned for Helms, his Chi Psi brother Monroe had put school on hold for a semester to devote full time to the Jim Hunt campaign. Monroe then became co-director of the "Students for Sanford" group at UNC during the 1986 election.

After the campaign, Monroe submitted resumes and had interviews for positions on various senatorial staffs. Sanford accepted him.

Rindge was on the Campus Governing Council for three years. She interned for Clarke after her

sophomore year and also for the National Committee for an Effective Congress. One fall, she worked for the North Carolina Democratic Party in Raleigh. On campus, she was active in a group concerned with South African divestment.

Aside from political activities, Rindge had various jobs on campus. She worked with residence housing her sophomore year. She helped with orientation one year and worked in the costume shop of the drama department for a while. "This sounds sort of hokey, but each of these things were . . . diverse and it's kind of helped me with my job," she said. "You learn how to deal with people, with meetings, just dealing with problem solving."

After school, she applied to work for Clarke and has been working with him since January.

All of the graduates say they like their jobs.

"It's a very good job," Allen says. He said the job affords him the chance to travel. He has been to South Africa twice, to the Orient, the Caribbean, Latin America, London, Spain, Portugal, Taiwan, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

Herrin said the best thing about his job is the people he gets to meet. "I've met the vice president. I've met George Shultz. I've met Ted Koppel. I've met a lot of people that I never would have had a chance to meet. Plus . . . I got to meet Linda Evans!"

Rindge describes her job as a full day every day. "It's exciting, but also kind of stressful," she says.

One drawback the graduates face is expenses. The cost of living in Washington D.C. is quite a bit higher than in Chapel Hill. "Expense is not the word for it," Allen said.

Herrin added that everyone in Washington has roommates because housing is so expensive. His apartment is \$1,100 a month. He said some apartments in Washington cost as much as \$1,500 a month. Rindge says she pays triple what she paid for an apartment in Chapel Hill.

Rindge says she dislikes only one aspect of her job. "I answer mail for the congressman, and I'll have to state how he stands on something

and sometimes I disagree with him," she said.

But that doesn't happen often. "Basically I do agree with him and that makes the job very enjoyable," she said.

Allen said he usually agrees with Helms, but not always. "I may disagree, but if I don't, he will certainly know," he said. He said his hardest day on the job came when Helms voted against the Martin Luther King holiday. Helms called Allen at home and the two talked about the issue.

"I may not agree with him on everything, but the bottom line was that he had a position that he took, he stood by it and I respect him for it," he said. "At the point that I consider something to be ethically or morally questionable, I will cease to do this job."

One thing Monroe does not like about his job is reading mail. "There's so much of it," he said. "You just have to set a block of time aside and just do it."

As for the future, Rindge plans to stay where she is, at least for a while. "I think I'll be here a few years," she said, adding that she may specialize later in education or environmental science. She has also considered lobbying.

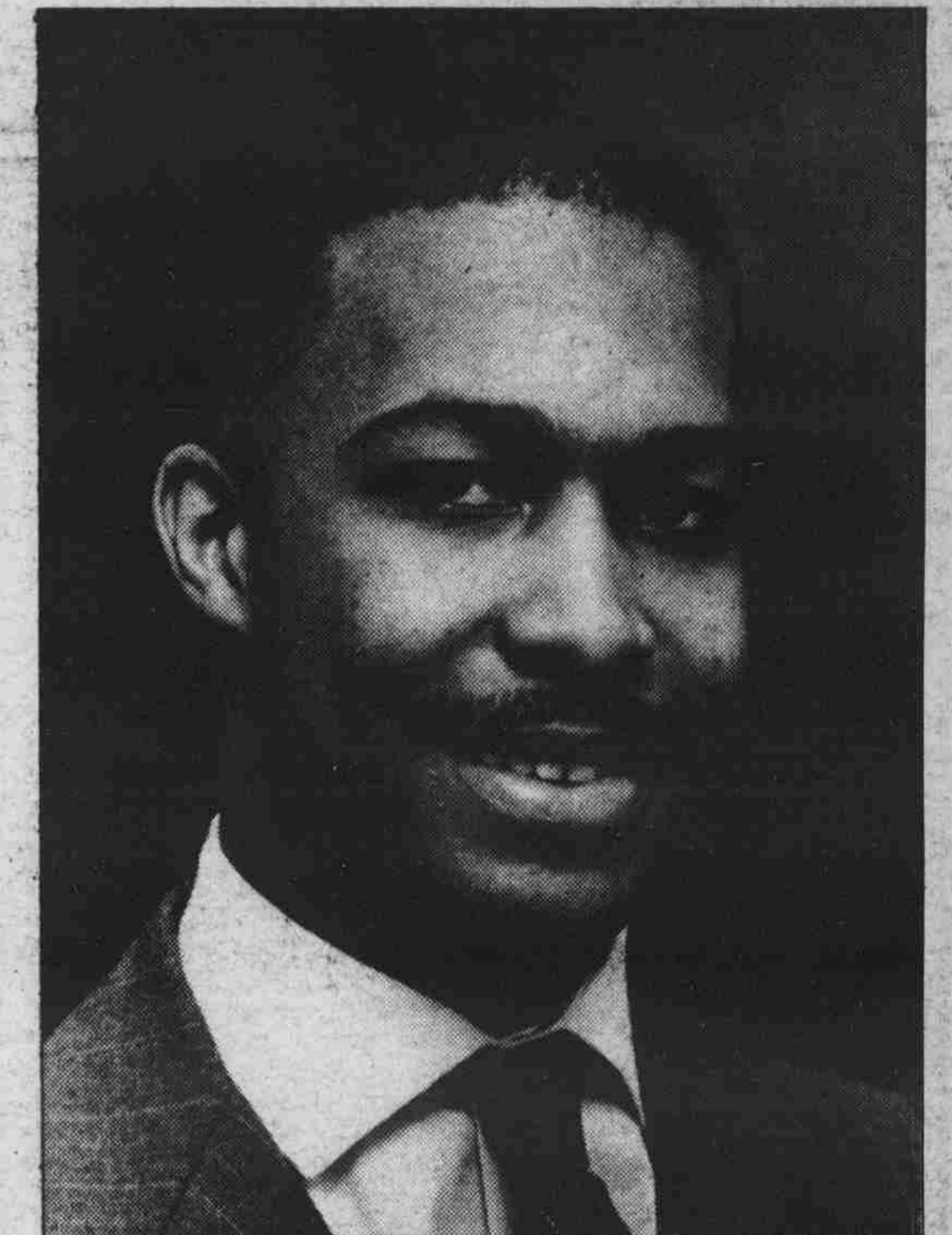
The future holds various plans and ideas for the others. Allen is getting married this summer to a woman he met in Washington. He met Janise Mitchell while the two were in a class preparing for law school.

Herrin is also preparing for law school. He has applied to several schools and he will go where he is accepted. But, he said, "If I had my druthers I'd go to Carolina."

Monroe says he is considering joining the Navy flight program. After the six-year program, he says he would like to return to work on Capitol Hill. "maybe with a defense research group or something like that."

Closs wants to finish his senior year at UNC. He said he would like to continue to be involved in the public sector in some way, but he is unsure exactly how. Only time will tell for sure.

And only time will tell how many students at UNC today will be on Capitol Hill tomorrow.



Tar Heel file photo

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— Wyatt Closs

