

# The Daily Tar Heel

96th year of editorial freedom

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## Search for space a 3-ring circus

There ain't room enough in the Monogram Building for the both of 'em, says the UNC administration. But that's not the point. Once again, the UNC administration's *modus operandi* has left much to be desired.

Given the huge rise in applications to UNC, it's undeniable that there's a need to enlarge the admissions staff and office area. The obvious answer is expanding the admissions department into the back of the Monogram Building, where the Circus Room is now located.

The Circus Room is more than a mid-afternoon and late-night snack bar; many students use the Circus Room as a grocery store as well. Those students should have been consulted before any decision affecting the store was made.

Nonetheless, way back on February 11, Chancellor Christopher Fordham decided to allow the expansion and to temporarily house the additional admissions staff in the basement of Cobb dorm.

Unfortunately, this was not a concerned administration quickly responding to a recent Student Congress resolution calling for an increase in the admissions staff.

The chancellor, as of last Thursday, had not raised the issue with his own student-faculty Building and Grounds committee. Nor did he consult last year's Morehead Confederation or Olde Campus governor, Residence

Hall Association president or student body president before reaching a decision last February.

Students learned of the decision last Friday, at what the new Morehead Confederation governor described as a "purely informational" meeting. Student opinion would be solicited only about the future location of the Circus Room, which the vice chancellor and dean for Student Affairs has pledged will remain open in some form throughout the process.

But students are understandably suspicious about administrative promises. In the past, converting one level of a dorm to administrative offices has led to the conversion of the entire dorm. That process claimed Carr, Smith, Steele and Battle-Vance-Pettigrew dormitories.

However unlikely the prospect of a conquest of Cobb dorm, the past speaks for itself. Conversions aren't instantaneous, but like kudzu, they proceed with gradual inevitability.

The administration's approach to expanding the admissions staff excluded students until late in the decision-making process, near the close of the semester. Such an approach fuels student fears about the consequences of the move.

By excluding interested student groups from the process, Fordham has only reinforced the legacy of distrust between students and administrators. — **Stuart Hathaway**

## Give the BCC director a chance

Margo Crawford will become the first director of the Black Cultural Center July 1. She is well-qualified for the post — in addition to holding several teaching and administrative posts, Crawford co-authored a 530-page book, "Contemporary Black America." She includes Maya Angelou as a reference on her resume.

Students should welcome the addition of an enthusiastic BCC director to the University community. Given a chance, she could accomplish a great deal.

But the BCC is carrying a lot of baggage that must be shed quickly. Sometimes sarcastically referred to as the "Black Cultural Corner," the center is a small section of the Union, closed off by glass walls. A paper sign above the door identifies it as the BCC, and a newspaper column on the door proclaims, "Black Cultural Center is a handout."

The original proposal said the center should house an Afro-American reading collection; display contemporary African and Afro-American art; and sponsor events highlighting black culture.

Obviously, there is quite a difference between what administrators promised and what they delivered.

Fortunately, Crawford is moving in the right direction. Both Crawford and

Edith Wiggins, associate vice chancellor of Student Affairs, have said they view the current BCC as nothing more than a temporary base of operations until a real center can be constructed.

But understandably, many students are tired of being told to wait. Unless Crawford can change the BCC's image as a token gesture to appease minorities, students will never take her task seriously.

In addition to relocating the center, Crawford has other worthwhile goals. She has emphasized that students should run the center. She has also expressed a commitment to private fund raising, which is an excellent idea — the more money the center raises on its own, the more autonomy it will have.

Crawford's attitude and ability indicate that she has the potential to accomplish her goals and earn the University community's respect.

With that respect, she could act as an avenue to the administration for minority concerns. The vacant position of Hayden Renwick at the Office of Student Counseling has worried many minority students. And while the University should be held to its promise to replace Renwick, minority students deserve more than one administrative champion. — **Matt Bivens**

## Floating in Max Steele's daydreams

Editor's note: UNC creative writing professor Max Steele will be signing copies of his latest book, "The Hat of My Mother," on Thursday from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Bull's Head Bookshop.

**Brian McCuskey**  
**In the Funhouse**

As a student of Max Steele for two creative writing classes, I picked up his new book of short stories, "The Hat of My Mother," with a slightly perverse feeling of anticipation. Would he break any of the rules laid down in his classes? I remembered a few: "Don't start stories with a man waking up." "Suicide shows the victim's lack of imagination; suicide at the end of a story shows the author's lack of imagination." "Stories with just two scenes are too intellectual; a third scene makes it emotional."

I've always harbored the vague suspicion that Steele had secretly written the perfect short story — about a man who leaps out of bed in the first scene, and out a window in the second — and was desperately trying to keep us from discovering this ultimate tale before he could publish it. Happily, I found no such story in the book.

Instead, I finished the stories in one long afternoon and realized that I had jotted down only five or six notes for this review. Puzzled by my lack of commentary, I remembered something else Steele had said about one student story we reviewed in class. There was very little discussion about it; no one seemed able to say anything. Finally, Steele said, "This is a very good story, which is why we're struggling to talk about it. It's hard to say why a story works. It simply does."

I feel the same way about his collection. Steele's stories explore the delicate balance between humor and sadness, and his prose steps lightly and carefully so as not to upset the scales. In "Ah Love! Ah Me!," a lovestruck schoolboy's date with his dreamgirl turns into disaster as his

intestinal workings fail him. He ends up on his back in a soda shop watching the girl leave, feeling sorry for himself and "for the whole pitiful world." We can continue to laugh at the boy, but the pull is strong to cry with him instead.

In the complementary story, "Forget the Geraniums," a Paris artist has become completely disillusioned with the farcical world around him. He decides to kill himself, until he experiences a moment of pure farce so ridiculous that he must keep on living. He faces the choice of total despair or helpless laughter, and chooses laughter. We chuckle too, but it is a chuckle of relief.

In a recent interview, Steele expressed his love of privacy in Chapel Hill, and explained how his lighter counsel and infrequent publishing has allowed him to become a more private person. Many of his stories deal with issues of privacy, and people's escape into their own memories and daydreams. In "Where She Brushed Her Hair," the narrator dreams himself back into the womb of his mother and from that vantage point is finally able to share the contemplative hour she always spent alone before dinner. The man in "Color the Daydream Yellow" derives the strength to continue his rocky marriage by daydreaming of a past burnt-out love affair.

Steele's characters rummage through their dreams and memories to find new resolve and strength. Much of Steele's fiction is contemplative and retrospective, suggesting that the writer, by doing the same sort of rummaging as his characters, derives a similar affirmation of order

through his storytelling. The stories refer repeatedly to human manners, and several stories explore what happens when human order is imposed on an absurd and often orderless world. In the title story, a woman is trapped in the funeral of a dead woman she has never known, simply because the grieving family has taken and mistaken her hat for a floral gift, and she is too polite to ask for it back. The schoolmarm in "The Cat and the Coffee Drinkers" brusquely teaches her young pupils good manners and the proper methods of entering rooms and introducing oneself. She concludes the education of her class with a lesson in death, conducted with the utmost propriety and good form.

"The Death of a Chimp" is the weakest story of the collection. It is an awkward story about an ex-astronaut who fears that NASA is out to stuff him — literally. The bizarre premise would work if the story were told at a more surreal level, but Steele's style grounds it in reality, and the plot and characters remain flat. Steele's strength is his eye and ear for unusual and subtle details in daily life, and his perception of extraordinary moments. The narrow and contrived plot of "The Death of a Chimp" is not worthy of his stylistic skill.

But what all this commentary finally leads to is one short sentence: These stories work. My mostly empty pad of paper proves that. I lost myself in Steele's daydreams and didn't want to leave them for even a few moments of scribbling. I just wanted to keep reading, which is ultimately what a story should do. Max Steele tells good ones, and tells them well — a rare combination of talents.

Brian McCuskey is a junior English major from Los Angeles.

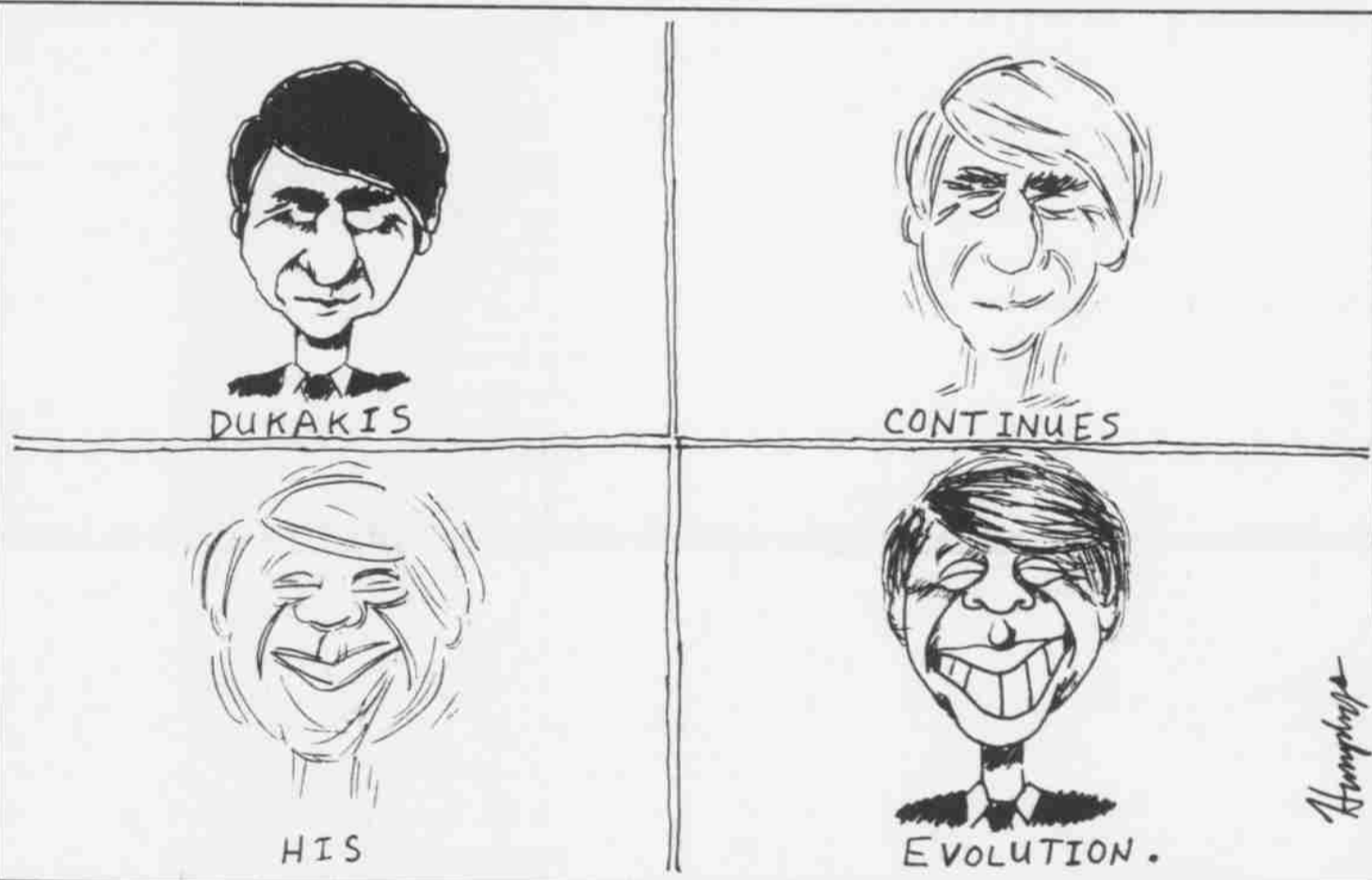
## Readers' Forum

### Let them eat cake

To the editor:  
 We are writing this letter in response to a major administrative decision that has once again been made without consulting the students. First, the administration steals two-thirds of A-lot parking (Cobb, Joyner and Olde Campus vicinity), leaving many dorm residents without a parking place. Now, the administration has annexed the Circus Room for use by the admissions office, leaving those stranded students hungry. The Circus Room provides groceries for those students unable to get to a normal grocery store, and now, this "semi" grocery store has vanished also. What are these poor, starving students to do?

In all seriousness, the Circus Room provides a much-needed service for North Campus residents. Granted, the admissions office desperately needs additional office space, but not at the expense of student needs. There is no question that a new Circus Room facility must be built. However, no break in service should occur while this building is under construction. Unlike the admissions office, which has found a temporary office in the basement of Cobb dormitory, the Circus Room cannot find temporary space. A break in Circus Room service would not only anger North Campus residents, but would deprive them of basic necessities as well as crush a long-established tradition.

As elected leaders and residents of North Campus, we propose the building of a new Circus Room facility while providing continuous service



until the said establishment is opened for student use. The needs of the admissions office will be met as well as the needs of the North Campus residents.

In building this new facility, the administration needs to remember that the students are here. Their needs remain loud and clear. Do not let us return in the fall to find that the Circus Room has done a disappearing act.

STEPHANIE HARDY  
 Sophomore  
 Political Science  
 ANITA GILLIS  
 Junior  
 Education

### Potty parity a civil right

To the editor:  
 On average, a newborn girl can expect to live seven years

longer than a newborn boy. But what does she do during those seven years? It seems that she spends those additional seven years forever waiting in line to use the women's facilities in sports arenas and stadiums, as well as many other public places.

I always assumed it was biological differences that freed men from these long lines, so I was somewhat surprised by an article in "American Demographics" that suggested it is actually the facilities that make the difference. This lack of "potty parity" has compelled a California state senator, Art Torres, to push through a "potty parity" law, recognizing that men and women have not been treated equally when nature calls. Under California's new law, a committee is now determining the best ratio of women's toilets to men's, and

this ratio will become part of the state's building code.

One of Torres' objectives was to reduce the "economic impact on women who pay the same money to attend public events but end up missing half the event because they are standing in line." And food vendors are also sure to benefit as women are more free to consume large quantities of liquid without missing most of what they've paid to see.

GENE GALIN  
 Chapel Hill

### Letters policy

■ When submitting letters or columns, students should include name, year in school, major, phone number and home town.

## Protesters' cause takes backseat to methods

On March 15, Paul Alarab tried to suspend himself from the Golden Gate Bridge. He tied one end of a 30-foot rope to a support cable and the other to a 36-gallon garbage can. He had planned to live in the pail for a week as a protest on behalf of the nation's elderly and infirm.

On the way down, Alarab lost his grip and fell into San Francisco Bay. He bobbed in the water for an hour before the receding tide carried him out to sea. More than six hours later, a fishing boat spotted the protester clinging to a rock far from the coast. Luckily, Alarab survived.

Hanging from the Golden Gate is a rare incident, even in San Francisco, but surviving a fall from the bridge is even rarer. Thus, Alarab provided the San Francisco Chronicle with a media bonanza. He was front-page news for three days, an honor usually reserved for presidents and popes.

Obviously, Alarab got exactly what every legitimate protester desires and deserves — publicity. Ideally, this attention could be used to further the protester's cause, as a forum for educating the public about an often forgotten minority. But the publicity the activist received did not concern the elderly and the infirm. Rather, it centered on Alarab and his "weird" fall from the bridge. The paper probed the "ins" and "outs" of the protester and his unusual feat. What was it like? What was

**David Long**  
**Guest Writer**

he like? Alarab became another Bay area "freak;" he did not become the representative of a noble and legitimate cause.

Alarab crossed the fine line between effective activism and exhibitionism. His stated goal was an admirable one. His means, however, showed that he was either politically naive or not very intelligent. Fall or no, hanging from the Golden Gate Bridge would not convince many people to help some of the helpless members of our society. Dead or alive, the protester and the protest would obscure the cause.

Alarab-esque talk has filled the DTH for some time. Dale McKinley has captured a lion's share of headlines. Here is another activist who is willing, in the spirit of self-sacrifice, to publicize the woes of a wronged people, and the excesses of a sometimes abusive organization.

Yet the debate which surrounds McKinley does not center on South Africa or the CIA. It does not center on the protester's sanity, as in the Alarab case. Rather, people wonder if his protests have gone too far. They wonder if he makes headlines for his martyrdom or his marquee value. They wonder about what

he is doing, not for whom he is doing it. In any case, many people notice the activist and his activism. Few seriously debate the issues he proposedly stands for.

In McKinley's "It's not trendy to oppose genocide," (April 15) he sarcastically and obtusely addresses the idea of activism. Having created a large audience through a series of fasts, demonstrations and vigils, he does not try to educate the DTH readers about the issues concerning apartheid and "genocide." Instead, he defends himself and his organization. As in the Alarab case, the protester and the protest were discussed at length. The oppressed were not. Even in McKinley's own writing, his cause takes a back seat to his activities.

Consciously or not, and assuredly through good intentions, Alarab and McKinley have created showdowns, not forums for serious debate. They have become curiosities. They make good headlines. But their efforts to educate the public are ineffective. In San Francisco, people are waiting for the next bridge gymnast. In Chapel Hill, people wonder what Dale McKinley will do next. Few are more aware of the problems of the elderly or the excesses of the CIA.

David Long is a graduate student in history from Chapel Hill

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