

Opinion

Biscuit craving leads to a heavyhearted drive

I've been on a Kentucky Fried Chicken kick lately. What that means is, when I get on these kicks (I do it for bananas, strawberries and certain songs), I can't go for more than about two days before I need a KFC biscuit or three. So, almost every night around 5 o'clock, I've left the computer to drive over to Carrboro in my car (which looks more like my grandfather's boat — that old and that big).

When I drive, I turn on my old tape player (since the radio quit two years ago) and try to forget everything I have to do in the next 24 hours. It should be a time to think about absolutely nothing.

But it never works out that way,

because as soon as I turn off of Cameron Avenue, I drive by the town's soup kitchen and the group of men hanging around outside.

Even in my big, old car that makes me feel utterly ridiculous anywhere on Franklin Street, I end up feeling ostentatious when I drive by, thinking that I really ought to be walking, that I don't deserve this luxury. And I remember the one time I worked in the soup kitchen, for lunch last year.

I went because my campus pastor went every Friday and campus ministry members were supposed to help. I didn't really mind going and dealing with the older men and women there — I served them the food and talked briefly with some of

Sharon Keschull
Editor

them. They didn't really tell me their stories of why they were there, as I would've expected — they just didn't seem to want to rehash that.

What I did have a difficult time with were the few guys there who were my age or just a little older. They were generally good-looking and not the types I expected to see. And they were the ones I couldn't talk to, because I couldn't figure out what to say.

I wanted to ask why they were

there, why not in school or at work. Jobs are plentiful in this area, I thought, so are you all just lazy?

Since then, I've learned at least partial answers to those questions. Some of them probably did have jobs and were trying to support themselves. But in Chapel Hill, minimum-wage jobs don't go too far when you try to pay for an apartment and food and clothing. For those guys who had moved away from their families, self-support was tough — especially in a part of North Carolina where a college degree is almost the rule.

Town leaders are working for low-income housing and shelters for special children or battered wives. But it's not fast enough to help those

people I see nightly outside the shelter get out of the rut they're stuck in. The town can't solve those people's problems, but it could take a big chunk out of them.

I haven't been back to the shelter — I usually say I'm too busy, and that's generally the truth. But I want to go back, and I want to talk to the people who are my age, to find out what kinds of jobs they have and how what kinds of plans they have for the future. And I want to ask what they think whenever they see cars like mine drive by and just keep on going.

Sharon Keschull is a junior journalism and religious studies major from Raleigh.

Ponytails and prejudices

Bill Hildebolt
Staff Columnist

I used to have long hair. It got to be long enough so that I could pull it back into a ponytail. Not one of those wimpy ponytails, either; it took forever to grow, and it was hard to part with.

From an aesthetic standpoint, I thought it was attractive, and even entertaining. I could twirl it around my finger, or put it in my mouth and be happy (I'm easy to please) for hours.

The real reason I had it, though, had more to do with a little "game" I was playing. A ponytail is an extremely stereotypical trait, and a lot of people committed themselves to some interesting attributions about my personality upon meeting me and seeing my ponytail.

I always loved to hear them later: Gosh, I thought you were freaked out on drugs when I met you. Gosh, I thought you were a pinko-commie

It was more than funny. People who allow themselves to judge someone by a ponytail open themselves up to a lot of abuse. In a discussion, in a social situation, in a business transaction, I could often gain the upper hand because people couldn't figure out how I was going to act, or what I was going to say next.

It wasn't all good, though. Although I loved the attention that resulted from it, I also noticed another more subtle shading. In almost every "group" situation, I always felt different. I could be accepted, but I never felt totally "assimilated."

It was very much like being a guy in a room full of girls, a Southerner in a room full of Northerners, or an American in a room full of Brits.

Except it wasn't a room, it was a world, and it never stopped. Just as bad were the people who wanted to accept me just because I had a

ponytail. "So what," I felt like screaming, "it's just how I look, it doesn't mean anything." Except it did.

Finally, the fun of having people thinking I was something I wasn't lost out to this feeling of being different in a way that I could never totally overcome.

So I had my ponytail cut off. As I sat in the barber's chair, I wondered if I was losing part of my personality. As six-inch blond locks fell to the floor, I wondered if I was giving up and selling out to social pressure, or just doing what was necessary to reach my full potential.

I kept taking heart in a sign on the Black Cultural Center's wall — "To win the game, play by the rules, but don't believe in it," but then I questioned something that goes a little deeper than my ponytail and my need to fit in.

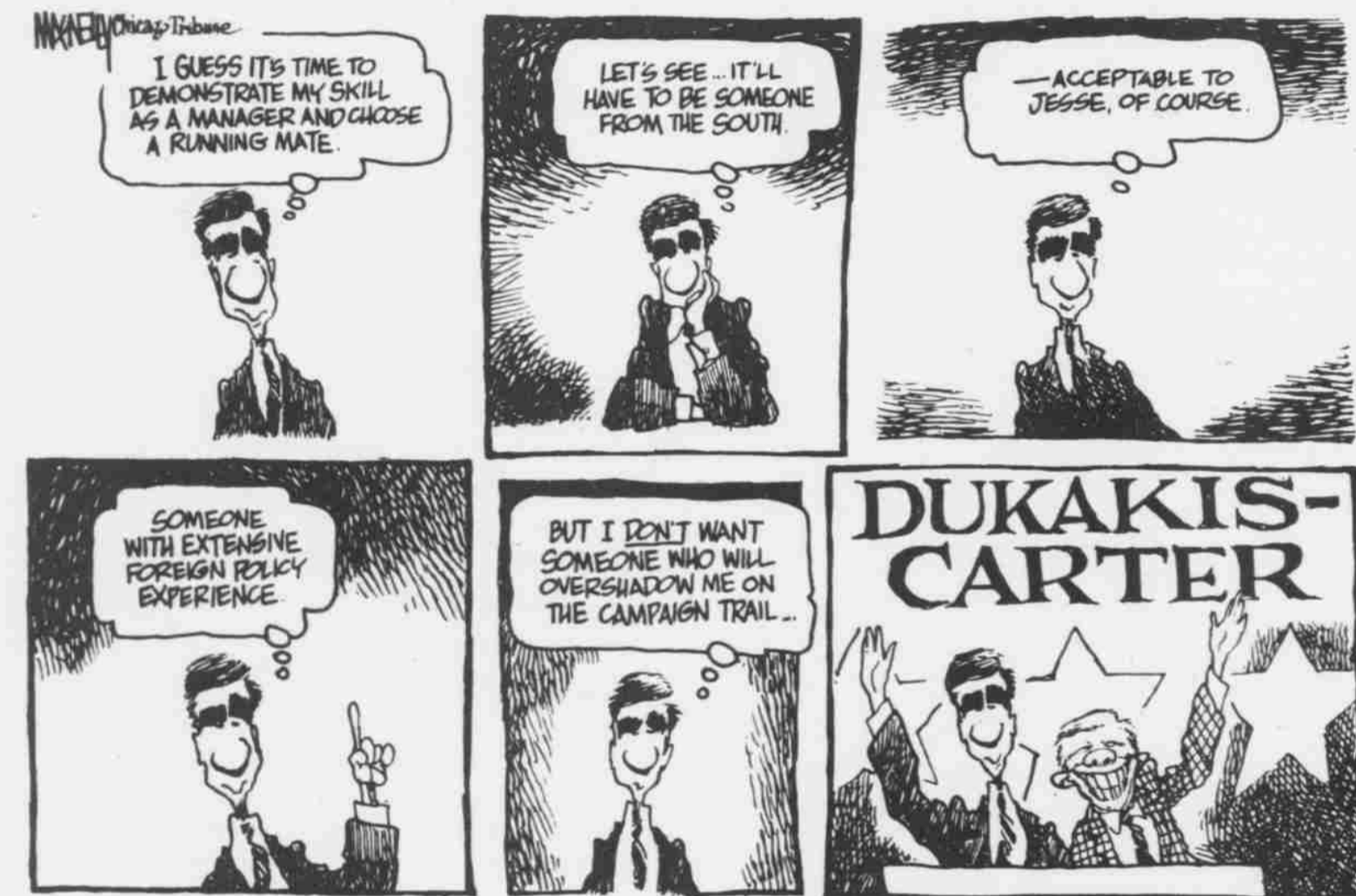
The ponytail came off with a pair of scissors, but other characteristics aren't so easily changed. Skin color, economic background and shoe size, among other things, are one-shot deals, and the people who judged me by my ponytail probably judge everyone by their appearance. I wonder how I would have dealt with life if my ponytail were permanent.

Bill Hildebolt is a sophomore economics/political science major from Winston-Salem who has short hair and hasn't worn a bandana in months.

Editors — Sharon Keschull
News Editor — Julia Coon
Photography Editor — David Minton
Design Editor — Mandy Spence
Assistant Editor — James Benton

Editorial Writers — Bill Hildebolt and Randy Basinger
Staff — Francine Allen, Allison Baker, Kari Barlow, Frank Bragg, Bill Brown, Beth Buffington, Scott Cooper, Tony Deifell, Jeff Eckard, Shelley Erbland, Mark Evans, Nancy Fister, Robert Genadio, Dawn Gibson, Susan Holdscaw, Anne Isenhower, James Mills, Michael Phillips, Angelia Poteat, Subhash Roy, Chris Sellers, Chris Sontchi, Mary Turner.

The
Tar Heel



Murder made simple

Gun shots. Loud screams. One child murdered, others injured, and a gun in the hands of an unstable woman who eventually commits suicide. The incident last week in Winnetka, Ill., has restarted the debate over who should be allowed to purchase guns.

In a class discussion last semester on whether it was worth the price in human lives to have guns for hunting or protection against intruders, the conversation was dominated by an instructor who was against guns for reasons to the effect that most murders occur when someone takes his girlfriend out — someone else looks at her cross-eyed, and the next thing you have is a body in a pool of blood. Opposition in the class came from students saying they have a constitutional right to bear arms and hunt when they please.

But is it worth the cost in human life? Should guns be so freely distributed?

If what happened last week could have been prevented by a stronger control on the sale of firearms, shouldn't Americans support further control? We are so fragile. We break, shatter, and fall, yet there are still those who wish to have a gun in their possession. But at a time of irrational

Randy Basinger
Staff Columnist

thought and anger, they could easily pull the trigger and waste a God-given life.

What if it were harder to kill someone? If guns were abolished, the process of killing a person would come down to using a baseball bat or strangling with a cord, a process much more personal than pulling a trigger on a gun at a great distance from the victim. With a gun there is none of the aftermath implanted; one just turns away and avoids seeing the holes left behind.

However, with a bat or a cord, you see the blood, the blue face, the cracks in the skull. The blood can come off with water, but it will never wash away from a conscience. If guns were abolished, murder influenced by passion or alcohol would become too personal and would rarely reach the stage of death. Few have the guts to finish off a person who will die in their hands.

Randy Basinger is a sophomore journalism major from Statesville.

Letters policy

■ *The Tar Heel welcomes all reader comment. In exchange for access to the Reader's Forum, we ask that you follow a few simple rules:*

■ *All letters and columns must be typed and double-spaced for ease of editing.*

■ *All letters and columns must be signed by the author(s), with a limit of two signatures per letter or column.*

■ *Students should include name, year in school, major, phone number and home town. Other members of the University community should include similar information.*

■ *The Tar Heel reserves the right to edit for space, clarity and vulgarity.*