

The Daily Tar Heel

96th year of editorial freedom

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Food fight breaks out at UNC

Long, long ago, when this year's seniors were only freshmen and Chase Hall was still under construction, there operated in this fair land a not-too-good food service which charged outrageous prices for mediocre food.

The students forced to eat from the lousy smorgasbord offered daily in Lenoir Hall did not like the ARA food service. And the students ran ARA right out of town.

Yes, before there was Marriott Corp., there was ARA. A bastion of broken promises and poor food selection, ARA was denied contract renewal in the spring of 1986 after student leaders protested the company's poor treatment of employees, contract violations, poor food and high prices.

ARA took over the UNC campus food service in 1980. Like all food service companies serving N.C. colleges and universities, ARA was subject to an evaluation before its contract was renewed. But for ARA, dissatisfaction among students became a real sticking point and eventually led to the University's decision not to renew the contract in 1986.

BATTLING AGAINST ARA

2/86: Students vote 3,211-479 against renewing ARA contract.

3/86: ARA contract expires. Student Congress, RHA pass resolutions.

Labor Support Group circulates petition as part of "Dump ARA Task Force."

4/86: Student coalition releases report "On the Need for a New Campus Food Service."

Division of Purchasing and Contracts announces ARA's contract will not be renewed.

A resounding "no"

In a February 1986 referendum, students voted 3,211 to 479 against renewing ARA's contract. The referendum's overwhelming results spurred the formation of a coalition of student leaders.

The coalition's well-researched report cited contract violations between ARA and its employees and customers. A key point for the study was a contract clause requiring ARA to detail training policies and procedures for the UNC administration. ARA never provided the information, and administrators never asked why until then-Student Body President Bryan Hassel brought the matter to the attention of the Board of Trustees.

ARA Food Service Director Connie Branch answered the charge that employees were not properly trained to do their jobs: "When people are hired, they're told what to do."

While conducting the study, students interviewed workers who said ARA had not treated handicapped workers with courtesy and respect. Furthermore, ARA withheld scheduled pay increases and violated employee contracts by not providing employees with information on pay and promotion schedules until the last month of a five-year contract.

ARA had promised to hold twice-yearly preference polls of "boarding students" to assist in menu selection, but no such polls were ever conducted. Branch responded in April 1986: "There are no boarding students here. It's a total cash operation."

Other student groups soon joined the cause. Student Congress voted 17 to 1 to pass a resolution discouraging the administration from renewing ARA's contract. The Residence Hall Association passed a similar resolution, with all RHA members voting for the resolution except the governor of Granville Towers. Granville has its own food service.

The crusade continues

But success comes in numbers. After



Playing David to the University's Goliath?

reviewing the study, the executive branch of Student Government, Student Congress, the Residence Hall Association, the Black Student Movement and the Labor Support Group (which addressed food-service employee grievances) banded together to form a coalition endorsing the need for a new food service on campus.

Ray Jones, who was RHA president during the ARA controversy, said the crusade for a new food service was led by active students who were very concerned about ARA's labor problems and the "horrible tales we were hearing about the food we were getting."

In the fight against ARA, student leaders had the overwhelming and vocal support of the student body and the cooperation of just about every major campus group. They armed themselves with a convincing and highly critical report, presented a united front and made a lot of noise. And it worked.

After UNC made recommendations to the state's Division of Purchasing and Contracts Department, the department promptly dumped ARA and then approved Marriott after two rounds of evaluations. "Students' views were not disregarded," said Max Baldwin, director of the Division of Purchasing and Contracts. "I know that the report said student leaders were against ARA."

After the decision, Baldwin told The Daily Tar Heel the extensive amount of student dissatisfaction was definitely a factor in deciding not to renew ARA's contract.

Jones said student activism was a deciding factor in getting a new food service. "I want to think it did, or else a lot of hours of work was in vain."

Serving the right purpose

In 1981, the consulting firm of Hill, Inlow, and Jacobs assessed UNC's food service.

"The need for student support for food service on a college campus is so important that whatever emphasis these words can portend cannot be emphatic enough," the firm concluded. "While the food service department must serve and support the entire campus, the staff, the faculty, visitors and alumni, it exists for the student. The student is its reason for being."

The firm's conclusion is one with which the activists who opposed ARA would agree. Student support is absolutely necessary for a campus food service.

With the ARA fiasco in mind, the administration has turned renewed attention and given much-earned respect to the Food Service Advisory Board, in the hope of better serving the University community and especially the student body.

The well-organized student movement against ARA proved that sometimes administrators have to be reminded of the primary purpose of University services — to serve students. And students, as primary users of the food service, have a responsibility to demand quality service and take steps to ensure they get it. ARA's poor management may never have been exposed if students hadn't taken the time and initiative to do so.

A king, a god, a legend . . . and a man

Two and a half hours of highway driving later, Archibald and I arrived at the Mint Museum in Charlotte, for the much-fanfaired Ramesses the Great exhibit. As I used to say when my parents dragged me to museums, I hoped there was some good stuff to see.

We were hustled into the lobby, where museum-goers milled in front of the coat check counter, nervously watching the red neon teleprompter which read, "NOW ACCEPTING TICKETS FOR — 2:00." Our tickets were for 2:30. A name-tagged woman behind the counter offered to sell me a book of photos of the exhibit. I told her thanks, but I thought I'd just go in and see it live.

A chain dangled across the hallway which led to the exhibit; clearly they'd already let through the 2:00ers. We waited anxiously for the teleprompter . . .

"NOW ACCEPTING TICKETS FOR — 2:30" . . . and we were in! An elderly couple fought their way past me toward the metal weapons/keys detector looming like something out of Star Trek at the end of the hall. I passed through the portal with a clean bill of health, whizzing past the elderly couple who had been caught trying to smuggle some paperclips through.

We were ushered into an auditorium, where a toothy woman welcomed us all to the museum. Her nametag read "Shift Captain." So did the tag of her assistant, another toothy woman who guarded the door into Egypt. As a matter of fact, every museum staffer I saw seemed to be a Shift Captain. Due to their exemplary skill and long experience, no doubt. We were in safe hands.

A five-minute slide show flashed images of the Nile and the desert before us, complete with a booming narrative read by none other than Charlton Heston, the master of the dramatic pause. "Ramesses the Great," he breathed. "A king, a god, a legend . . . and a man!" Or, at the climax — "It was in that year that Ramesses the Great . . . died." A much-moved audience blinked in the sudden overhead lights and was steered out of the auditorium.

Brian McCuskey In the Funhouse

But there was more Charlton Heston to come. Earlier, another team of Shift Captains had hawked portable tape players to us, so that we could have Charlton breathing interesting facts into our ears the entire tour, for a mere three dollars. Archibald and I had both resisted that temptation, and received withering glares from the vendors. But now, as our tour began, we could still hear Charlton whispering from the earpieces of a hundred tape players around us. Not to mention the too-loud conversation of Walkmanned couples.

The first piece was impressive — a stone statue of Ramesses almost 30 feet high. We oohed and aahed as elementary school teachers wearily told their charges not to touch, or climb. I eavesdropped on the art commentary and criticism murmured around me.

"Sure is big," said a portly man in a blue suit.

"Uh-huh," re-emphasized his equally portly wife.

"Can we go now?" queried their sighing son.

In the next room, and the rooms that followed, glass cases held various objects of Egyptian art and culture, from engraved jars used to hold the preserved internal organs of the dead to a gold necklace weighing nearly 20 pounds. My own favorite was a tattered sketch of a group of giant mice being served by their feline slaves. The title of this display was "Satirical Papyrus."

Archibald and I wandered past wooden coffin lids, a huge sarcophagus, cups of gold, ancient architects' tools and an ornate Senet gameboard.

"How d'ya play it, Ma?" asked a tiny boy who stood puzzling over the strange symbols on the board.

Ma glanced quickly at the board, in a hurry to move on to the giant gold

necklace. "It's like Chutes and Ladders, Jeremy. Come on."

The boy was unsatisfied. "Don't see any ladders, Ma."

She grabbed his shoulder, steered him away. "That's because they're Egyptian ladders. They're different. Come on."

Archibald and I squeezed our way through the throng ogling the giant gold necklace and its matching giant gold earrings, and exited the exhibit.

But the real exhibition was on the other side of the door — the Ramesses Gift Shop. Ramesses posters, Ramesses shirts, Ramesses ashtrays, Ramesses bumper stickers. Not to mention the photo books and slide collections. Along with the token ank necklace and ank lighters.

"Sort of breaks the spell, doesn't it?" Archibald said.

"Shatters" would be a better word," I said.

The gift shop was more crowded than the exhibit itself. "Why look at the stuff when you can buy miniature plastic replicas of it, right?" Archibald said. He led the way past the cash registers, stopping only long enough to stare with disbelief at the final come-on:

"YOUR NAME IN HIEROGLYPHICS!"

A very bored-looking man inked archaic symbols onto scraps of papyrus and sold them to the adoring public. Somehow we managed not to be seduced by this last temptation, and wriggled our way out the door and into the lobby once again.

A Shift Captain eyed us suspiciously when we had no Charlton Heston mumblyings to return, but let us pass without incident, and we tiptoed through the mud back to our car.

"Fascinating culture, isn't it?" Archibald said.

"Yeah," I said. "There was definitely some good stuff in there."

Archibald grimaced. "Philistine!" I didn't care. It was good stuff.

Brian McCuskey is a senior English major from Los Angeles.

Readers' Forum

Park and Stay not depraved

To the editor:

As a proud trailer dweller and six-year resident of Park and Stay Mobile Home Park I would like to reassure Laura Pearlman ("The ever-growing wasteland," Nov. 22) that life in our part of the Chatham County woods is not nearly so depraved as her over-exposure to TV sleaze journalism would have her imagine. If, for example, she had had the privilege of attending one of the recent Park and Stay Ockeghem Blow-outs at number 50 she would realize that self-righteous, pseudo-intellectuals like Gerald and pontificating, pompous fools like Morton Downey Jr. have no audience among those of us for whom life is not cheap, but merely budget friendly.

PAUL CAUTHEN
Graduate
Music

A symbol against racism

To the editor:

As I read Jim Pailin's letter to the editor ("Band-Aids for gaping wounds," Nov. 15), my reactions ranged from that of total agreement to total disagreement. Jim states that he is "opposed to the creation of superficial attempts to have this university community appear committed to making black students an integral and warmly welcomed population on this campus." The superficial attempt Jim is referring to is the proposed Black Cultural Center.

I agree with Jim. The establishment of the BCC can be



viewed as simply "applying bandages to manifestations of the symptoms" and it will not solve the problem of racism on this campus. Yet, without it, the University community may never realize its goal of making black students feel "welcomed" rather than tolerated.

As a symbol, the BCC will communicate many messages. First, it will recognize the administration's recognition of a commitment to the right of blacks to full membership in the Carolina family.

Second, it will serve as a vehicle for educating blacks who (1) never knew of their heritage, (2) who have forgotten or (3) who know their heritage but nevertheless have chosen to assimilate. It will also serve to educate whites. Sadly, I agree with Jim when he states

the reality is that few whites will take advantage of this opportunity. But, can we afford to not make it available for those few? Finally, it is my prayer that the BCC will act to remind us: (1) from whence we come, (2) how little things have changed and (3) how far we have to go.

Given this interpretation of the BCC as a symbol, I am sure many would agree that the establishment of a larger BCC is not a regression to the "separate but equal" mentality. Rather, it will serve as a foundation from which we can seek more creative ways of counteracting the new trend of "covert racism."

WANDA SMITH
Graduate
Business

Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. When writing letters to the editor, please follow these guidelines:

■ Place letters in the box marked "Letters to the Editor" outside the DTH office in the Student Union.

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

■ The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Remember, brevity is the soul of wit.

Theater critics need a lesson in technique

Eric Rosen Guest Writer

Lawler, who saw a dress rehearsal of "Candida," criticized specifically Rhetta Wiley, the staging, the lights and the inappropriateness of the piece. I take issue with all these points. Wiley lightened the first act and brought levels of the character not particularly evident in the text. She was far from "shallow" as the critic suggests. The staging was terribly appropriate as were the lights. The piece had a message that I suppose Lawler just missed. Long before the women's rights movement came full circle, the notion of individuality so early is beautiful, and its "datedness" makes Shaw's point resonate. "Candida" had problems, but it is sad that many people who might have attended the production missed it because of what appears to be a very personal attack on the director. If this is the case, Lawler has no business reviewing the piece.

While Lawler's review was inanely critical, Buffington's review was excessive

and flowery. "Picnic" had very fine moments to be sure. Kristine Watt, and especially Deb Teitelbaum, were both wonderful, but the show had obvious problems that the writer ignored. The performances of other actors, while acceptable, left room for improvement.

The production aspects added the most to the success of the show. The set and lights were awe-inspiring; the direction was clever and lively. "Picnic" was not bad, and at moments was very good, but it did not create the overwhelming sensation required to raise an audience to its feet. Buffington was misleading and timid in her review.

Maybe it's me. But as far as I can tell, I am on the mark in these comments. The University has an active theater life, but the DTH reviewers need to have the journalistic integrity to tell the truth and the objectivity to tell that truth both fairly and accurately. The writers of these columns need to come up to par with the rest of the DTH staff.

Eric Rosen is a freshman speech communication/RTVMP major from Fairfield, Conn.