

Taking A Stand

To raise awareness amid apathy

By VICKI HYMAN and ELIZABETH MURRAY
Staff Writers

The scene is a large East Coast college campus. Students, wearing black arm bands and chanting, "Hell no! We won't go," are gathered around the building in which the chancellor's office is located. Police, carrying guns and clubs, are prepared to beat back the crowd if the situation gets out of hand. Suddenly, a smoke bomb goes off in the midst of the protesters. The crowd surges forward, throws open the doors and storms the building.

That was the '60s.

Today, after 20 years of political evolution, the issues have changed, as have the methods. But the passion and idealism of student activists persist.

The makings of an activist

One theory of activist motivation states that activists are strong-willed, intelligent people reacting to the ills they see in the world around them. A second theory states that activists' behavior is an extension of their hostility toward authority figures.

But the true explanation is not that clear-cut, said David Galinsky, chairman of UNC's psychology department.

"What's the difference between Charles Manson and Mahatma Gandhi? It's always a very complex phenomena," Galinsky said. "For some, (activism) is an expression of a very pure commitment. For others, it's a mixture of caring and drive that are based primarily on negative characteristics (such as hostility and rebelliousness)."

Family structures also can play a part in determining whether a child will be more likely to be active in student movements. "With more domineering families, there is a lot of effort to control, and there is a more rebellious orientation. In a more permissive family structure, the child is comforted by and embraces the views of the family — activism is the living out of the family styles and views," Galinsky said.

Environmental issues have always been a concern for junior Brian Holman, co-chairperson of the Student Environmental Action Committee (SEAC).

"I grew up doing a lot of stuff outdoors — hunting, fishing — and my family has always spent a lot of time outdoors. You read that a lot of unhealthy things are going on. I could see things were getting messed up," Holman said. "I also debated in high school, and we (debated about) environmental issues. That gave me the evidence that crystallized the issues."

Activism peaks in college

College is the ideal time for activism, said Craig Calhoun, associate professor of sociology. "There are certain stages in life when you are more likely to become active. Adolescence in general and college in particular (make up) one of those stages because people tend to be in the process of forging their own identities and thinking really hard about beliefs and issues."

The diversity of the university atmosphere is especially conducive to activism, said sophomore Chris Brannon, president of Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (SETA). "There wasn't a lot of room for activism in high school. One of the most important aspects of a university is that you have a chance to debate and mingle with people who feel differently."

Students become more active in general once they find an issue they strongly believe in, Calhoun said. College can introduce students to such issues. "The majority of activists are motivated by an overwhelming concern about one particular problem. They don't start out being active in general. Once you get involved in one issue, you tend to be active in others."

College students also are relatively free of responsibility, which gives them more opportunity to express their beliefs. "At colleges — four-year ones as opposed to community colleges — ... there's flexibility in schedules and the risks are greatly reduced," Calhoun said. "It's a sort of time-out from the regular world of work. There's no responsibility to parents, no boss that might be offended, and if you are arrested, it's viewed differently in college than at other stages in life."

College students also have gained confidence in themselves, he said. "You've learned how to organize people. You found out you could do it and not get into trouble. You get to know other kinds of people who are activists who reinforce your ideals."

The college community brings together people of similar interests. "In a community like this, there is a lot of concern about issues and respect for activists," Calhoun said. "You've been brought together with a large number of people and concentrated in the same space. All these people packed together on a college campus lends itself to activism. Activists need activists. They may be leaders, but they aren't solo activists."

Promoting awareness

Holman said he doesn't want to play an extremist role at UNC. "We want to educate people. You don't have to make a lot of noise. The issue, the idea, is most important."

There are many different ways of making people aware of the problems, Holman said. "You can scale a radio tower. You can hang a banner from the Y. You can have a can-crushing contest ... It's just depressing how many people walk away. They don't realize how important it is. They don't think they can do anything about it. But if we don't, nothing is going to get solved."



Brannon agreed that awareness was an important part of activism. "With animal rights ... I'm not dealing exclusively with squirrels and chipmunks, but with human beings. One person can only do so many things. We're more awareness-oriented — we try to get people interested. Activism begets activism. We hope more and more people find that they can't stand something any longer and go out and change it. That can't be anything but a positive learning experience."

Going to extremes

Activists need to work within the system to realize their goals, Brannon said. "Any time I see a problem, I try to deal with it within the system, talk to people involved, convince them the policy is incorrect. (I) keep stepping up, perhaps hold a vigil, a protest march."

"I don't believe in breaking a law, except in cases of civil disobedience, but that also involves taking responsibility for your actions."

Brannon said he would go to jail to promote his beliefs if he thought that step needed to be taken. "It's not something I practice lightly. If what you're doing is so important, you have to go to jail."

Holman agreed. "I would go to jail if I thought it would help. A lot of people I work with would. It's kind of exhilarating — we all started to talk about it, and we were surprised to find that we all would."

Students should be the first ones to take a stand for their beliefs, Holman said. "I think students ought to be on the radicalized end of things because if students don't do something, no one will. The risk you take when you become too radical is that one, you scare off a lot of people who could help you, and two, people don't listen — they can't look past the fact that you're way on the outside. You don't want to scare them, but (you do want to) get them thinking."

Senior Jerry Jones, a member of the CIA Action Committee (CIAAC), said activism was an integral part of his life and he would go to extremes for his beliefs. "This (activism) is what I do for a living, and I've done it for a living in times past. But I don't intend to live a very long life, and I think placing limits on one's consciousness is a very dangerous thing."

"Speaking for myself, I'm prepared to do anything and everything within the confines of truth and nonviolence. That's the only way to live. To not do things that you know are the right things to do simply because they are inconvenient — you don't like jails or you like to eat — aren't good enough reasons."

A blanket of apathy

Only about 1 percent of the student population at UNC can be considered activist-oriented, Jones estimated.

"I think (the 1980s) has generally been a somewhat more quiescent period in the sense that there haven't been as many issues that have inspired such widespread activism," said Pamela Conover, associate professor of

political science.

Students and the public in general aren't any more apathetic than they've been previously, Conover said. "Just because people aren't protesting doesn't mean they're apathetic. People can be quite allegiant or satisfied, or they can be active in society in a way that doesn't involve protest."

Others disagreed. "I think, unfortunately, the students here are very apathetic," said freshman Charlton Allen, a member of the College Republicans. "Because we are a democracy and our government is based on people's opinions, I don't see how it could be beneficial if people don't care. I think for the most part they just think it can't make a difference."

Students aren't the only ones who are apathetic and escapist, Jones said. "All across the country people aren't responding to what they are seeing. I don't think there's ever been a civilization or culture like ours that is so inept at dealing with the realities of life. I think it's a problem. I think it's a real problem."

The apathetic majority often cannot understand those people who do try to make a change, Brannon said. "People cut down Dale (McKinley). I'm not saying I endorse him or I don't. People are saying, 'Dale, sit down, shut up. We don't want to hear what you have to say.' That's ridiculous. That's apathy. Stifling someone's opinions is never good."

According to Holman, "As a whole, our society is too apathetic about environmental issues. I know a lot of people who don't give a damn. They haven't learned to give a damn. Caring sometimes hurts your G.P.A. We try to convince them to learn to care."

Commitment to the cause

Although some students may not be sympathetic to many of the current issues that concern activists, most seem to feel a certain admiration for the individuals behind the protests.

"I think it is good to see people dedicated to a cause they really believe in, even if I don't believe in it," said Ken Heft, a sophomore math and science major from Penlynn, Pa. "But you have to be able to draw a line so that you can get your point across without upsetting a lot of people."

Anne Shaw, a freshman speech communications major from Charlotte, said she doesn't mind activism as long as people don't try to force their beliefs on her. "As far as expressing your own opinion, go for it," she said.

The bottom line is acting in the name of what you believe in, Jones said. "I think I've made a good effort at trying to do the right thing, and that's taking into account a whole lot of things. You guarantee making a fool of yourself when you become an activist. It can't be avoided, but the important thing is that you make the effort to follow your conscience and try to do the right thing."

Discrimination, sandwiches spark campus protests

By NOAH BARTOLUCCI

Staff Writer

The building was filled with blankets, clothing, food scraps, paper plates, cans, cartons and a couple of campus dogs.

This was the scene two decades ago when Manning Hall, which then housed the UNC Law School, was seized by student demonstrators. The students were using a food strike to protest the deplorable working conditions and unfair treatment of black workers in Lenoir Dining Hall.

Police lined the cafeteria's entrance, where small riots often would break out. Protesters and police exchanged punches, while bottles and milk crates were hurled overhead.

Manning served as the headquarters where protest leaders would give speeches to motivate demonstrators and denounce the University administration.

Soon the governor decided the protest had gone too far. He ordered state troopers to reclaim Manning Hall.

This is the story of the 1968 Manning Hall student conquest, as Jim Shumaker, associate professor of journalism, remembers it. "Highway patrolmen lined up with riot gear and billy clubs," Shumaker said. "They locked arms and moved straight across the campus with students backing up in front of them. It was the first time the campus had been occupied by a hostile force since the Civil War."

The issue cooled down after a couple of days and students returned to class.

This example of activism was typical of the student protest era of the late '60s and early '70s. Nationwide, students received a mixture of criticism and respect.

In 1968, C. Wilson Anderson, then dean of the UNC School of Social Work, told the Daily Tar Heel that he understood both viewpoints. "Students today are more alert to the social and political problems of our time and are eager to get ideas both within and without the academic structure," he said.

However, he added that a minority of students did "delight in controversy for controversy's sake."

As student activism gained momentum in the late '60s, a significant number of UNC faculty members and even administrators voiced their support.

"At least half of the faculty were supportive of the student efforts," Shumaker said. "A lot of them even marched with the students."

The University chancellor in 1968, J. Carlyle Sitterson, was considered by most to have taken a moderate stance on student activism, according to DTH articles that year. While he urged students to "support the University wherever and whenever possible," he also recognized the student's right to dissent.

"Student unrest arises from the understandable and commendable desire of students to help make the policies affecting their living and learning on campus," Sitterson said.

Students used their imaginations when active protests failed to produce change. "The students were quite clever," Shumaker said. "One Saturday after a basketball game, student demonstrators blocked every single road leaving Woollen (Gymnasium). Nobody could leave until the police showed up. I remember they threw the demonstrators into an old bread truck they had converted into a police truck."

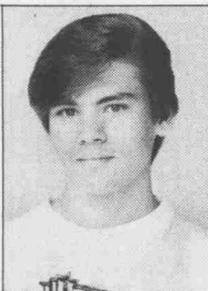
During another protest, students joined Vietnam veterans to picket on Franklin Street. They were marching to protest the draft and held up traffic for half an hour before marching across campus.

That same month, a group of students made their way across campus to the chancellor's house to present a petition asking for greater academic freedom.

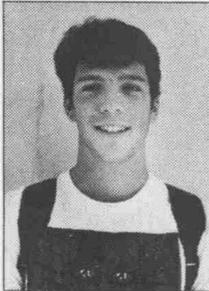
Of course, some protests lacked the depth and support that formed the foundation for other movements, but they made up for it with humor. On Oct. 28, 1968, 15 students picketed the Circus Room snack bar in protest of the poor quality of sandwiches sold there. Students held aloft signs reading "UNC sandwiches more effective than napalm" and "We demand free Roloids with every UNC sandwich."

The highlight of the picketing came about 11 a.m. when Tom Shetley, head of Student Stores, came to the Circus Room. He smiled and said, "Good morning, gentlemen and ladies" and then went inside. A few minutes later, Shetley reappeared eating a UNC chicken salad sandwich.

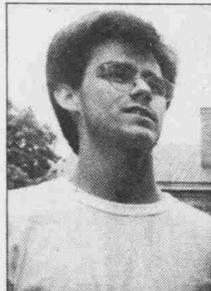
Shetley dismissed the boycott as immature and said, "These sandwiches are the best I've ever tasted."



Chris Brannon



Brian Holman



Jerry Jones

STUDENT ACTIVISM 1968-69

- Oct. 23 Fifteen students picket the Circus Room to protest the poor quality of UNC sandwiches.
- Oct. 28 About 1,000 students assemble outside Lenoir Hall to show support for dormitory visitation privileges.
- Nov. 5 Six students are arrested during a Franklin Street party held by the Southern Student Organization Committee. The party's purpose was to show people that while "the politicians are in office, the streets belong to the people."
- Nov. 15 About 200 students march to the chancellor's house to show support for visitation privileges. The students found no one home.
- Dec. 7 Students join the United Anti-war Mobilization Front in a march down Franklin Street to support freedom of speech for G.I.s.
- Feb. 7 About 450 white students march across campus and occupy South Building in support of a list of Black Student Movement demands. The BSM was demanding stepped-up programs for recruiting and aiding black students at UNC, as well as the creation of a black counterpart to the student legislature.
- Feb. 24 Black food service employees strike for better working conditions and fair treatment.
- Apr. 29 Women in Parker Residence Hall protest an excess of fire drills by refusing to leave the building during alarms.