

FEATURES

Student-author treks along New York Times bestseller list

By Kristin Leight
Staff Writer

Terry Mancour used to write in Greenlaw computer lab like every other student — churning out words that became gray figures on perforated computer paper. But unlike most, Mancour's words now rest on the pages of a glossy black book bearing the red-blazoned title "Spartacus" — a title that was ranked number 13 on the New York Times bestseller list for two weeks in January.

Mancour, a fifth-year senior from Durham, has always wanted to be a writer.

"I am one of the few people who actually decided to consciously go out and become a writer, because I didn't want to work for a living, and (writing) seemed like a pretty good thing to do, and I had some talent at it," he said.

But even he was surprised at his early success. "Selling a book at age 21 is not unheard of, but it's extraordinarily rare."

"Spartacus" is the 20th book of the "Star Trek: The Next Generation" series, published by Pocket books. It uses characters from the TV show as well as Mancour's original characters.

Mancour said that the day after the pilot episode of "Star Trek: The Next Generation" aired in 1988, "I got sort of a vague idea about one of the characters named Data. Data is an android who was built by humans. He's more than a toaster, but there's a lot of confusion surrounding his classification."

Data shook his head. "I am not human, Kurta. I can only copy my fellow crewmembers' habits and try to theorize the basis for their actions. I try, because I am terribly interested in the race that created me."

In "Spartacus," androids like Data, created by aliens to be slaves, revolt and escape their planet. "The Enterprise

found them, and basically the story continues from there about the nature of slavery and the nature of warfare and justice," he said.

Since his freshman year, Mancour has wanted to be a science fiction writer. "But I had no real inkling that I wanted to do 'Star Trek' at all," he said. "That wasn't really something I had looked into, but when the plot jumped into my head, and the story forced itself out of my brain, I decided to take it down and send it off."

Before "Spartacus," Mancour had submitted a complete "Star Trek" novel that was rejected. He was later advised by a science fiction writer not to sell a complete novel, but an idea. So he proposed the idea of "Spartacus" to Pocket Books. "I sold 'Spartacus' on two pages," he said.

Mancour educated himself about the publishing process, not only by talking to local science fiction writers, but also by reading books about it. "A lot of people don't understand that writing is a business," he said. "I endeavored to learn the business of it, instead of learning how to write, because I figured you learn how to write by writing."

Never having taken a creative writing class, Mancour prefers his style to remain independent of others' criticism. "Basically, I'll stare out the window or walk around campus, or, God forbid, do my homework, write papers and stuff and veg until the idea gets enough energy on its own to keep me awake at night," Mancour said. "And when it keeps me awake at night, I know it's time for me to start writing it down."

After he has written something, Mancour puts it in a file and lets it simmer on the back burner for about six

months. "Then I yank it out later when it starts to obsess me again."

Mancour is now working on two science fiction books, two original fantasies and two nonfiction books. "Of those six, four will probably spontaneously abort, because either the ideas aren't strong enough, or there's not enough there, or my interests will be taken up by something else. It's a matter of what you're obsessed on," he said.

But Mancour said he wasn't obsessed with the TV series "Star Trek." "I wasn't really a Trekkie," he said. "I didn't run around with Spock ears on and stuff. It just presented a philosophy and background that I could get into."

Mancour, a religious studies major with a minor in history, said he realized through studying religion that "Star Trek" was a viable mythology for Americans.

"Data, personalities aren't limited to carbon-based life-forms, she said softly. 'You have one as interesting and important as anyone on the ship. You may not be as adept at humanoid mannerisms as we are, but you were made by a creature with a soul. Anything that such a being makes takes a little of his creator's soul with him.'"

"When you're writing for 'Star Trek' fans, you have a tremendous responsibility, because you're not just writing a science fiction book, you're adding to a religious canon in a very important way," he said.

Mancour said he wanted his writing to serve a purpose. "When I write, especially with 'Star Trek' now, I'm writing to 300,000 people who are going to read my book with a certain amount of enthusiasm, and the words I say are going to carry over into those people's lives. I see it as a responsibility to put forth ideas that will hopefully change the way people think in a positive manner."

Mancour said he would accept the

challenge of writing more books for the Star Trek series. He would like to publish several within the next two years and then apply to the University of Wisconsin at Madison to do graduate work in cultural anthropology.

Although Mancour is not sure what he ultimately wants to do, he knows what he does not want: "I don't want any particular career."

"I plan on doing a variety of things to fuel both my imagination and my works in progress — probably just hang out and have as much fun as possible, learn as much as possible and see which way the winds take me."

Mancour recommended that people planning to be serious writers do something similar. "The biggest piece of advice I can give you is that if your mother encourages you to get your English teacher certification so you can have something to fall back on, then 99 times out of 100, you're going to fall back. Having a fall-back position is an instantaneous way of undermining your success."

"The only way to become a professional writer at any sort of early age is to be utterly desperate and utterly determined," he said.

Mancour will be signing copies of his book today at 2 p.m. in the Bull's Head Bookshop.



Terry Mancour displays his contribution to the Star Trek series, "Spartacus"



ACC foes join with the Tar Heels to raise awareness about homeless

By Jon Whisenant
Staff Writer

Duke and UNC may be rivals on the court, but when it comes to raising awareness about homelessness, the N.C. colleges are all one big team.

Members of the UNC chapter of Habitat for Humanity invited campus groups to build cardboard shacks and

Taxes from page 3

County, Chapel Hill and Carrboro contribute funds to the RSVP program.

RSVP volunteers will be available to answer questions about tax returns at the Chapel Hill Public Library every Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. until April 15. No appointments are necessary. For information about other RSVP sites, call 968-6060.

Hours for Beta Alpha Psi's Carr Hill Mall office are Wednesdays from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. No appointments are necessary. For more information call 968-2517.

Festival from page 3

illustrated by the Winter Olympics and the upcoming union of the European Economic Community.

International Festival Day kicked off the week Sunday in the Great Hall. Booths displayed pictures, art and costumes from more than 25 countries, including Greece, Jamaica, Cyprus, Turkey, India and Thailand.

In addition to an Asian fashion show, performances included Tae Kwon Do demonstrations, a Chinese lion dance and two Indian dances.

Food from various countries, slide shows, films and international art from the Auckland Art Museum will add to the global atmosphere during the week, organizers said.

place them in the Pit. The shacks were printed with the slogan "No More Shacks" as part of a statewide protest against poor housing conditions.

UNC, Duke University, Wake Forest University, N.C. State University and East Carolina University all pitched in by building shacks and planning sleepouts for Wednesday night.

"Our purpose for this event is to present to the media an image of schools that are often seen as rivals working together to fight homelessness," said Matt Williamson, president of the UNC chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

UNC students began building the two-foot-by-two-foot shacks Tuesday, and as of Wednesday night, there were more than 50 cardboard houses. Campus groups such as the UNC Water Polo Club, the Newman Catholic Student Center and Project Literacy had shacks set up in the Pit Wednesday night.

Elections from page 1

That was Monday at 6 p.m., and no one ever filed."

Nick Franzese, 1991 Elections Board chairman, said the Abner-Lumsden case could not progress to the Student Supreme Court because the statute of limitations to file a case had expired, and Bracey already had approved the petitions when the original complaint was filed.

Franzese said he thought the cases against Moore should be under the jurisdiction of the Honor Court. "Karen is

David McDaniels, national director of campus chapters of Habitat, was scheduled to kick off the Pit sleepout Wednesday at 9:30 p.m. with a speech. Members of Habitat expected 200 to 400 students to attend.

Habitat organizes volunteers to help poverty-stricken people renovate old homes as well as build new ones. Their slogan is "Give me a hand up, not a hand out," which explains their practice of helping people help themselves.

"We don't give away houses," Williamson said. "Those who receive assistance must provide \$600 worth of labor, and they have to pay for the building materials."

To help pay for the materials, Habitat provides the future homeowners with a \$35,000 no-profit, no-interest loan.

The campus chapters provide support by publicizing the need for adequate housing and by raising funds.

willing to testify, and if someone forged her name, they're guilty," he said. "Candidates are supposed to be responsible for their campaign (workers), so does that mean Tim is guilty, too?"

Bracey should look into the cases, so he can make a recommendation to the Honor Court, Franzese said. "He's saying since the petition is approved that supersedes everything else. But my understanding is that if you forge a signature, it's an Honor Court violation. It's lying."

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