

# OPINIONS

The Blue Banner

Editorials

## Fire Alarms and Extinguishers

Yellow smoke filled the fourth floor of Mills Hall at 1:30 a.m. April 12.

The fire alarms blared, lights flashed and a mechanical voice announced: "An emergency has been reported. Please exit the building."

Students ran down the hall blindly, unable to see one foot in front of them. The acidic taste of the smoke filled their mouths and lungs.

Ten minutes later, several public safety officers and fire-fighters arrived. The fire fighters looked, to put it mildly, extremely irritated.

Mills Hall residents spent about an hour outside in the rain while fire fighters cleared the hall.

Public safety reported that a student, or students, had stolen the fire extinguisher from the third floor and sprayed the fourth floor with heavy, yellow smoke.

A public safety officer found the extinguisher in the fourth-floor study lounge.

To tamper with fire detectors or fire equipment is a misdemeanor punishable by up to six months in jail and a \$500 fine.

According to Jerry Adams, public safety investigator, 205 fire alarms went off during the year 2000. None of these alarms were due to an actual fire that resulted in property damage.

Every time an alarm sounds on UNCA property the Asheville Fire Department is required to speed to our campus, and make sure there is no real fire.

When fire fighters notice a UNCA signal, they probably roll their eyes and sigh loudly. We are wasting their time.

So, why do students insist on pulling fire alarms and misusing fire extinguishers? Out of boredom? For a quick thrill? To prove their fearlessness to their peers?

Well, none of their fellow students were pleased on Thursday night as they stood in the rain for an hour.

Can you not find something better to do with your time then pull fire alarms and spray fire extinguishers through dormitory halls?

## In the big Leagues

Throughout our tenure at UNCA, we here at *The Blue Banner* have watched the university strive to become a beacon of academia; to stand out beyond its stature as a successful liberal arts school.

Yet, one thing has always seemed to be lagging a bit behind: commencement.

Sure, everything looks great.

Our Physical Plant workers seem to have the magical ability to reform the quad in the last few weeks of school from a trampled mess to a green thing of wonder.

No, it's the content that we are talking about here.

Does anyone remember the debacle surrounding Chancellor Patsy Reed's final commencement?

Apparently, the administration (ie. Reed) thought it would be nice if she gave the Commencement Address.

In the end, it all seemed a little tacky, and most of the graduating seniors left feeling a little cheated.

Commencement has just never seemed very special.

That has all started to change with Chancellor Jim Mullen's first commencement last year and this coming graduation as well.

Mullen brought with him the idea of giving honorary degrees, something most the other universities do, but we here at UNCA never really bothered with.

This year, UNCA is giving four honorary degrees:

**John Hope Franklin**, who is one of America's most famed historians, is also giving the commencement address.

**Myra Janco Daniels**, chief executive officer of the Philharmonic Center for the Arts in Naples, Fla. and former president of Draper Daniels advertising firm.

**Adelaide Daniels Key**, a leading figure in humanitarian activity in Western North Carolina. The UNCA Key Center for Learning is named after her.

**Gregory James LeMond**, who is a three-time Tour de France winner.

Changes like these will give UNCA's commencement the prestige it desires, and leave its graduating seniors with a positive memory to go with them into the future.

## Writing a Sitcom in Minutes



Shaun Cashman

Columnist

The sitcom, or situational comedy, has long been a form of entertainment, even before the invasion of televisions.

And, because of such huge popularity, television stations are always on the lookout for new sitcom ideas.

You ask: "How can I, a semi-illiterate McDonald's employee, break into this exciting and profitable business?"

Well, with my help and a little happy powder, anyone can learn how to create and write their own award-winning sitcom in just nine minutes.

Pick up that pad of paper, and put on your imagination cap as I explain the rules and consistencies gleaned from years of studying sitcom lore.

I have divided this course into four parts: Theme, Setting, Characters and Story Plots.

**Theme:** Often overlooked, the theme explains the main idea or meaning behind a piece of work.

Talking about it makes you appear intelligent.

Nothing impresses a director or producer more than a writer who seems to understand an artistic purpose in their work.

To create a sitcom theme, take out that huge novel currently propping up the sofa, and read it.

Find the main story idea, and steal it. Don't worry about being sued for copyright, the author probably died years ago anyway.

**Setting:** Ninety percent of all action in a sitcom takes place in one area. It could be a house, an apartment, a bar or any other kind of

confined space.

The setting creates its own gravitational field where the characters, whether they live there or not, will orbit in an elliptical pattern.

Occasionally, they will come close enough to hurl sarcastic missiles at each other in the war for galactic domination.

**Characters:** Those psychologically disturbed people who make up the cast of characters truly define the sitcom.

Usually related to each other in some form, the characters supply the line of action by using conflict.

They must constantly engage in mental battles in order to see who can insult everyone else in the most original manner.

Characters only show weak and boring emotions, such as love and compassion, when they conveniently match the canned audience response.

We can divide the characters into subgroups of gender and purpose with which to better understand them.

**Men** - No matter what job they have, all men have the I.Q. of a Lima bean.

They all suffer from a callous disregard toward women, minorities and anyone with more authority than they have available.

Enlightened or sensitive men need not apply; we only accept real men here.

All real sitcom men are beer-drinking, gun-loving, sports fanatics.

The main male character always has a story about how he used to be the captain of his elementary

school's baseball team, The Plaid Ducklings.

Audiences love it when you make these scumbags suffer for being the rude, uncaring chauvinistic oinkers that all men are.

**Women** - Slightly more intelligent than their male counterparts, sitcom women have little or no personalities.

They all follow the basic female stereotype, and the men tease them for it.

Sitcom women love to shop, love to talk, love to watch romantic movies, and love to hate just about everything else.

They especially hate the men, but are rarely, if ever, without one.

Always remember that the women must get the last joke.

**Children** - The most intelligent member of any family, children offset their innocence with the cynical wit of a college professor.

However, they lack experience and perform countless stupid actions, so their wiser, albeit less intelligent, parents can teach them lessons in life.

All children have problems in social groups. No matter what the age, children TV actors always develop a romantic interest in a fellow cast member.

Keep in mind that most child actors are actually 22-year-old mutants who cheat the aging process through daily injections of jelly preservatives.

Most of them have already gone

through puberty, although they look five.

**Pets** - Avoid pets like the plague. Unless they talk or do something amazing, pets have only two useful episodes in them.

One, getting the pet. Then, someone conveniently develops an allergy. And, two, killing the pet, which is where we learn not to mix hamsters and microwaves.

Pets pull attention away from the other characters, mostly because of better acting.

Therefore, sitcom actors hate to work with animals.

**Story Plots:** Having to create story plots for several hundred episodes may seem like a daunting task to new writers.

However, they can be very simple, and after about two dozen episodes, they may start to feel repetitive.

In fact, they are.

A sitcom only has about a half-dozen story plots, and repeats them constantly.

By changing dialogue just enough to make it seem like a new episode, people will religiously set their schedules to watch your show.

And, that's it.

Now, you have all the skills needed to brave that intellectual wasteland we call prime-time television.

Tune in next week to learn how to simplify your life in only nine minutes using a shotgun, three rabid squirrels, Al Pacino and duct tape.

We now return you to your regularly scheduled lives.

Audiences love it when you make these scumbags suffer for being the rude, chauvinistic oinkers that all men are.

## Catamounts Take Over UNCA



Eric Winters

Columnist

In the Mountains section of the *Asheville Citizen-Times* April 18, there was an article titled: "WCU, Asheville create education partnership."

There is also a photo of Chancellor John W. Bardo of Western Carolina University signing agreements with Mayor Leni Sitnick of Asheville, so they might "reach out to the region."

Here we go again. I think a degree from WCU is worth about as much as a 34-cent stamp.

My father always told me not to drive through Cullowhee with my windows down or someone might throw a degree at me.

I take pride in the fact that I am a student of UNCA. But, once again, WCU is doing, from 45 miles away, what we should be doing in our

own community.

This recent action by WCU is but one of many that should scare students and faculty here at UNCA.

Many will argue that UNCA does its fair share for the community.

In fact, the Key Center for Service Learning, founded by a chair member of WCU's Board of Trustees, has high aspirations, but the underlying issue is UNCA's identity.

Why do you think other universities, such as UNC-Chapel Hill or N.C. State University, have such great retention rates?

Overlooking the great social life they possess, which remains non-existent at UNCA despite the efforts of our Greeks, retention here is decreasing because there is no sense of identity.

Where is the pride?

I, for one, do not feel like a Bull-

I, for one, do not feel like a Bulldog.

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dog. It seems as if the administration of UNCA is content to let WCU walk all over us.

Millions of dollars.

This is the amount of money that WCU owes UNCA. More embarrassing is that we at UNCA will probably never see a dime of this.

Let's face it, WCU wants to be UNCA. Have you ever driven several miles west down Interstate-40 and seen the enormously tacky, purple billboard claiming: "BEWARE! THERE ARE CATAMOUNTS IN THESE HILLS!"

With the sign being 45 minutes away from Cullowhee and only five minutes away from Asheville, this raises a bit of suspicion.

Have you been to the Asheville Mall, and noticed the glowing advertisement beside the Sunglass Hut that states: "Western Carolina University, Your Graduate University in Asheville?"

I have a serious problem with an ad for WCU being photographed in front of Karpen Hall-OUR building on OUR campus.

I did find humor in the ad's pathetic attempt to portray diversity with several different groups of women and minorities.

Truth in advertising? They've obviously never heard of such.

If this were true, then they would have included "Bubba" huddled amongst the circle of devoted students, wearing a mesh ACE Hardware cap and spittin' tobacco juice on the sidewalk.

You're probably thinking, "There goes another columnist stereotyping again."

Frankly, I don't care.

Not that I feel the need to justify

my opinion, but both of my parents obtained degrees from WCU.

Like the Visigoths and Vandals sacking Rome, UNCA is being invaded.

When Asheville-Biltmore College was applying for its charter to become UNCA, there was a long process of interviews and letter writing.

If you go to Ramsey Library, you will find a letter from WCU which adamantly opposes Asheville-Biltmore becoming UNCA.

WCU maintained then, and perhaps still does, that this lovely campus in Asheville should have served as a satellite campus for their use at WCU at Asheville.

I am sick and tired of sitting in any given class at UNCA and seeing a flyer directed at WCU students.

This summer, I attempted to enter the Highsmith Center bookstore.

I was promptly asked if I was a WCU student.

When I said something to the effect of, "Hell no," I was told that our UNCA student center was only open to WCU on this day.

WCU has, through carefully planned strategies of a "nursing program" and "graduate studies," succeeded in making UNCA their slave.

Anyone who borrows millions of dollars and doesn't pay it back at the expense of hard-working students at UNCA is either pretty dumb or extremely unethical.

Would you have admiration for and embrace the idea of, a learning community with someone who owed you several million dollars?

Didn't think so.