

# Is Branson, Mo., Ready for Miss U.S.A.? We'll See ...

"Branson, Missouri. My dad says it's like Vegas if it were run by Ned Flanders." — Bart Simpson

This week, 51 young women, along with thousands of people will flock to the cultural oasis of the Midwest, the self-anointed "Live Music Capital of the World," Branson, Mo.  
Friday, Branson will host the 49th Annual Miss U.S.A. pageant. My column Friday will focus on the event itself, but today let's examine what the girls, their friends and families and pageantry fans can experience in the city that never sleeps past noon.  
Situating in the armpit of the nation (southwest Missouri/northwest Arkansas), Branson has at least 3,706 residents, not including the thousands who reside in RVs and mobile homes on the edge of town.  
Branson and the surrounding Ozark Mountains country was settled by farmers centuries ago. It then became a lawless party during the Civil War. The population didn't explode, however, until the cast and fans of "Hee Haw" moved down from Nashville following the show's cancellation in 1992.

In case you've forgotten, "Hee Haw" (which was on for a surprising 23 years) was set entirely around the cracker barrel or in a corn field. It was hosted by Buck Owens, who sacrificed being remembered as a legendary country music star and will now be remembered as the legendary country music star who hosted "Hee Haw."  
Roy Clark, who co-hosted the show with Owens, led the Haw clan down to Branson, where it is still cool to be a redneck. Clark used to play at the Roy Clark Celebrity Theatre, which for reasons unknown is now known simply as the Celebrity Theatre.  
In a strange twist of fate, the Celebrity Theatre has welcomed Motown's Platters as its main talent, and Branson has welcomed the Platters as its first black residents.  
Now that Donny and Marie are back on television you might be wondering what happened to the Osmond Brothers. Look no further than the Osmond Family Theater in Branson. There

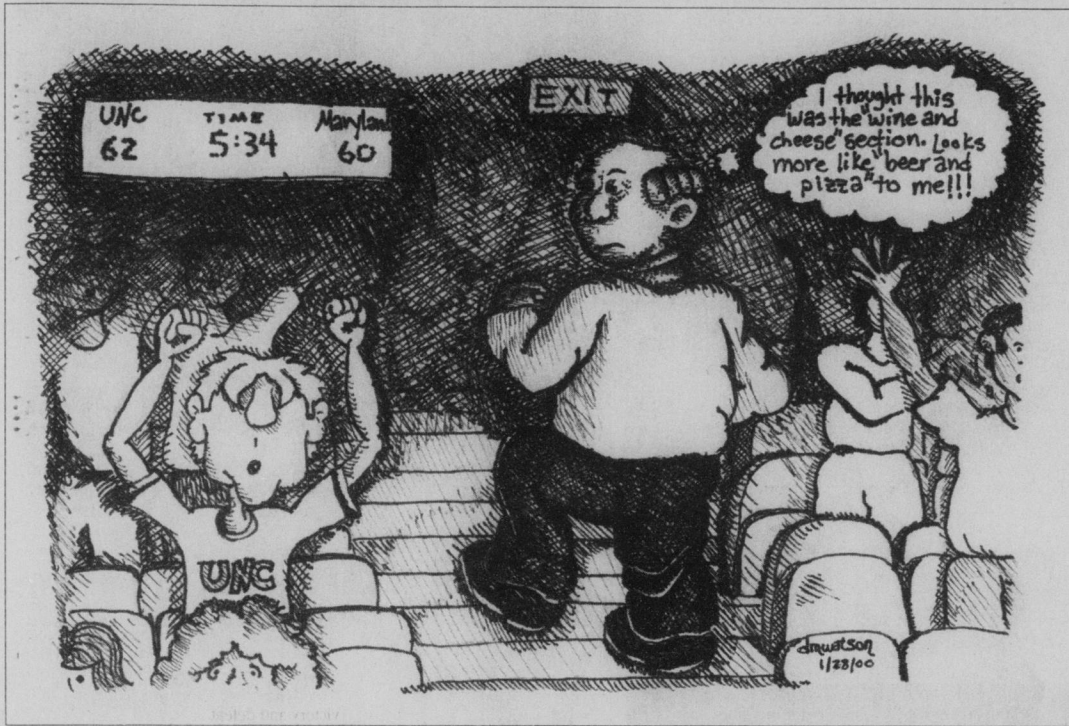


**BRIAN FREDERICK ON TAP**

you can see the Osmond's award-winning "Variety Show on Ice." It was alluring enough to entice Tony Orlando, who fled Vegas and is now performing at the Osmond theater.  
And in the ultimate self-fulfilling prophecy, Andy Williams, best known for "Moon River," performs at his Moon River Theatre. ("Mooooooo river ... You got your whole fist up there, doc?")  
If the delegates and their posers are looking for thrills, Branson is also home to the theme park Silver Dollar City. Featuring such rides as "Fire in the Hole," "Shoot-Out," and "BuzzSaw Falls," (America's first liquid coaster!), Silver Dollar City is the kind of theme park your cousins always envisioned when they were playing Slip 'n' Slide in their backyard.  
Also included in the pre-pageant festivities is a cruise. Miss U.S.A. delegates will board the Showboat Branson Belle for a night of elegance.

As the Branson Belle traverses majestic Table Rock Lake, everyone can relax and be waited on as the boat promises "No buffet lines or serve-yourself-dining!" Delegates and guests will dine on prime rib and baked Alaska while enjoying the comedy of ventriloquist Todd Oliver with his amazing talking dog Irving.  
And if that weren't enough, Capt. Fittipaldi of the Showboat Branson Belle will award each delegate the distinction of honorary captain. I wonder if they will receive paddles to pin on their lapels.  
Is Branson ready for Miss U.S.A.? This is the second year in a row for Branson. And last year's pageant raised a ruckus.  
In November, resident Ben Kinell circulated a petition asking organizer Donald Trump to clean up this pageant. Kinell and others were upset about the sexual overtones in the 1999 pageant. The song "What's New Pussycat?" played while the delegates strutted around the stage in their swimsuits. (Eazy-E's "Gimme That Nutt" and Sir Mix-A-Lot's "I Like Big Butts" were also considered.)  
"We just think that the show went a little out of bounds over what we consider a good

Christian attitude in Branson," Kinell said.  
The real shocker here is the fact that a song by Burt Bacharach ended up causing such controversy.  
The petition was signed by one-third of the population (the literate third) and sent off to Mr. Trump in the big city. We'll see Friday what effect the petition will have.  
Until Friday night, the delegates and others will have to take in the sights and sounds of Branson. And if there weren't enough to do already, perhaps the single greatest attraction in Branson is enough to cause me to book a flight right now. Branson is the home of one of the true legends of comedy: Yakov Smirnoff.  
And you thought the Russian comedian's career died with the fall of communism. Apparently, they're just warming up to communist humor in Branson.  
Welcome to Branson, Miss U.S.A. delegates!  
Brian Frederick is a graduate student in journalism and mass communication from Lawrence, Kan. His column did not appear Friday because of the snow. Reach him at [brifred@yahoo.com](mailto:brifred@yahoo.com).



## Failing to Vote Means You Don't Count

Well, it's that time of year again. Snow is falling faster than Shane Battier on a basketball court, and elections for student body president are rapidly approaching. In just a few weeks, many of us will cast our votes and select the person we want to lead us into the first full school year of the new millennium. In this column, I will first try to convince you students why you *should* vote. Secondly, I will attempt to make your voting decision *easier* by suggesting some important qualities a student body president should have.  
To start off, let's discuss the *importance* of voting, even at the level of student body president. Usually, only a handful of students bother to vote during the elections for student government. As for everyone else, most of them just *don't care*. Nonvoters choose not to vote because they don't think the elections matter.  
"After all," they say, "the decisions made by people like the student body president don't have any impact on the rest of us."  
I'm here to argue otherwise.  
Student elections should matter to *all* of us. Seniors and final-year graduate students should get out and vote in order to help preserve their legacy at UNC. Current and potential graduate students should go vote to help ensure that their future years here will continue to be memorable and productive. In addition, the juniors, sophomores and fresh-people at the University should also be sure to vote. Those of us who will be spending at least one more year at UNC need to vote for someone who is on *our* side, someone who can help make the rest of our college experience as rewarding as possible.  
Along these same lines, in selecting the next

**JIM WILLIAMS  
CARTOONIST**

student body president, we need to consider how such a decision will affect our friends and brothers and sisters who might be coming to UNC in years to come.  
To illustrate the importance of voting, let us examine one issue that UNC will be facing over the next few years: the dreaded tuition increase. A tuition increase at UNC (and other public universities in North Carolina) is certainly relevant to all of us here.  
It is not likely that this problem will suddenly disappear. In the last several months, hurricanes and snowstorms have decimated much of North Carolina. Millions of state dollars will be needed to repair the extensive damage.  
In light of this recent destruction, higher professor pay is probably *not* at the very top of the state legislature's list of problems to address. Therefore, they are going to expect someone *else* (students and their parents) to pay for the needs of our University.  
We need to elect a student body president who will be able to effectively fight for our right to an affordable education at this school.  
Now, please allow me to change gears. Let me discuss the four most important characteristics to look for in a potential student body president. First, you must consider the *sincerity* and *intentions* of the candidates running for the office. Be wary of individuals who seem like "career politicians." Even at the college level, there are people who have shaped their lives

around "climbing the ladder" to political success and *personal* gain. In voting, you should set aside ideas of "liberal" and "conservative" and focus on whether or not a candidate would honestly work to better the lives of the students.  
Next, I would suggest that you vote for someone whose plans for UNC are *practical*. Vote for a person who wants to make changes and improvements that are feasible and useful. Empty promises will not uphold the prestige of our school.  
I would also seriously consider a candidate's ability to handle the responsibilities of his or her office. Vote for an individual who is willing and able to work hard to get things done.  
The student body president needs to be someone who can elevate himself or herself *above* party politics. This person needs to be able to look at things on a broad scale and in the long-term. We have no time for petty politicking.  
Finally, a potential student body president should be a good representative of our University and all its students. He or she needs to be dignified and disciplined. This individual should carry out his or her presidential duties with a great deal of honor, integrity and respect. The student body president represents *all* of us, as well as our school's history and traditions. Choose someone you can be proud of.  
We don't get much of a say in making decisions at UNC. So, let us choose our words carefully and find someone who speaks loud enough for all to hear.

Jim Williams is a junior communications and political science major from High Point. Reach him at [jgwiv@email.unc.edu](mailto:jgwiv@email.unc.edu).

## Web Caving to Wusses Afraid to Print 'F-Word'

Don't write unless you can use the word 'fuck.'  
"Unless you get paid."  
That's advice from Mike Jasper, one of my favorite columnists. He gets paid to write. And he can use profanity.  
But not at the same time. Because all the publishers with money are pansies.  
So all of Jasper's funny writing is on the Internet, which turns everyone into a potential publisher, and he must pay for the privilege of posting a weekly column under his own domain name. At the same time, his less-edgy, appropriate-for-the-masses writing for The Austin Chronicle is what gets him a paycheck.  
Even Playboy is too pussy (pun most definitely intended) to include four-letter words in its publication. A magazine intended for adult males who knowingly want to look at pictures of naked women is too scared of the bottom line to print some expletives? I don't think they're exactly dealing with a bunch of prudes.  
It looks like the Internet's the last frontier for those of us who want to avail ourselves of every last word in the English language. It's so cutting-edge, so Generation-X, so so commercial.  
That's right — even the Internet, the best place for porn this side of Times Square, is selling out.  
There is a growing online market for freelance writers. That is, if you're willing to write about your kids' crazy high jinks or thrill an international audience with your adventures in the local grocery store.  
That is, as long as you avoid a certain seven words.  
Even Internet publications, at least the ones that pay, are censoring their writers so they can have mass appeal. This reeks of the same irony as "alternative" rock being the most popular type.  
Oh, but those fearful of profanity will cry, we must protect the children, whose parents think it's a good idea to give them unlimited Internet access, from learning to cuss.  
To them I say, name one naughty word most kids on the playground couldn't tell me.  
And if they learn a few "bad" words, who cares? Let's perform an experiment: Stand up and yell the "f-word" as loudly as you can.  
Come on, you know the one I'm talking about. That's it, right where you are.  
If you did that in the middle of class, you definitely deserve a cookie.  
Did that physically hurt anyone? (Besides yourself — if you were stupid enough to strain your voice by taking the words "as loudly as you can" literally, I have no sympathy.)  
Maybe it hurt someone's feelings or offended someone, but the word "fat" probably has more power to offend, and I can say that on prime-time network television, print it in



**ERIN MENDELL  
EDITORIAL WRITER**

Newsweek and plaster it all over the Internet.  
There is nothing that makes cuss words any more harmful than any other word. The fact that they're so taboo is completely arbitrary. They're just words.  
OK, maybe it's reasonable for writers to expect the fluff to pay the rent and save their more interesting material for noncommercial purposes.  
I can argue all I want that censoring writers promotes a publication's mediocrity, but it's still the publisher's right to decide what he is willing to pay for.  
However, it looks like censorship might be beginning to seep into our own correspondence as well. A UNC senior might face Honor Court charges for using the word "cunt" on the senior class listserv a few weeks ago.  
The student's use of the word was probably inappropriate. It was probably rude. But she shouldn't be punished over it.  
First of all, it was a University-level senior class listserv. I'm fairly certain that everyone (with the exception, perhaps, of some foreign exchange students) on that list had heard and knew the definition of the offending term long before it landed in his or her inbox.  
Secondly, (and I'm only going to say this once), IT'S A WORD. I promise it won't make anyone bleed. We have no business telling people what words they can and cannot use in their personal speech or writing.  
One could argue that because the University provides students with an e-mail service, it can therefore censor how students use that service.  
Well, my phone company provides me with a voice mail service. Does that mean it can tell me what my message has to be?  
Society can set standards for what kind of language is appropriate when, but then let society take care of the violations of those standards.  
Don't take someone to court over one very short word.  
I always thought writing was about pushing the envelope and finding your voice. Silly me, I didn't know it was all about publishing something that won't offend anyone anywhere.  
No wonder newspapers are too boring for people to read anymore.  
All I can do is hope that publishers realize it's OK to take risks, that in fact, that's their job. I like being edgy and getting people to think a little bit differently.  
And someday I'd like to get paid to do it.

Erin Mendell, a sophomore journalism and mass communication and French major from Newtown Square, Pa., was wondering if The Daily Tar Heel was edgy enough to print all of her profanity. You can let her know at [mendell@email.unc.edu](mailto:mendell@email.unc.edu).

### READERS' FORUM

#### Students Call on UNC To Open Up Courtside Seats to True Fans

TO THE EDITOR:  
This is in regards to what happened in the Dean Dome on Thursday.  
UNC students proved once and for all why *they* should have the majority of the lower-level tickets — as well as be spread all around the lower level (as opposed to being relegated to one little corner).  
The crowd was loud and intimidating and the team fed off that. Thursday, we had six men on the court. The students have heart — and they should be rewarded for it.  
Money must be made and I realize this.  
However, I pose one question — how much money does a losing team that doesn't even make the NCAA Tournament generate?

Give the students what they deserve. Change the ticket policy. Go Heels!

**Jaime Argila  
Junior  
Biology**

TO THE EDITOR:  
Any student who did not go to Thursday night's men's basketball game against Maryland missed one of the most exciting games since the team moved into the Dean Dome in the mid-1980s.  
Was the game so exciting due to a last-second shot in overtime? A spectacular comeback? No. Other than the fact that we actually won, the game was nothing out of the ordinary.  
However, the Dean Dome shook with more enthusiasm than I have ever seen.  
The reason? Simple. The Carolina Athletic Association allowed students to attend the game even if they did not

have tickets.  
Therefore, hordes of students who were not fortunate enough to receive tickets by the bracelet system found themselves occupying the seats of alumni who did not attend the game on account of ice.  
The result was electrifying. The Dean Dome was noisy, as opposed to the usual "you can hear a pin drop" atmosphere. The students proved that all Carolina fans do not belong to the "wine-and-cheese crowd" that we are so often accused of having.  
I heard many students tell me that some of the alumni were upset due to the fact that they had to stand up to see the game. If they aren't willing to stand, then they should stay home and watch the game on television.  
Last year, I heard some N.C. State University fans say that the Dean Dome was dead. Thursday night, the Dean Dome was alive and rockin'.  
I think the CAA made a wise deci-

sion by letting students into the game without tickets. I think the same system should be used at every home game. Maybe if there was more enthusiasm in the Dean Dome, the players would be inspired to play harder and win more games.  
**Dawne Howard**  
Junior  
Journalism and Mass Communication and History  
TO THE EDITOR:  
As a fervent UNC basketball fan, I was shocked to see UNC ticket-holders walking in as much as 45 minutes late to the last men's basketball game.  
I propose that the ticket policy be changed as follows: once a men's basketball game has been in progress for a certain number of minutes (say five to 10), ticket-holders lose all rights to their assigned seats.  
At this point, UNC faithful (i.e., stu-

dents and late-coming ticket-holders) should be allowed in on a first come, first serve basis to fill any open seats.  
In my opinion, this would result in a much more energetic crowd for UNC home games. If you need proof, look at the results for the UNC-Maryland home game.  
If ticket-holders don't care enough about UNC basketball to show up on time, they deserve to lose their seats!  
**Jennifer Mosher**  
Graduate Student  
Physics  
TO THE EDITOR:  
After UNC's victory against Maryland, it can no longer be denied: The students carry the true Tar Heel pride. When are we going to stop concerning ourselves with money and return to what really matters?  
In contrast to the usual games I attend, surrounded by old men on their

headsets with their wives discussing social issues, the win against Maryland can be attributed as much to the fans as to the players.  
Everyone was behind the team, on their feet jumping, chanting and jeering. The only other time you see this kind of excitement is at the Duke-Carolina game. So I ask, "Why can't every game be like the Duke-Carolina game?" The reason is money. OK, I know we live in a capitalist society, but does this have to carry over to Tar Heel basketball? It should not.  
As much as we feed off the players' energy, they feed off us. Let's keep this basketball dynasty alive; let's let those of us who have invested much time and money to attend this University really be a part of this University.  
**Jenna Tomon**  
Freshman  
Psychology and Elementary Education