



ERIN MENDELL

For the Law's, Public's Sake, Open Meetings

I'll give a big thumbs up to the town-gown relations committee Chapel Hill Mayor Rosemary Waldorf and Chancellor James Moeser announced Oct. 19, but I'll use another finger to express my feelings about the committee's decision to close its meetings.

Let's forget all the arguments about the public's right to know for a minute - although they are valid arguments. The decision is quite possibly illegal.

North Carolina has an Open Meetings Law. That means, coincidentally, that governmental meetings must be open. That means the town-gown relations decision to close its meetings is illegal unless members can prove it meets one of the law's conditions for closing meetings.

Council and committee member Kevin Foy defended the legality of the decision and told The Daily Tar Heel, "This is not a committee that has any authority to make any binding decision on the town."

As a lawyer, Foy should know that, under North Carolina's Open Meetings Law, this argument won't cut it.

Under that law, it is illegal for any public body - and the town council is certainly a public body - or a committee of a public body to close its meetings. Even if the committee has only an advisory function, it is still a public body under N.C. law.

But you don't have to take my word for it. Ruth Walden, a media law professor in the UNC School of Journalism and Mass Communication, agrees with me. She told the DTH she thinks the meetings would need to be open legally.

It's not as though a public body can't close a meeting under any circumstances. But the town-gown relations committee doesn't seem to meet any of the conditions for closing a meeting.

The committee is not addressing specific personnel or employee issues or deciding whether to honor someone. The committee meetings won't involve attorney-client privilege, or if they do, only those portions of the meetings should be closed. It's not dealing with employment contracts, confidential or privileged information or criminal misconduct.

The legal logic the committee could use is that it will be dealing with business or industry expansion and real estate acquisitions, both of which are legal justifications for closing a meeting in North Carolina.

The committee will probably address growth, which could be construed to mean business and industry expansion. And the University might try to acquire land residents own as part of the Master Plan. Discussing that in a meeting would be discussing real estate acquisitions. But that argument is shaky, and the entire business of the committee will most likely not be about business expansion.

But with the wide variety of issues affecting town-gown relations, I doubt that's all the committee will discuss. When a meeting is closed, the members can discuss only issues related to the issue they used to close the meeting.

Setting aside the legal issues, if the committee's purpose is to improve the relationship between the town and the University, closing the meetings seems self-defeating. Communication between town and University officials might improve, but most members of both communities will be left in the dark.

Committee member Jonathan Howes, special assistant to the chancellor, told the DTH, "I think it was the expectation of the chancellor and the mayor that the subject matter would be sufficiently sensitive that the matters would be best discussed in private."

The best way to discuss sensitive issues is openly. I want to know what's so sensitive about the subjects of these meetings that Chapel Hill residents and the University community can't be trusted to be in on them.

Council member Joyce Brown is not a member of the committee, but she supports its formation. But Brown told the DTH she opposes the fact that the committee is being proposed as a closed committee.

And I hope committee members start to agree with her. They might not lose a lawsuit, but they could lose public confidence.

Columnist Erin Mendell can be reached at mendell@email.unc.edu.

Cartoonist Draws a Crowd for Slide Show

By SCOTT BRITTAIN
Staff Writer

Students, professors and anyone else who wanted to hear a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist had their chance Thursday night in a comedy-filled program sponsored by the Park Foundation.

The third Roy H. Park Lecture Series brought satirist Doug Marlette to Carroll Hall, where he spoke to an audience of about 200 people. Marlette is best known for his syndicated comic strip "Kudzu" and his political cartoons that are printed in hundreds of newspapers.

Marlette kept the mood in the lecture hall lively with a slide show displaying several strips of "Kudzu" and numerous examples of his political cartoons.

"The thing that was attractive to me about political cartoons is that you can express something without saying anything," Marlette said.

One of the best examples of this is the shuttle Challenger's explosion in 1986. Marlette created a cartoon for a special afternoon edition of The Charlotte Observer that featured a bald eagle looking toward a star-filled sky with a tear coming from its eye. The paper had to print 70,000 copies of that one cartoon to fill special requests.

Marlette also draws cartoons about topics such as sports, the death penalty, prescription drugs and politics. He said there are several politicians that he enjoys drawing frequently, such as Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., whom he has depicted as a pickle, a gallstone and "all kinds of lower life-forms."

Once, when Helms was adamantly speaking against the formation of the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, Marlette drew a picture of a calendar turned to April 1 with Helms proclaiming it as April Fools' Day.

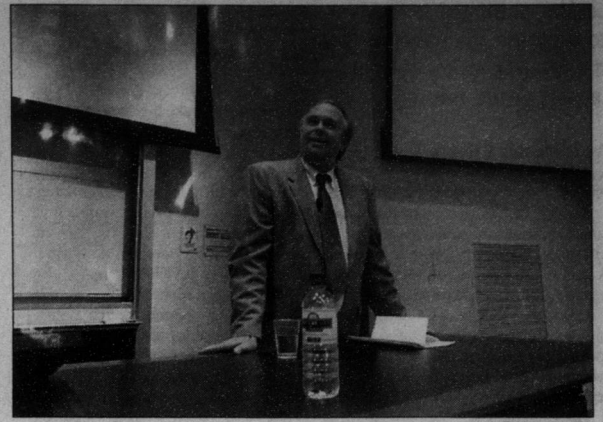
Marlette said he normally does not back down from an issue, but he does have a harder time with certain topics. "Abortion is tough because I have very conflicted feelings about that," Marlette said. "We live in a time when you can't talk about certain things. If you say something about race then you're a racist, or if you say something about homosexuals then you are a homophobe."

He said his views expressed in his drawings are usually not reflections of his opinions of the people.

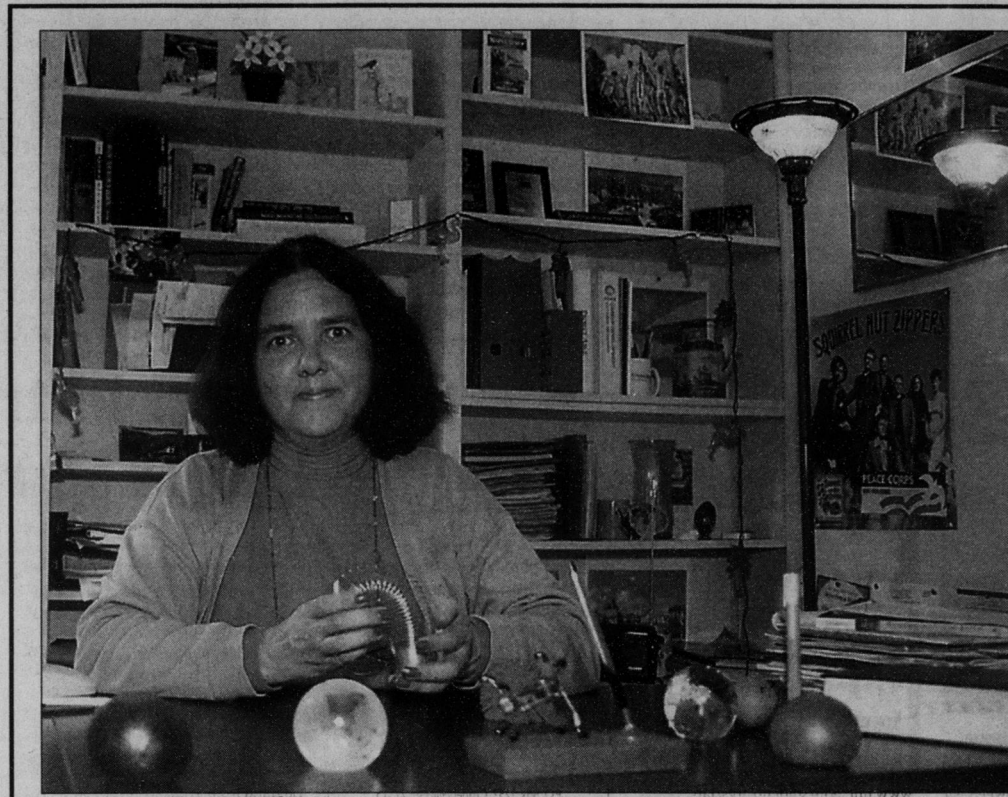
"I like everybody, but with my cartoons I'm interested in the policies and activities and not the people," Marlette said. "I like being mean. In daylight-saving time, I can be mean an extra hour."

Marlette was born in Greensboro and attended Florida State University. He began his journalism career with The

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Cartoonist Doug Marlette, best known for his comic strip "Kudzu," shows his work during the Park Lecture Series in Carroll Hall.



Jacquelyn Gist plays with a Slinky, one of the many toys she keeps in her Nash Hall office to make students feel more comfortable. Gist works both as a University counselor and as a Carrboro alderman.

Nurturer by Day, 'Ass-Kicker' by Night

By STEFANIE WOVCHUK
Staff Writer

When seeing Jacquelyn Gist in her UNC office, one might be surprised to find out she is both a career counselor and town official.

Flamingo and palm tree lights illuminate the walls of her office in Nash Hall. And next to them hangs a large Squirrel Nut Zippers poster.

Her desk is covered with many childhood gadgets such as a Slinky and bright bouncy balls.

And Gist will be the first to admit that she can't coordinate her daily attire. Although her office and outfits might be decorated uniquely, what makes Gist stand out is the work she does through her two occupations.

Gist works as a counselor with University Career Services by day and as a Carrboro alderman by night.

And her work has given her a love for both the University and the surrounding area.

Gist helped start the homeless shelter in Chapel Hill and recently won the Office of the Provost Public Service Award for her

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Annual Festivals Provide Variety of Halloween Fun

By JAMILA VERNON
Staff Writer

Halloween festivities including scary storytelling, costume contests and a carnival full of games will kick off in the Carrboro community this weekend.

Starting at 5:30 p.m. today, Weaver Street Market will hold its annual "Ghost Stories" on the lawn.

This event, which has been held annually for more than seven years, will feature live music, a costume contest and scary storytelling.

Local musician Tim Stambaugh will kick off the event and play music throughout the night.

"The musicians (for the events) are

incredibly eager," said Cat Moleksi, a media specialist for Weaver Street Market. "Stambaugh is planning on having seasonal music and a puppeteer as part of his act."

Moleksi said the costume contest is always a popular event among kids up to 10 years old.

"Costumes run the gamut from princess to Dracula, but this year we think we might get some Harry Potters," Moleksi said.

Costumes will be judged in the categories of most original, funniest and scariest. The two judges will be employees of the Weaver Street Market.

Karen Berry, a recreation supervisor of the Carrboro Recreation Department,

said the storytelling will be done by teacher and writer Milbre Burch.

"We always have a hard time finding good storytellers," Moleksi said. "Milbre is a wonderful storyteller."

Burch will be interpreting stories by various writers and draw on world folk tales and legends as the basis for her stories.

Carrboro Recreation Department will follow this event on Tuesday with its Halloween Carnival. It will feature a range of games and activities from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. and will be held at the Carrboro Town Commons.

"It's a safer alternative to trick or treating ... we ordered all the candy so we know where it's coming from," said

Berry. "It (also) builds on that sense of community."

Berry said the events are geared toward children from preschool to high school.

"It (will have) carnival booths with games appropriate for different ages," Berry said.

Berry said 200 to 300 people usually attend the event, and she expects that the same amount will attend this year.

There will be an area specifically designated for teens, Berry said. Activities include eye-putt, which is a version of miniature golf, where the participants use a fake eyeball instead of a golf ball, and dance contest.

"Monster Mash music is played and

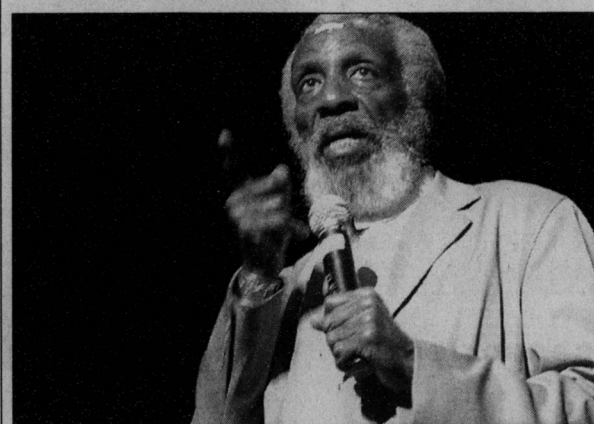
participants are to show off their moves," Berry said.

The carnival will also include an educational component that includes Merlin and his Owl and The Bat Cave. Berry said a paid performer will play the role of Merlin and talk about why owls are magical. "Halloween lends itself well to education about history," Berry said.

"Things that are fun and educational are always a good idea."

The town of Chapel Hill will close off Franklin Street to prepare for its annual Halloween Promenade, which drew tens of thousands of revelers last year.

The City Editor can be reached at citydesk@unc.edu.



Comedian and social activist Dick Gregory, who was involved in the civil rights movement, speaks Thursday night in Memorial Hall.

Comedian Stirs Laughter, Thought

By TORI KISER
Staff Writer

Laughter filled Memorial Hall on Thursday night as guest comedian Dick Gregory spoke about family values, drug usage and politics with a bawdy flair.

Gregory, who recently released his memoir, "Callous on My Soul," was welcomed to the stage with a standing ovation.

He then garnered roaring laughter after opening his speech with a personal anecdote about an accidental energy boost.

"I just realized I popped my Viagra pill instead of my ginseng," Gregory said.

His visit was sponsored by The Sonja H. Stone Black Cultural Center and WNCU Jazz Radio 90.7.

The event was a fund-raiser for the cultural center, which is expected to break ground starting in April 2001.

Gregory began using his comedic skills during his military career in the 1950s.

After he was discharged from the military, he gained national attention while performing before a predominantly white audience at Chicago's Playboy Club in 1961.

Audiences have said Gregory is as much an activist as a comedian because of his talent for making people think as well as laugh.

After he achieved his success as a performer, Gregory made a move in American politics.

He unsuccessfully ran for mayor of Chicago in 1966 and for U.S. president in 1968.

Gregory also was active in civil rights and anti-apartheid movements.

"Integration is here, and somewhere - I don't know where - but a black woman done taught a white woman the grits recipe!" Gregory said.

Gregory gave many statistics in his performance, which contained information on such issues as teenage pregnancy and divorce rates.

He also attacked the topic of school

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