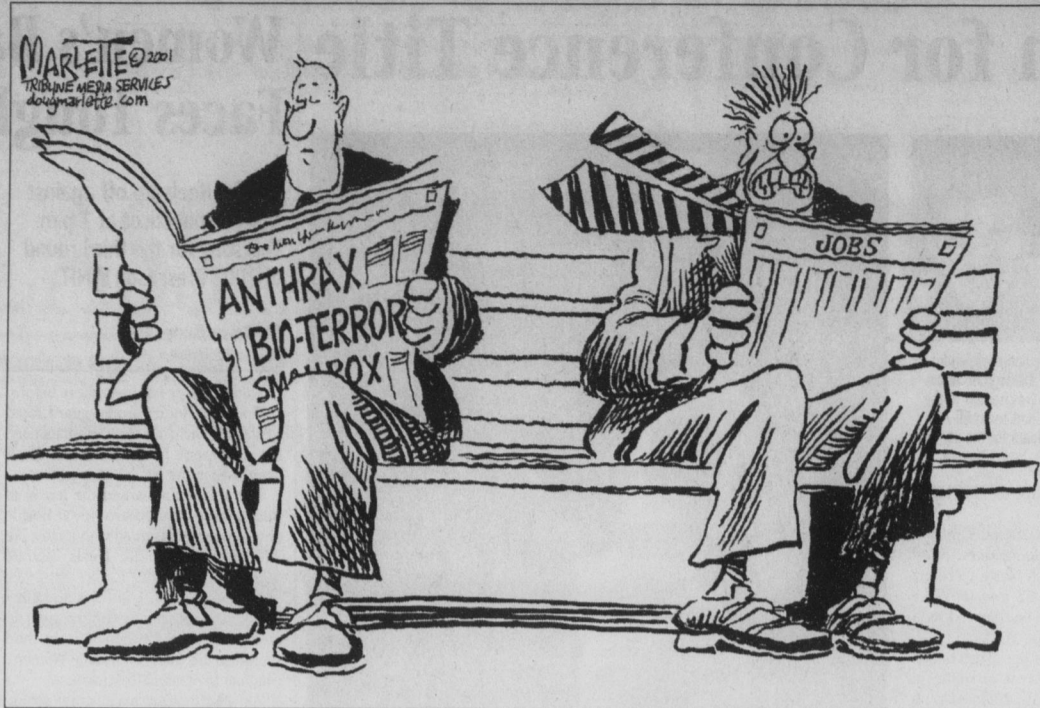


Opinion



The Guilty Pleasures of Harry Potter

Friday the 16th, is not merely the middle of November or the beginning of another weekend or the day before the Duke/Carolina football game. Tomorrow is the day that the first Harry Potter movie opens nationwide. Laugh if you will, but for a lot of college students and adults, this pre-adolescent boy and his adventures have reeled them in. I even know one member of Phi Beta Kappa, who will remain nameless, who owns a pair of Harry Potter socks.



MARIAN CROTTY
COUNTERPOINT

At first, it seems silly to enjoy young adult books so much, but after reading them, it doesn't take too long to see the pull.

On one hand, the books simply provide entertaining fiction written in an engaging, easy-to-read style. The characters also tend to be quirky in an endearing sort of way.

Harry Potter's friend Hermione has poofy hair and spends most of her time studying, but she goes along with most of Harry's schemes, usually has a solution for unexpected problems and, to the dismay of the other female students, wins the heart of a handsome visiting student. Hagrid, the gamekeeper at the school, looks fearsome but cries easily and tames giant spiders and other unusual creatures.

In each book, Harry and his friends also solve a mystery with many twists and bumps along the way.

Beyond interesting plots and characters, though, these books simply offer a world of fantasy and imagination. People can wear invisibility cloaks and walk around without anyone seeing them, look at a school map with moving figures for all of the people on the grounds or make potions that will allow them to temporarily switch bodies with other people.

Especially in today's fast-paced world, we don't often get to let our thoughts drift to implausible situations. We have been taught to question ideas and challenge what we see. Our professors instruct us to back up our positions, re-examine beliefs we've always held, and understand why theories hold true.

We've been trained to see life as it stands — to notice the way the people around us look and behave, read the newspaper and follow current events, and make judgments based on facts. We rarely spend our days wondering about things that could never exist or simply doing something unstructured. Even time spent with friends often becomes ordered. We plan ahead of time to go to a party, play basketball or watch a movie. And, for the most part, we know what the event will entail.

Although people sometimes encourage us to "think outside the box," they very rarely do so for the sake of imagination itself. Professors might tell us to follow our crazy ideas or to write a first draft using as little of our conscious minds and rational thoughts as possible.

However, professors do not give this advice to provide personal entertainment or to make us more interesting people. They simply believe that these tactics will enable students to produce better work.

In the same way, the bosses of large companies might ask employees in a brainstorming session to give them their most ridiculous and unlikely ideas, not to add depth to individual lives but to encourage creative solutions for their businesses.

I can certainly see the point of rationality. If no one thought to set standards for employees or remembered to pay bills, our society couldn't function. We wouldn't have accurate medical research, dependable cars or computers or even running water. However, even if practical thinking accomplishes important business, the fact remains that many of us spend our days operating rationally and aiming for efficiency.

And, this favoring of precision makes it easy for us to have underdeveloped imaginations. What we think about when we stop filtering our thoughts doesn't even matter so much. Just daydreaming about anything offers relaxation, lets unconscious thoughts surface and returns us to our regular lives and ways of thinking feeling refreshed.

Therefore, simply by sitting and doing nothing but musing, we can improve our outlook on life or even become more productive in our work. We aren't often asked to think like a kid who's told to believe that a fairy takes away his baby teeth, that a giant bunny brings him candy each spring or that a world could exist where boys fly on broomsticks or put spells on cars to make them fly. But, on those rare occasions when someone invites us to make believe, it almost makes logical sense to do it.

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Board Editorials

Closing the Chapter

The agreement between the United States and Russia to reduce nuclear arms sets a positive example for the world

Even though Monday's tragic plane crash darkened the beginning of the week, there have been several breakthroughs in our nation's current international situation.

The Northern Alliance took over Kabul in hopes of fully eradicating the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, a major step in the fight against terrorism.

The federal government has made great strides in improving bioterrorism preparation plans throughout the country in a relatively short time period of time.

And on Tuesday, amid the drawn-out debates and arguments surrounding missile defense, President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to reduce Cold War-era nuclear arsenals by as much as two-thirds. The announcement was made at a joint press conference on the first of a three-day summit between the two leaders.

This reduction will be a major step forward in bettering post-Cold War relations with a once-bitter rival. It is imperative dur-

ing this critical time that attempts are made to maintain good foreign policy with Russia and all over the world.

America has a nuclear arsenal of around 10,000 warheads, with Russia possessing some 7,000. Bush and Putin agreed to cut the number of nuclear weapons to somewhere between 1,700 and 2,200 for both countries over the next decade. An agreement between both leaders provides a positive example of improved American-Russian relations.

An arms reduction represents a good move in creating new national security measures. For 50 years national security was defined by intense periods of nuclear deterrence.

The government inadvertently played shadow games with Russia using undercover intelligence to better homeland security. An arms reduction shows that both nations are trying to avoid deterrence security to maintain democratic ideals. Security is based on the general will of a society and

its people, not on stockpiles of lethal weapons.

Furthermore, this agreement provides an example for the rest of the "nuclear world."

In an age where potential conflict looms heavy on the hearts of many worried citizens in "nuclear nations," this relationship displays successful diplomacy defined by open communication and compromise.

The United States cannot let nuclear weapons affect important political decisions with nations such as China, Pakistan and India.

The agreement goes a long way in closing the book on Russia and America's nuclear rivalry.

Russia and the United States have the chance to strengthen a strategic relationship that was once thought to be impossible by many critics.

The arms reduction agreement is just one aspect of Bush and Putin's overall goal to accomplish sound diplomacy and prove that theory wrong.

Constructive Criticism

The University needs to better inform campus residents about inconveniences related to construction projects

Hark the sound, Carolina. Hark the sound, that is, of the new Carolina; grow accustomed to waking to the sounds of jackhammers, backhoes and construction workers yelling out orders to each other in the wee hours of morning.

For many students living in residence halls that have become construction sites, the length of the projects comes as somewhat of a surprise.

Not only are the projects going on for much longer than planned, but the University did a poor job informing residents about projects and their timelines.

If students could have known in advance that they would be paying to live in a residence hall where backhoes started digging every day at 7 a.m. or where there was periodically no hot water, then many probably would have looked into living off campus.

However, the projects go beyond construction around residence halls.

Officials at the Student Union announced recently that construction of the new wing is two months behind schedule. The new building was set for completion last June and is now on schedule to be finished sometime in February.

MATT MINCHEW

EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

Among the reasons for the delay is the fact that the stairs connecting the area by Student Stores and the Union with South Road weren't straight and consequently will have to be destroyed.

It's understandable that there are a lot of construction projects the University will have to undergo for some time.

Still, it seems that the number of projects going on simultaneously makes deadlines harder to meet. Maybe the University has bitten off more than it can chew. A project to replace the water heating system just outside Mangum and Ruffin residence halls also has been further delayed.

Residents in these halls were recently without hot water for several days, and oftentimes the hot water is shut off unannounced from time to time.

In addition to the e-mails that resident assistants send out to their residents, the University housing department needs to take a more active role in keeping residents informed. It simply isn't fair that many residents unexpectedly find themselves living in the middle of a huge construction site, walking in between heavy machinery just to get to their front door.

Unfortunately this is the reality of living on campus at a university that is growing at a rate that, apparently, it can't handle.

So get used to it, Carolina. New projects keep springing up as old ones remain unfinished or delayed. Maybe in 50 years, when the Master Plan is finished and all that is left of Chapel Hill is UNC, people will be able to find some peace and quiet on campus.

Student Government Needs to Speak Out on Students' Behalf

Students are set to become UNC's overlooked constituency unless something changes — soon.

It now has been almost two years since a student government leader has stood up publicly to the folks in South Building over a major campus issue.

And administrators are getting used to expecting dispassion and complacency from the student government leaders charged with the task of bringing student concerns to the table.

If things do not change, pretty soon no undergraduate on this campus will remember that student leaders once considered themselves legitimate sources of power at UNC.

And some key administrators and trustees would be just fine with that.

Do you realize that in March of 1966, 12 students, led by Student Body President Paul Dickson III, filed a lawsuit against top University administrators who refused to allow two prominent Communists give speeches on campus? Just two years ago, a student govern-



KATIE HUNTER
EDITOR

ment-led fight against the wishes of the Board of Trustees helped get a proposed five-year tuition increase knocked down to only two years.

Both scenarios are examples of strong student leadership.

I can't imagine our current student leaders having the gumption to act similarly.

I recently heard a former chancellor describe the essence of strong leadership as the ability to identify a set of values and to stand up for those values, whatever the cost.

Recent events have prompted me to wonder whether current student government leaders have abandoned their values, or worse yet, if they ever really stopped to think about what those values were to begin with.

In the leadership sense, having values means having vision — knowing the difference between those issues that ultimately are inconsequential (whether the student body president gets a stipend) and important long-range issues that are essential to the future of the University (free speech on campus, tuition).

Since August, three major issues have

come up that have the potential to drastically alter the direction in which the University moves in coming years.

These issues are tuition, student parking and the question of whether UNC will establish a satellite business school in Qatar. Student concerns have been virtually unrepresented as of yet on all three topics.

Now the blame cannot be placed on students alone (Lord knows, there is little, if any, evidence to suggest that administrators — namely Chancellor James Moeser — are at all concerned with students' opinions on University issues).

But I think it is irresponsible for students to fail to ask their elected student government representatives why student government has not made a bigger stink about routinely being ignored.

Perhaps the most blatant example is the parking issue. Administrators recently announced that all on-campus parking spaces for students who live on campus will be eliminated in the near future.

Input from the two students who sit on the Transportation and Parking Advisory Committee was never solicited in the decision. But what is even more shocking is the sedated student government response. Although leaders have said they are disap-

pointed with the decision, no large-scale action has been taken to mobilize student opposition on one of the few issues students on this campus genuinely care about.

Similarly, on the issue of Qatar, it shocks me that student government is not publicly outraged by the fact that Student Body President Justin Young — a voting member of the BOT who legally is afforded the same rights as every other BOT member — was told he could not participate in a recent trip to the Middle Eastern nation.

Although UNC students might never attend classes at the satellite campus, it still seems as though they should have some input about whether their business school professors are shipped to the other side of the world to teach Qatari students instead of UNC students.

Student Body Vice President Rudy Kleysteuber said Wednesday that he believes any trustee other than Young would have been allowed to go to Qatar.

But what concerns me more is that Kleysteuber also admitted that student government did not think it wise to exacerbate an already "tense" relationship between student government and Moeser and therefore settled for Wednesday's forum as an adequate way to gauge student input.

Unfortunately, student government and the Campus Y allowed the forum to present just one side of the issue to students. Not one of the five panelists was opposed to the satellite campus.

And on the issue of tuition — perhaps the issue that is the most germane to students at this University — student government officials again have yet to take a firm stance on a tuition increase that — when you take away the smoke and mirrors — everyone knows the BOT will act on in January.

Today the trustees are slated to hear how UNC's tuition compares to similar schools' and are expected to set up the committee that would draft a tuition proposal. It will be interesting to see how student government representatives approach the meeting, the outcome of which could greatly affect students.

It is time for student government representatives — namely Young — to display strong leadership and strong values.

It is time for student government to take a public stand for students — whatever the cost.

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