

BOARD EDITORIALS

MINDFUL OF HISTORY

Fraternities shouldn't forget the 1996 fire that claimed five people's lives, and they should step up safety efforts in their respective houses.

On the morning of May 12, 1996, a fire ripped through the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house. Five students were killed. They died mere hours before the 1996 Commencement ceremony was set to take place.

The blaze began in the basement, where a cigarette hadn't been disposed of properly. The fraternity house was not equipped with a sprinkler system or fire alarm system. A flurry of activity followed as houses were supplied with adequate safety materials.

The fire remains one of the most horrifying incidents in the University's history.

With strict rules regarding in-house equipment and a renewed focus on fire safety, one would think that the message had gotten through.

But in light of recent inspections by the Chapel Hill Fire Department, one would be wrong.

According to The (Raleigh) News & Observer, fire officials forced members of Sigma Chi to remove tons of wood chips from the basement of the fraternity house Feb. 26. Members were planning a beach party.

Another reported violation at the Phi Gamma Delta house involved brothers placing cups over

smoke detectors to prevent alarms from going off during a smoky party.

With that hard-line approach, local fire officials are not just spoiling fun. They are doing exactly what they should be doing: maintaining vigilance and preventing potential tragedies before they come to be.

However, they shouldn't have to be the only ones to deduce that a basement full of wood chips is a fire hazard. It is a tough task to keep track of all potential dangers, and plenty of fraternity fire marshals have been paying close attention to their duties.

But sprinkler systems and lessons in fire safety can go only so far. Ultimately, it's up to fraternity members themselves to make the right decisions.

It's possible that, as time has passed since the Phi Gamma Delta disaster in 1996, students have become complacent and apathetic.

In the case of Sigma Chi's wood chips, an unthinkable accident was waiting to happen. Now is not the time to let history repeat itself. With exams on the horizon, fraternities are gearing up for massive end-of-year parties. They must put in the extra effort to ensure the safety of hosts and guests alike.

PRINCIPLED CHOICE

JamesOn Curry's legal dilemma is unfortunate, but Roy Williams made the right decision in withdrawing the guard's scholarship offer.

In our commercial and competitive world, it is easy to value success over character, achievement over integrity, winning over all else.

In the especially commercial and competitive realm of collegiate athletics, the push for immediate and greater accomplishment all too often swells above other concerns, drowning out the more important emphases on integrity and the moral fiber of those who participate.

With illegal gambling, academic cheating and booster violations, it is heartening to witness a university and its athletic program put aside personal gratification for the sake of integrity.

Last week, men's basketball coach Roy Williams made the right decision for UNC by withdrawing the athletic scholarship for Alamance County phenom and now convicted felon JamesOn Curry.

University athletes serve as prominent public representatives of their institutions. Their status as the face of the University is only enhanced when they play a high-profile sport, and basketball at UNC is as high-profile as college athletics can be.

It is the great responsibility of all athletes to serve

as a public embodiment of something much greater than themselves, a responsibility stacked on top of all the other demands that make their lives more complicated than the typical student's. That responsibility is one that many potential students, despite amazing athletic skill, are not well-equipped to handle.

For the most part, UNC has recruited athletes who have demonstrated the ability to represent the University in an appropriate manner, and our Department of Athletics must maintain such standards in the future.

Curry's case is certainly a sad one: a tragedy not only because of the potential life he has denied himself, but also because of the pointlessness of his crime. But the University cannot abandon its moral standing by making him a public representative of UNC.

The UNC basketball program will find success. Make no mistake. The program and the University it represents desire to reach greater heights and will do so through winning, but the program will win the right way, with the right student-athletes and with the right emphasis on representing a state and University much larger than any individual.

A DESERVED VOICE

Carrboro residents in the process of attaining U.S. citizenship should be able to vote in the municipal elections that greatly affect them.

Casting a ballot in the voting booth represents the physical embodiment of democracy. Voters who pay taxes and contribute to their communities get the opportunity to choose their leaders and hold them accountable.

Unfortunately, many permanent residents who have immigrated to the United States find themselves in a type of voter limbo waiting for final approval after applying for citizenship. These people get no voice in the voting process.

Carrboro Alderman John Herrera presented a promising solution at last week's meeting of the Board of Aldermen.

Herrera proposed allowing permanent residents who have applied for citizenship to vote in municipal elections, thus giving people committed to citizenship the right to practice it.

The U.S. Constitution precludes noncitizens from voting in state and federal elections. It does not however, speak specifically to the municipal electoral process.

Despite their lower profiles, municipal officials

have a far greater impact on the lives of people in their immediate community than do their state or federal counterparts.

Additionally, before they obtain citizenship, permanent residents pay the vast majority of their taxes to municipalities. Giving them the ability to vote in this narrow arena makes sense.

Critics of this proposal might ask where you draw the line in terms of giving people the right to vote before earning citizenship. Herrera's plan sits directly on that line.

Citizenship and the voting right it entails must be earned by those who choose to immigrate to this country. But that doesn't mean that during the gap between immigration and citizenship they should have no say in who governs them.

People who have invested time and money in establishing residence here can face waits of as long as a decade for citizenship.

A decade is far too long to contribute to a community while not even being able to call yourself a second class citizen, let alone a citizen.

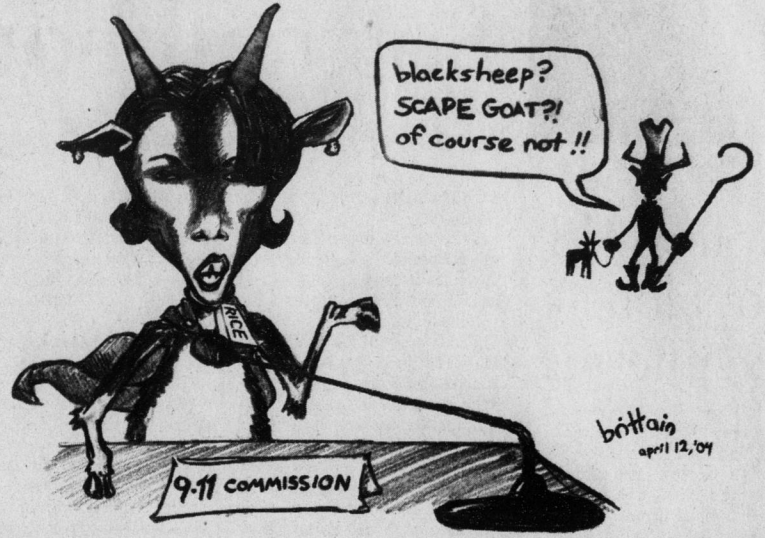
ON THE DAY'S NEWS

"The past is always a rebuke to the present."

ROBERT PENN WARREN, POET

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Britt Peck, bmpeck@email.unc.edu



COMMENTARY

Meeting demand for housing outweighs aesthetic worth

Four years later, my mom still refers to my first dorm room as "That Cave" when she recounts the story of moving me into UNC. "I cried the whole way home thinking about how I'd left you in such a horrible, awful place," she says, shaking her head.

My room — second floor Morrison, on the Dark Side — really was a cave.

With no air-conditioning, one window that never saw sunlight and depressingly low ceilings, my first home away from home was a sight that would make most mothers cry.

I know my experience isn't unique. The old school, high-rise South Campus residence halls hold more than 3,000 students, and while one in four residents is blessed with air-conditioning, all of them share in the cave-like rooms, the meals at Chase Hall, the lack of green space and the 20 minute walk to main campus.

There are people who love the large and crazy community that the South Campus high-rises breed. These people relish in the huge numbers of students and the buzzing atmosphere where anything could happen at any time.

I was never one of them. I hated the gargantuan, impersonal buildings with architecture that made me feel I'd wandered into a former Soviet bloc nation.

So I should have been thrilled when I heard last week that some members of the UNC Board of Trustees were considering leveling the heinous structures. Though campus planners have been planning the Morrison Residence Hall renovation, set to begin in 2005, for more than a year, trustees began asking last week whether it wouldn't be better for the University community to knock



STEPHANIE HORVATH NOT THE BELL OR THE WELL

Morrison down and start over, admit that the brick monstrosity was a mistake and move on.

Initially, I loved the idea. I look forward to the day when South Campus has beautiful grass quads with shade trees. I hope for a time when students no longer live in cave-like quarters and South Campus is no longer so removed from University life. Handsome new residence halls that don't look like a product of urban renewal would go a long way toward creating that atmosphere.

Despite their many shortcomings, however, the high rises have one significant attribute: They help provide a bed for every head.

UNC strives to provide on-campus housing for incoming students and current students who wish to remain in residence halls and rightly so. This policy immediately immerses freshmen in campus life, making it easier for them to get involved and meet people. Additionally, it provides all students with reasonably affordable housing in the often-unreasonable Chapel Hill housing market.

While beautiful new residence halls would improve the atmosphere on South Campus, they probably won't be able to hold the same number of bodies as the high rises. According to the Web site of the Department of Housing and Residential Education, Morrison houses 1,012 residents and Hinton James Residence Hall houses 974.

This contrasts sharply with the new Morrison South and Hinton James North, which hold 190 and 276 residents, respectively.

UNC would have to build a lot of these smaller, more aesthetically pleasing residence halls in order to make up for the space lost if the high rises were demolished. This would be a difficult task on a campus where space is at a premium.

Housing shortages remain an issue as our enrollment increases and as off-campus housing grows more expensive. As recently as the 2001-02 school year, UNC experienced a serious housing crunch. With a large freshman class and an unexpectedly high number of returning students staying on campus, the University found itself hunting for space.

The housing department reopened Joyner Hall, which was slated for renovations that fall, in order to accommodate an additional 170 students. Transfer students, graduate students and students moving back on campus all were turned away. Granville Towers was booked solid.

The housing department made a great effort to give every student a room on campus. It understood that living on campus is essential to the freshman experience and often the only affordable option for students of any age.

While I would love UNC to rip down the high rises and create a beautiful South Campus devoid of cave-like rooms, I encourage the trustees to make it a priority to provide housing for every student who seeks it. When they meet again this month, I hope they seek a plan that combines a beautiful form with practical function.

Contact Stephanie Horvath at shorvath@email.unc.edu.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The above editorials are the opinions of solely The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board, and were reached after open debate. The board consists of seven board members, the editorial page associate editor, the editorial page editor and the DTH editor. The 2003-04 DTH editor decided not to vote on the board and not to write board editorials.

The Daily Tar Heel

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Editorial page applications available

The academic year is coming to a close, and while students are focusing on upcoming papers, exams and summer activities, we here at The Daily Tar Heel are looking ahead to the fall semester.

The newspaper is in the hunt for talented, dedicated and knowledgeable applicants to fill positions on the editorial page staff.

Editorial board members, columnists and cartoonists play a vital role for The Daily Tar Heel.

Whereas staffers on the news side have a journalistic duty to remain as objective as possible in their reporting, it's the job of those who work on the opinion side to analyze the news and take stands on the important issues of the day.

The two sides are separate. That's why students interested in applying for one of the editorial page positions need not worry about prior journalism experience.

Columnists and cartoonists get the glamour, as their names — and, for columnists, pictures — are tied to their respective works.

Less obvious, but by no means less important, are the contributions of The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board.

The board meets three times per week. At each meeting, members dissect matters of importance to the University community. Once the board reaches a



ELLIOTT DUBE EDITORIAL PAGE EDITOR-SELECT

majority decision regarding an issue, one of the board members is picked to write an unsigned editorial about that topic.

Board members should be committed, thoughtful, articulate and receptive to a wide range of ideas and perspectives.

The time commitment is something to consider. Why add another set of duties to a slate of class-work, social obligations and other extracurricular activities?

Because being a member of The Daily Tar Heel Editorial Board is one of the more educational experiences available at this University.

Board members learn about the nuances and subtleties of many campus issues. They interact with student leaders. They do research in commenting or criticizing decision-makers on the University, town, state and national levels.

Perhaps most appealing is the debate. Argument — albeit civil argument — is encouraged. Sometimes, it gets people's blood boiling. And sometimes, it allows

board members to reach epiphanies of their own.

Finding a group of top-notch board members is one of our highest priorities, but we aren't forgetting the page's other positions.

Five applicants will be selected for columnist posts. One columnist will handle topics related to the University. One will focus on town affairs, and one will take on state and national issues.

The two remaining columnist spots are "at-large" positions. These writers will be given carte blanche to cover whatever subject matter they choose, as long as it has some relevance for the newspaper's readership.

The selection process for columnists typically is highly competitive. Applicants should be ready to demonstrate considerable writing skills and develop a number of relevant ideas.

As for cartoonists, the strength of an applicant's ideas will be given as much weight as artistic quality. Prospective cartoonists should watch current events and read the news on a regular basis.

Applications for these positions will be available beginning today at The Daily Tar Heel's front desk in Suite 2409 of the Union.

Contact Elliott Dube, editorial page editor-select, at dube@email.unc.edu.

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