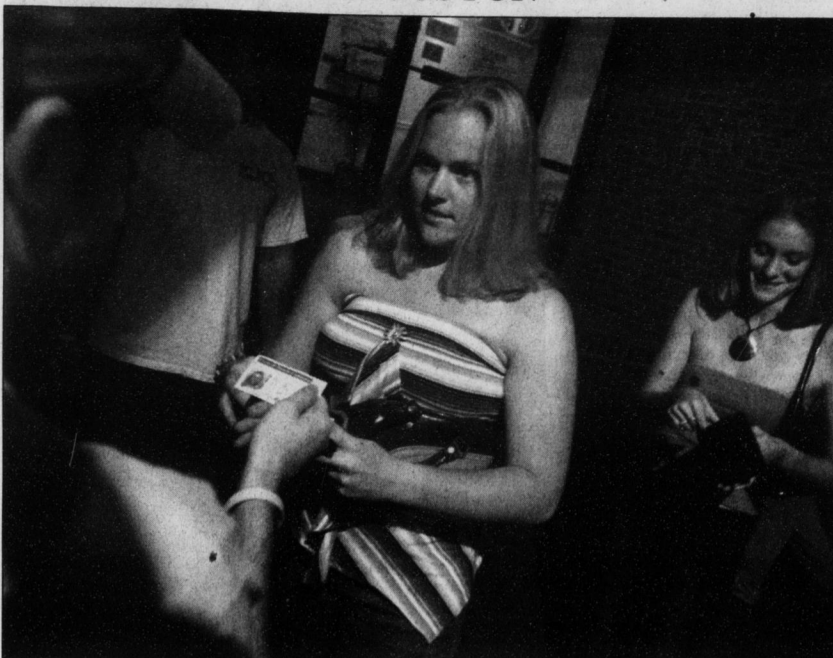


SERIOUS FUN



DTH/JUSTIN SMITH

**H**annah Carlton shows her I.D. on Thursday at He's Not Here, a Franklin Street bar, for the first Senior Night of the year. Senior class marshals are meeting this weekend to finalize the three options for the senior class gift. Seniors also were offered free ice cream on Polk Place on Thursday afternoon, and class T-shirts will be on sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday in the Pit.

Emissions plan may harm health

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — A Bush administration proposal to regulate mercury from power plant emissions ignores more than 60 other toxics that threaten public health, many of them emitted from North Carolina's 14 power plants, opponents said Thursday.

The Bush proposal would allow the continued release of high levels of the pollutants in North Carolina, including tens of thousands of tons of arsenic, lead, dioxins, and other pollutants, said a report issued Thursday by the National Environmental Trust for Clear the Air, a coalition of advocacy groups.

The administration has hailed the plan as the first to regulate a pollutant generated by power plants.

Announced earlier this year, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has been taking public comment and has until March to adopt the proposal.

Opponents argue that the plan would force the EPA to violate its obligations under the 1990 Clean Air Act.

The EPA issued a statement late Thursday saying the Clean Air Act requires the agency to decide "on a pollutant-by-pollutant basis whether it is appropriate to regulate based on the risk of these emissions to human health."

The agency said it sent a report to Congress in 1998 that found mercury, the common pollutant from coal-burning plants in North Carolina, and nickel to be the most concerning air pollutants.

The EPA said regulation of other

elements emitted by power plants isn't warranted at this time because they "do not pose a threat to public health."

Reductions in the other pollutants will occur as a byproduct of the plan to reduce mercury and nickel, the EPA said.

Poverty rises, wages fall across state since 2000

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — North Carolina took a triple economic whammy over the past few years, with more people living in poverty, without insurance and not seeing as much household income, the Census Bureau reported Thursday.

The numbers released by the bureau reflect averages compiled over a pair of three-year periods — 2000-02 and 2001-03.

They show that the percentage of North Carolinians living in poverty increased from 13.1 percent in 2000-02 to 14.2 percent in 2001-03.

The rate of uninsured people rose from 14.9 percent to 16.1 percent.

The median family income fell from an average of \$38,432 in the first period to \$38,096 in the second.

The figures reflect North Carolina's continuing struggle to adjust to the collapse of traditional manufacturing industries like textiles and furniture, economist Gary Shoemith said.

"These all go together with what's happening in our basic industries," said Shoemith, director of the Center for Economic Studies at Wake Forest University's Babcock Graduate School of Management.

"Overall, I'd say the North Carolina economy has a bright future, but the fact of the matter is, until the (complete downsizing) of these specific industries takes effect, this is what we're going to see."

Nationwide in 2003, the number of Americans living in poverty increased by 1.3 million while the ranks of the uninsured swelled by

1.4 million, the Census Bureau reported. It was the third straight annual increase for both categories.

The Census Bureau's definition of poverty varies by the size of the household. For instance, the threshold for a family of four is an annual income of \$18,810, while for two people it is \$12,015.

The data showed that North Carolina was one of only three states where the poverty rate measurably increased while income decreased in 2002-03. The other two were Texas and Illinois.

Shoemith said the numbers are among many indicators of the state's economic struggles.

Unemployment is another: Over the years included in the Census Bureau data, unemployment went from 3.3 percent in January 2000, to 4.4 percent in January 2001, to 7 percent in January 2002, and finally to 6.4 percent in January 2003.

The improving rate this year, from 5.8 percent in January to 5 percent in July, is deceptive, Shoemith said.

"What you really need to look at is the employed figure, not who's

unemployed," he said, noting that many jobless people either stop looking or drop out of the statistics due to the length of time they've been without a job.

He expects more bad news as the furniture industry continues to adjust to world competition. In the long run, Shoemith expects North Carolina's overall economy to rebound thanks to industries such as banking, technology, medicine and biotechnology.

"Once we get past that, I think there will be a lot of good news. The one missing piece to this whole process I'm not certain about is what happens to the workers that leave those manufacturing companies," he said.

Retraining is the best answer, Shoemith said, but for all those who head to community colleges or other job-specific class sites, there are others who resist the idea.

"Perhaps they don't think they need it, perhaps they have an attitude left over from the '70s where they think it's the government's job to provide for them or provide a market with plentiful jobs," he said.

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Have you ever wanted to be involved in the business side of publishing? Help the Yackety Yack, the yearbook of UNC, approve a contract, elect staff members and figure out a budget. Come by Suite 2415 in the Old Union to pick up an application. Applications are due on Tuesday, Sept. 7 by 5pm. If you have questions call our office 962-3912.

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