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A FOND FAREWELL

BY MAC MOLLISON
UNIVERSITY EDITOR

Sunday's Commencement ceremony captured the spirit of the Carolina experience for 5,377 graduates and tens of thousands of excited family members.

Wendy Kopp, founder of Teach for America, delivered the Commencement address.

Kopp emphasized the graduates' opportunities to achieve great things.

"You have been so privileged to attend such a rich and warm institution, one with such a strong ethos of achievement and service, and I know it has equipped you with the knowledge and the values to lead rewarding lives," she said. "It is inspiring to sense the potential in this stadium."

She also honed in on the importance of public service — a common theme throughout the graduation ceremony.

"The world needs your inexperience," she said.

"It needs you before you accept the status quo, before you are plagued by the knowledge of what is impossible."

Kopp's speech ended a long discussion among students that dated back to the November announcement of her selection as speaker. This week, many students — including student leaders — vocalized their disappointment in her speech.

Chancellor James Moeser has ultimate control over the Commencement speaker pick, though he

is advised by a committee of senior marshals.

"There's nothing we can do," said class of 2006 marshal Meghan Campbell. "It's pretty much at the whim of whatever the chancellor wants."

On a more personal note, Campbell added that she wasn't compelled by Kopp's address.

"I applaud her on her accomplishments and life," Campbell said. "But I felt like the speech was just her rattling off her accomplishments and how she's affected people."

Student Body President James Allred also expressed sentiments commonly held among students.

"I'm hoping for someone a little different next year," he said. "I think she focused almost exclusively on her own experience, and some students felt it wasn't tailored for them."

He noted several possibilities for improving the ceremony as a whole, including moving it to the Smith Center to avoid weather-related concerns.

Another possible change would

be to decrease the length of the ceremony — a move that would encourage graduates to pay attention to any speaker for the duration of an address.

At 96 minutes, Sunday's ceremony was the shortest in recorded Carolina history, Allred said.

"Nobody was paying attention," said graduate Shelley Basinger.

"I was really more impressed by Chancellor Moeser's speech at the end — just the way he really brought home the moment for us. He got up there and kind of saved

the graduation. He shouldn't have to do that."

Moeser quipped about Duke University's disappointment with the morning's Carolina blue sky and joined graduates in chanting the words "Tar Heels" during the climax of the ceremony.

"Graduates, this is my charge to you," he said. "Heed the magic. Drink one more time from the Old Well."

Earlier in the ceremony, the

SEE GRADUATION, PAGE 4



Above: Mother's Day signs dotted the sea of Carolina blue graduation robes worn by the class of 2006 at the Commencement ceremony held in Kenan Stadium on Sunday morning. Below: Graduate Brandon Henderickson gets sworn in as a second lieutenant while his family looks on by the Old Well.

DTH/GALEN CLARKE



Suspect's letters help explain crime

BY SHANNAN BOWEN
SENIOR WRITER

Before he became a Muslim intent on killing students at UNC, he attended Baptist Sunday school as a child and Catholic school in ninth grade.

Before he decided to attack, he'd wanted to go to graduate school to get his doctorate in clinical psychology.

And before he drove an SUV through the Pit on March 3, he'd wanted to join the military so he could drop a nuclear bomb over Washington, D.C.

Mohammad Taheri-Azar, a UNC alumnus now under a \$5.5 million bond in Raleigh's Central Prison, also writes in a letter to The Daily Tar Heel that he has no remorse for his actions and that he plans to plead not guilty at his first Superior Court appearance June 20.

In the past two weeks, Taheri-Azar has sent 20 letters to the DTH in response to one letter sent to him in March.

The letters contain his answers to 39 of the DTH's questions about his attack. They also include information that helps readers understand his mind-set and his motives for his actions — including facts about his biography, his family and his religious background.

Finally, they offer the most detailed account of his attack plans yet seen, including more information about why he chose an SUV and why he decided to turn himself in.

Plans for attack

The letters make clear what Taheri-Azar already has stated on multiple occasions: His faith led him to believe

SEE TAHERI-AZAR, PAGE 4

In his words

Mohammad Taheri-Azar writes about a variety of issues in the 20 letters he has sent The Daily Tar Heel since he was placed in jail.

On his goals: "My goal for the attack at UNC-CH on March 3, 2006 was to retaliate against United States taxpayers (which I also consider to be part of the government since their tax money keeps it in power) for their responsibility in the evictions, tortures and killings of Allah's followers in the Middle East and Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba."

On his education: "For the most part, I was aiming to follow in the footsteps of Muhammed Atta, one of the 9/11/01 hijackers, who obtained a doctorate degree just prior to 9/11/01."

On his weapon: "I was considering acquiring a handgun to suddenly open fire inside Lenoir Dining Hall, but decided against this plan because the gun may have malfunctioned and acquiring one would have attracted attention to me from the FBI in all likelihood."

On his conscience: "Due to my religious motivation for the attack, I feel no remorse and am proud to have carried it out in service of and obedience of Allah."

The Phi Gam fire and the DTH

CHRIS COLETTA
SUMMER EDITOR

Here's the main thing you need to know about this 600-word, front-page space in this, the first issue of the 2006 summer Daily Tar Heel:

It shouldn't be here.

My picture. The headline. All 600 words that I'm about to write.

The whole thing shouldn't be here.

But reality has a funny way of ignoring what should or should not be.

And reality tells us that 10 years ago

— May 12, 1996 — five living, breathing human beings stopped living and stopped

breathing when the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house went up in flames.

Three of them — Mark Strickland, Robert Weaver and Ben Woodruff — were fraternity members. Two others, Joanna Howell and Anne Smith, also died.

It happened on Mother's Day, which around these parts is always the same day as Commencement. The day is a double-whammy celebration of life, a paean both to those who birthed us and to the potential of every Carolina-blue blip in Kenan Stadium.

The devil, it seems, boasts a keen sense of irony.

Thankfully, the circumstances that led to the fire — a lack of sprinklers at Phi Gamma Delta — are no longer the modus operandi in Greek houses, which all have sprinklers and must undergo inspections. And a majority (though by no means a large majority) of residence halls also are equipped with the fire-

safety equipment.

We are thankful for these things, though, because five people died. Only in their passing did we recognize and solve the problem — and that's a hell of a way to troubleshoot.

Now, I was in middle school in Connecticut when the Phi Gam fire happened, and I've only the vaguest recollections of the day. But I also have a strange connection to one of the day's victims: Like Joanna Howell, I'm a journalism major from Cary who works for The Daily Tar Heel.

That's not easy to think about. Partly for all the reasons you would expect — it shatters the myth of collegiate invulnerability, for starters. But partly because I find it hard to come to terms with the fact that most UNC students probably don't know what happened 10

SEE FIRE, PAGE 4

Men's tennis team captures Sweet 16 bid

BY MATT BROOKS
STAFF WRITER

North Carolina men's tennis coach Sam Paul was soaked. But it wasn't the three-hour rain delay that had him dripping wet at the

MEN'S TENNIS

UNC 4 Paul had

Clemson 1 just received

UNC 4 a celebratory

SCSU 0 ice-water bath

after his No. 11 Tar Heels

advanced to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1993.

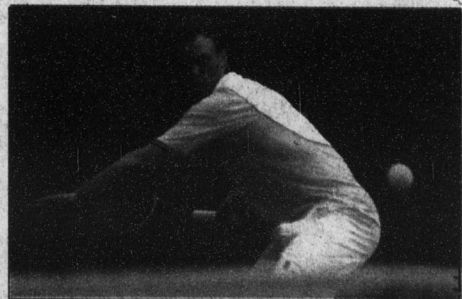
The Tar Heels (25-4) defeated

No. 24 Clemson (23-10) by a 4-1 score in a water-logged regional final Sunday in Chapel Hill.

By the time the clouds cleared after several sporadic showers, the Tar Heels clinched their first regional championship since the current tournament structure was instituted in 1994.

On March 25, then-No. 12 UNC had to rally to pull out a dramatic come-from-behind win against then-No. 10 Clemson after losing the doubles point. On Sunday, the team was determined to get off to a better start.

SEE TENNIS, PAGE 4



DTH FILE PHOTO/LARRY BAUM
UNC senior Derek Porter's play with teammate Sebastian Guejman was crucial for the Tar Heels on Sunday. The No. 3 doubles team won its match, giving UNC a crucial point.

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LATIN LOVERS The name's the most unique aspect of new Chili Peppers LP

LET'S GET POLITICAL An update on races for local and national offices

DOUBLE TRUE DTH blogs are the best; check our Web site this week for updates

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IT'S EDUCATIONAL

A trip through Wilson Library teaches attendees about the most unique collections at the most unique library at the University.

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'06: A MAGIC NUMBER

Seniors got treated to events such as the traditional Bell Tower climb — and a class speaker who raised eyebrows — before they left campus.

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BACK ON TRACK

After dropping a series to a tough Virginia team, the baseball squad beats UNC-G behind a strong performance from one of its young aces.

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