



NATHAN NYANJOM
A DIFFERENT ANGLE

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Driving 40 is a hard-earned privilege

It happened to me again Sunday.

After sleeping in and solving the breakfast question with a feast at Golden Corral, my friend made a should-have-waited right turn at a stop light, only to be rewarded with the cold-blooded karma that was a senior citizen cruise controlling at about 35 miles per hour.

40 miles per hour tops. Our banter should have been about his '94 Dodge Caravan's impending death and/or how long of a nap it would take to work off our five-pound meals, but the topic of discussion instead turned to this old man, his old car and his archaic driving speed.

The fact of the matter is that senior citizens not only have the privilege to drive slow here in the United States of America — they've earned it.

Almost every decade of our country's existence has seen armed conflict, and our grandparents' youth was no different.

It was their holistic involvement in numerous wars that now allows us here in 2008 to have the freedom we so take for granted. Naturally, the chief wars of World War II, Korea and Vietnam come to mind, but all senior citizens acted patriotically in some way, shape or form.

If our grandfathers and grandmothers weren't directly fighting in an American war or working for its wartime government, they were helping keep these efforts alive domestically, working in industries that either supported Uncle Sam's traveling army or helped the America that our parents grew up in to continue with as much normalcy as possible.

When we ask our parents what their favorite moments are from growing up — or when they tell us without warning — we are left feeling awkward, but our parents are usually left with fond and positive feelings: that first summer concert, a sporting event or their first school dance. However embarrassing they are, our parents' childhood memories of war are not their only memories, and we have senior citizens to thank for that.

And hey — maybe it's smarter to drive below the speed limit.

Dick Vitale and Martha Stewart notwithstanding, our elders are smarter than us. After all, driving slower does save gas, so while comedian Nick Swardson is right that senior citizens have the right to "Push 90 (mph) when they're 90," the majority choose to sacrifice this privilege, opting instead to be kinder to their wallets and the environment.

We can ask Nick for his take on Friday, when he and Will Ferrell will entertain those unable to stand at Dance Marathon for 24 hours straight.

Maybe this notion of environmental conservation explains why the popular activities of senior citizens are in fact so popular. Electricity isn't needed for Bingo, and Bridge only requires a deck of cards, stellar chat and an eight-hour block of time. Sure, bowling requires a bowling lane and the use of a computer-TV interface, but chances are good that those senior citizens in the far left lane will only need the computer to pencil in X's for their perfect games.

Senior citizens have the strongest claim of any in doing what they feel free to do, and while their driving might be questioned by those who have lived on this earth for fewer years, they should not be ridiculed.

If Mother Theresa or Yoda wanted to drink prune juice, wear suspenders and drive 40 miles per hour without the assistance of a seat cushion, we would not argue. The same restraint from questioning should be extended to all senior citizens, for they have earned their right to act with freedom, and have secured ours.

And quite frankly, my grandparents are way cooler than Yoda.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Don Wright, Palm Beach Post



Going, going, gone

Law school's move to Carolina North a good choice

Although it was originally deemed a research campus, UNC satellite campus Carolina North is now the future home of its first official academic unit: the School of Law.

The law school's move to Carolina North is a significant announcement, one that will be beneficial for the long-term future of UNC law.

Even if the existing building wasn't falling apart, a law school as prominent as UNC's inevitably would require building renovations and additions.

The current lot has no room for building additions or extra parking spaces, and law school orientations are forced to be held in the street because there isn't a room large enough to

hold the about 240 new students each year.

The new law building will offer an auditorium, extra offices for faculty and student groups, a larger library and most importantly room for expansion.

And out of all the graduate schools to make the transition to Carolina North, the law school is one of the best options.

Even with the school technically on campus, law students are not the most connected with undergraduate life.

Many graduate programs, such as history or religious studies, have teaching assistants who can be an invaluable resource to help with undergraduate classes.

Moving those TAs away from campus would be detrimental

to both the graduates and the undergraduates.

But the law school doesn't need to provide TAs for undergraduate classes, and busy law students don't make too much of an appearance outside of the school as is.

It is unfortunate, however, that undergraduates won't have as readily available access to speakers at the law school as they do now with it located on campus.

Also, any interdepartmental research could be hindered by a move away from campus.

But in the long run, the move won't change the identity of the law school, will allow room for growth and will be a benefit to both the law school and the University.

A grading dilemma

Schools should add pluses and minuses, not numbers

Anyone who recently applied to college knows how cutthroat the admissions process can be.

The struggle for a few spots at the nation's select universities can turn otherwise sane students into grade-grubbing, number-obsessed monsters.

In the battlefield of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, some vocal parents are clamoring for the district to change its grade reporting policy from letters to percentages.

Although improvements could be made to the way grades are reported, switching to a percentage system is unnecessary.

N.C. high schools are required to use a seven-point grading scale, such that 93 to 100 is an A, 85 to 92 a B and so on.

However, individual districts are allowed to choose between three options for reporting grades: letters, letters with pluses and minuses and percentages.

Percentages arguably give students the most distinction in the quality of their performance.

Some argue a student who earned 100 percent performed better than one who got 94 percent, but both transcripts would report the same letter grade.

Since grade point averages and class rank are major factors in college admissions, it makes sense that concerned parents would want to make their students stand out from the pack.

However, there are many problems with using a percentage system of reporting grades.

A numerical system would put even more emphasis on grades and achievement, thus dramatically increasing pressure on students to do well.

Class ranks are already a rat race, with students competing against each other for the highest GPA and the title of valedictorian.

Schools should be cultivating

a desire to learn the material, not to compete for a grade.

Percentages would also take away a teacher's ability to bump a student deemed deserving up an extra letter grade. For some, hard work should still be rewarded even if it doesn't always translate into a high score.

Plus, the letters are meant to indicate a range that constitutes a certain level of mastery of the material. Scores of both 95 and 100 indicate a strong understanding. The difference between them is negligible.

Nevertheless, a letter system with pluses and minuses would have the best of both worlds, reflecting some difference in performance without placing an undue burden on students.

To balance the concerns of parents with the realistic constraints of teacher and student needs, schools should keep one overriding concept in mind: It's about more than the numbers.

Super bad idea

Democratic Party's 'superdelegates' are undemocratic

This can't be what the Democratic Party hoped would happen this election year.

Before Tuesday's primaries in Wisconsin and Hawaii, a mere three delegates separated Barack Obama from Hillary Clinton in the race to secure the Democratic Party's nomination for president this year, according to The New York Times.

Although it is possible that either candidate could collect enough delegates in the remaining primaries to secure the nomination, it seems increasingly likely that the nominee will instead be decided by a group of 796 people known as "superdelegates" at the Democratic National Convention in August.

Unfortunately the mere presence of superdelegates in the nomination undermines the democratic process.

Unlike pledged delegates, who are bound to vote for a particular candidate based on primary results, superdelegates can vote for whomever they choose.

The superdelegates were created in 1982 with the intent of

helping the primary process produce more viable presidential candidates. The system was spearheaded in part by three prominent N.C. political figures: former Gov. Terry Sanford, former Gov. Jim Hunt and U.S. Rep. David Price, D-N.C.

But the superdelegate idea has proved to be rife with problems.

Perhaps most troubling is that superdelegates bring a decidedly undemocratic element to the primary process.

Having a group of party elites determine the nominee undermines the whole purpose of a primary, which is to allow voters of a particular party to pick the candidates of their choice. If the voters' wishes are going to be overridden by superdelegates in the end, that makes the voters irrelevant in the first place.

To further compound the problem, most of the superdelegates are politicians, including every Democratic member of Congress, as well as some governors and party icons.

While it might seem like a good idea to have politicians as

superdelegates, the results have been discouraging, as Obama and Clinton have been using every means at their disposal to court these people.

Because 2008 is an election year not just for the presidency but also for one-third of the Senate and the entire House of Representatives, many superdelegates are in the midst of running campaigns for reelection.

In an effort to swing these superdelegates to their side, Obama and Clinton have been donating money — more than \$900,000 in total between the two of them — to superdelegates' campaigns. That is not a healthy way for any party to choose its next candidate for president.

Presumably Democratic Party leaders are aiming for a large turnout in the election this year, but by thwarting the choices of primary voters, they risk alienating those who voted in the primaries and decreasing voter turnout.

If the Democratic Party is going to let voters choose their nominee for president, it needs to trust their choice.

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

"There's a huge gray area, and most of us live in the gray area. My view is (Albert Harris) exposed the gray area."

JOE TEMPLETON, FACULTY CHAIRMAN, ON COURSE DISCUSSION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To read the full-length versions
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UNC should ban farting, fix campus dining halls

TO THE EDITOR:

Forget the smoking and driving bans; I would like to propose a better, healthier and more productive ban: Let's ban flatulence. Yes, farting.

As a fifth-year senior in my 10th full semester, I have been at UNC longer than 98 percent of everyone reading this. Including summer school and leaving out "personal days," I've been on campus at least 1,200 days in my epic academic career.

That being said, I cannot remember one single time that a cigarette smoker ruined my day by puffing out little plumes of smoke.

However, I can tell many horror stories of fellow schoolmates whose irritable digestive system left a sour burn in my nasal passages causing me to: 1) trip on a brick, 2) use a bubble sheet instead of a blue book, or worst of all, 3) make Wednesday/Friday morning's nauseous hangover feel like the devil is using my stomach and head as a punching bag.

The problem doesn't stem from poor genetics involving a family history of indigestion. It comes from one of two places on campus: Lenoir or Rams Head.

The poor quality and deadly combinations of cheap meats and ranch dressing produces enough combustible gases in the human digestive tract to cause the Hindenburg pt. deux.

I haven't even mentioned the obesity pandemic running amuck in the U.S. If this university really wants to make a health-conscious decision, make the dining halls cleaner and better quality and quit smothering everything with ranch dressing and gravy.

And leave smokers alone; one man's right to clean air is another's right to puff on a cig. Just walk around them or hold your breath when you pass, similar tactics to avoiding a friend's silent-but-deadly.

Jason B. Newman
Senior
Mathematics

Boyz II Men was a really good choice for SpringFest

TO THE EDITOR:

I understand that "Party like it's 1999" (Feb. 18) was an opinion article, but I also have an opinion on the matter of Boyz II Men coming to campus.

I am completely STOKED. I think that bringing the group was ABSOLUTELY the best choice.

Sure, Homecoming brought two bands: Augustana (from which I know one song) and another band that I couldn't tell you the name of if I tried.

The concert planned by SpringFest is free for students and I haven't met a single student who isn't excited about taking the trip down memory lane.

If the concert was supposed to be representative of this past year, then Chris Brown would be coming. Obviously, that's not realistic, and I never thought that Boyz II Men would be either.

You can't please everyone, but I am definitely excited. Thank you SpringFest!

Holly Royer
Junior
Exercise and Sports Science

SPEAK OUT

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- ▶ Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- ▶ Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
- ▶ Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- ▶ Faculty/staff: Include your department and phone number.
- ▶ Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION:

- ▶ Drop-off: at our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union.
- ▶ E-mail: to editdesk@unc.edu
- ▶ Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

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Prohibition of concealed carry hurts campus safety

TO THE EDITOR:

Prohibiting concealed carry on college campuses violates human rights. The Northern Illinois University incident this week highlights the need for the government to legalize citizens to carry concealed firearms across educational institutions nationwide.

In North Carolina, concealed carry permit holders must be 21 years of age, take a certifying class and undergo a criminal background check and fingerprinting before receiving a permit; clearly, these are not cowboy gunslingers.

However, legislators believe that denying responsible citizens the human right of self defense is somehow a good thing. I'm sure 20 people in Illinois would disagree, as would 32 in Virginia.

Prohibitions on defensive firearms harm people, as laws tend not to stop outlaws such as Steven Kazmierczak and Seung-Hui Cho.

Maybe we should ban all guns (notwithstanding the Second Amendment). Clearly, we'd experience the widespread peace and happiness of the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994.

(It's) time to grant concealed carry permit holders the ability to legally defend themselves and others; further inaction merely perpetuates UNC undergraduates as 16,000 sitting ducks.

As for now, I'll have to buy one of the stickers claiming, "Don't shoot me! I'm unarmed," because campus police are able to provide adequate protection for 20,000-plus people 24/7.

John Houston
Senior
Spanish

Without change, American education is 'left behind'

TO THE EDITOR:

With respect to your "Education Programs Get Graded" (Feb. 15) article, it is apparent that maintaining a K-12 public education system focused on standardized testing and "having no child left behind" is not only counterproductive in giving all students a chance to succeed, but it also dilutes true learning.

For a number of years, education reform has received much attention in political discourse; yet those who profess the maintenance of the status quo are doing a great disservice to the future of our nation.

As foreign nations continue to pour additional resources into the implementation of more rigorous curriculums and increased teacher pay — both of which are necessary for the development of all children — the United States, by and large, appears unwilling to shed a public education ethos that was established in an agrarian society.

As trite as it sounds, those who refuse to change are also those who, time and again, truly get left behind.

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The Daily Tar Heel

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114 years
of editorial freedom

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