



CLINT JOHNSON
IN REAL TIME
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Support troops by listening to them

It's minutes before the 3 p.m. moment of silence on Memorial Day, and right now I'm willing to be anything but quiet.

Memorial Day has arrived, loaded again with tragic relevance.

President Bush stood at a podium earlier — embroiled in two wars and seeking a third — eloquently mourning our nation's dead soldiers, who number more than 4,500 between Afghanistan and Iraq.

At UNC, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" rings out from the Bell Tower, resounding through an empty campus.

Bush talks of democracy, of sacrifice. And the media talks of those who gave their lives in defense of freedom.

And only days ago, our Iraq veterans ascended the steps of Capitol Hill and spoke the truth about the horrors of occupation. During "Winter Soldier on the Hill," Congress heard the testimony of people such as Sgt. Jason Lemieux.

"I was ordered multiple times by commissioned officers and noncommissioned officers to shoot unarmed civilians if their

portable," Lemieux said, adding that sometimes weapons were "dropped" so as to make a civilian appear to be an insurgent.

At the event, arranged by Iraq Veterans Against the War, soldiers urged the government to begin an immediate withdrawal.

"Every day that the occupation continues, more men, women and children will be killed, maimed or forced to flee their country as refugees," said Kelly Dougherty, executive director of IVAW.

But Bush did not talk of these veterans. And the media did not report their stories.

The casualties of war extend beyond an American body count. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis and thousands of Afghans have died, with an indeterminate number wounded.

Thousands of our own soldiers have returned home as different people, scarred for life by their experiences.

Each week, 126 veterans commit suicide. Forty percent suffer from mental health problems, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. More than 150,000 are homeless.

Incredibly, our surviving soldiers are forgotten, mismanaged and ignored by the very institutions and individuals who clamor with such fervor that we must "Support the Troops."

The New York Times did not cover Winter Soldier because they said they prefer their own "on-scene accounts" to testimony "by organizations with strongly held political viewpoints about the war."

Meanwhile, the Veteran's Administration is so backlogged with claims — currently 600,000 — that the average claim takes a staggering 5.5 years to be resolved.

And what about the Commander in Chief?

He has come out against a new G.I. Bill of Rights that would improve education benefits for those who enlist, arguing that it gives too many advantages to those who serve brief stints.

In the meantime, he'll continue issuing stop-loss orders — provisions that allow the government to extend volunteers' service time beyond what they signed up for.

And, with the help of a deferent media, he'll argue his case for continued occupation — and expansion into Iran.

It's almost 3 p.m. now, and the Bell Tower chimes the tune of "America the Beautiful" to the peaceful campus streets.

We must ensure that Memorial Day ceremonies honor past sacrifices and don't resonate in the red sands of Iraq or atop the squalid hills of Afghanistan.

But for now, we should honor those who served and those who still serve by supporting them. And by listening to them.

It's time for a moment of silence.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Don Wright, The Palm Beach Post



Autopsy should stay sealed

Release of information could hinder legal process

More than two months have passed since the murder of Eve Carson, but our community still knows precious little about what happened that night.

We have memorized the basics — we did that in the first surreal days that followed March 5. And we have been inundated with the mug shots of the two suspects.

Yet the autopsy report — a crucial piece of the investigation — remains sealed from public eyes.

And, until Orange County District Attorney Jim Woodall says otherwise, it should stay that way.

In the interest of justice, we must ensure that the integrity of the case is not compromised by the premature release of the autopsy report.

A legal team for The (Raleigh) News & Observer has filed a motion for the records to

be unsealed, arguing that they are public record.

On June 11, Orange County Superior Court Judge Allen Baddour, who already has delayed a decision on the issue, will rule on whether the autopsy should be kept confidential.

The N&O, playing up its role as public servant, said it's in the people's interest for the documents to be released.

Their attorney, Michael Tadych, said it is a matter of public access.

Undoubtedly, the autopsy findings eventually should be opened, but what benefit would the community gain from having that information now?

The potential detriments are simply too costly.

Woodall argued, correctly, that public knowledge of the particulars of the case could compromise the prosecution's ability to line up reliable witnesses. And the same applies to

the defense.

To screen witnesses, attorneys test their knowledge of the facts of the case. It would not serve the community's interests to have a false witness — who had simply memorized the facts released by authorities — make it to trial.

And Woodall has said that he will release the records at the end of June.

In our anger and our grief, we have lost a sense of patience.

We are a community that has lost one of its brightest, and that makes our eagerness understandable.

But we are also a community raised in the era of O.J. Simpson, Scott Peterson and Court TV. We have become accustomed to instant gratification and total exposure.

We must step back and allow the legal process to work.

Besides, June isn't that far off.

Advising needs overhaul

Recommendations good steps for improving process

When they discuss the University's academic advising program, students draw from a rich lexicon of adjectives and expletives.

"Good" usually isn't part of that vocabulary.

Thus, it's surprising that the academic advising implementation committee, in a draft of their report, describes the system as "really quite good."

Really?

Despite this glaring rejection of reality, the recommendations of the committee should be welcomed with open arms.

But the potential changes also must be modified to better incorporate the needs of freshmen and sophomores.

Nevertheless, the committee displayed admirable tact with two ideas in particular.

First, they proposed scraping the advising "teams" and replacing them with three divisions: Fine Arts and Humanities, Natural/Health Sciences and Mathematics.

Every student would be assigned a single adviser. We know UNC loves sports, but

dividing advisers into "teams" was never a good idea.

A one-adviser-per-student arrangement allows a relationship of trust to develop. It enables the adviser to become familiar with a student's academic history, goals and needs.

And for the student, it makes the process of seeking advice less intimidating and less impersonal.

Second, the committee wants to establish a "comprehensive Web-based degree audit system." Working as a component of an already-underway Information Technology Services program, the audit program would have extensive capabilities.

Rather than having to trek down to the advising building, students would be able to log on and work through the advising minutia that clogs up our process.

For instance, students would be able to monitor their academic progress, examine "what if" scenarios with majors/minors, view lists of needed

courses and more.

If designed well, the program will free up advisers' time and help students gain a new level of self-sufficiency.

But it comes as part of an off-putting attitude by the committee in regard to students.

The committee comes close to explicitly blaming undergraduates for UNC's advising weaknesses.

Students obviously must take responsibility for their academic success, but the report itself acknowledges multiple faults on the part of advisers; including lack of availability, lack of knowledge about basic class requirements and lack of knowledge about departmental requirements.

And, surprisingly, the committee barely mentioned freshmen and sophomores. We should not underestimate the confusion and indecisiveness of the underclassmen.

Still, the committee's recommendations provide for notable improvement in the advising process and should be implemented.

Let voters own elections

Public financing will strengthen accountability

At a May 14 public hearing, the Chapel Hill Town Council and a crowd of concerned citizens debated the merits of publicly financed elections.

The "voter-owned elections" would provide public money to the campaigns of eligible local candidates.

Most of the attendees supported the proposal, but one notable dissenter denounced it as unnecessary.

First-term council member Matt Czajkowski said special interests are not a problem in Chapel Hill elections.

He's right.

But Czajkowski — the chief financial officer of a local biotech firm — had the ability to fund his own campaign with-

out having to accept cash from special interests.

And so council member Laurin Easton fired back at Czajkowski.

"Not everybody is as lucky as you are," she said.

She's right, too. When it comes to election financing, we're potentially looking at three types of candidates.

The first candidate, like Czajkowski, has enough money to bankroll his or her own electoral ambitions. This type of candidate is not beholden to special interests, but he or she also doesn't have a firm tie to the voters.

Candidate No. 2 doesn't have a big enough bank account to get elected; he or she relies on

donations to supplement the war chest. We know this person well. Candidate No. 2 is a panderer and a flatterer. He or she answers to the people with the big bucks.

Lastly, Candidate No. 3 uses public funds to get elected, drawing — in the case of Chapel Hill — from the town's general fund. Candidate No. 3 has to answer to the people. He or she can't afford not to. After all, they are the people filling the coffers.

Voter-owned elections — although not immediately necessary in our town — should be welcomed as a pre-emptive method for strengthening our democratic process.

And, most importantly, they'll set a positive example for the rest of the state.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"They've reflected the University's really incredible strength in a number of important areas."

STEPHEN FARMER, ADMISSIONS DIRECTOR, ON RANKINGS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Due to space constraints, letters are sometimes cut. Read the full-length versions online at the letters blog, or post your own response to a letter. VISIT// apps.dailytarheel.com/wpblogs/archives/category/letters

Chapel Hill must ensure student safety after dark

TO THE EDITOR:

I agree with Mr. Halpern (Town reacts to blue lights, May 15): this town is changing; it's being ruined!

However, the difference between Mr. Halpern and me is that he thinks that blue light projects are ruining the town, and I think that folks like Mr. Halpern are the ones doing the damage.

"What happened to stars being part of our evening walks?" he asks. Sir, I hardly think that two or three blue lights in the town would be able to completely block out your majestic view of the night sky come 7 p.m.

And our fellow alum Bret Dougherty? Your being "tired of seeing drunk kids" doesn't mean that blue lights can't go up. (Just so I'm sure I am understanding your argument: You're saying that by ensuring an important safety mechanism isn't put into place, college students won't get drunk and/or walk home in the dark? Interesting. Maybe next we should take away seat belts so that people won't speed.)

And anyway, I can guarantee you that these lights won't have any sort of scanner for student IDs that requires "kid-status" to use them. They're for all the residents of Chapel Hill, including yourself.

And, you know, let's not forget that this town's foundation lies in the University. Don't you think it's our duty to our current students

(and the residents, like you and me, who are here because of the University, too) to do a little more to ensure safety after dark?

Being sober does not imply being invincible. And frankly, Mr. Dougherty, I'd like to take you up on your offer to move out of the neighborhood, because I'm of the opinion that small communities like ours need to be supportive of all residents, student or otherwise, especially in the case of personal safety. I'll even help you pack.

Anna Tarleton Potter
Class of 2007

Clinton and Obama seek power above all else

TO THE EDITOR:

Americans are spellbound by the historic contest for the Democratic presidential nomination. Forgetting the political context, it is indeed something spectacular, even inspiring. A woman and a black man have reached a pinnacle that just a few years ago seemed impossibly far off.

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.
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 - **Send:** to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

But we can't forget the political context, and it's the nature of that context that should keep us from truly rejoicing.

When we strip away from the process they are engaged in the democratic mythology and red, white and blue bunting, we are left with the spectacle of two people vying for raw power. What they really want to do is rule — us.

This is a contest to determine who will decide how to spend a significant part of our incomes, who will make war or peace, and who will achieve his or her "vision" by manipulating us with carrots and sticks.

Obviously, the idea of what a president should be has changed radically. How much so is the subject of Gene Healy's new book, "The Cult of the Presidency: America's Dangerous Devotion to Executive Power."

"The chief executive of the United States is no longer a mere constitutional officer charged with faithful execution of the laws," Healy writes.

"He is a soul nourisher, a hope giver, a living American talisman against hurricanes, terrorism, economic downturns, and spiritual malaise ... He's also the Supreme Warlord of the Earth."

Lots of presidents have encouraged this way of thinking of the office, especially Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. But every man who held the office in the second half of the 20th century has done so. Maybe they thought it was necessary for the good of the country.

Some say that society today is too complex for Jeffersonian notions about freedom. On the contrary, the more complex society is, the more it needs government to stay out of its way.

More likely, those who have worked to inflate the office were driven by pure ambition.

President Bush has taken this up a notch with his Unitary Executive Theory, under which he can, on his own, invade and occupy countries, ignore congressional restrictions on his power, wiretap without a warrant, authorize CIA torture, send suspected terrorists to other countries to be tortured and hold people indefinitely without trial.

The presidency now has virtually open-ended powers.

This is the backdrop to the Democratic nomination. Neither candidate has condemned the blank-check presidency as a threat to the American people. Neither has pledged to forswear autocratic powers. Nor has John McCain.

As the great political philosopher Peter Townshend said, "Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss."

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The Daily Tar Heel

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115 years
of editorial freedom

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The Daily Tar Heel

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