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ONE IN A BILLION
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Beijing has given memories, lessons

I've been in Beijing for a month now, and it has been absolutely jam-packed with new experiences and instances of culture shock every single day. From meals replete with foods I never expected to consume (example: the accidental shot I took of fermented horse's milk) to everyone fondly asking me where I'm from and staring at my Indian self in the fascinated manner with which one would gaze upon a Dodo bird.

There's a quote by The Shins, "The years have seemed short, but the days go slowly by," and that definitely sums up my feelings on the crazy ways time has moved here.

And thus, time remains as mysterious to me as the success of "High School Musical" I and II. Reflecting, though, my favorite part of this trip so far has been the variety of experiences through which I've been able to share what I have to offer as an American college student, as well as learn more about Chinese culture.

Take, for example, my recent stint as a recording artist. My Web site's parent company is in charge of recording the government-issued "listening comprehension tests" for people who want to be English-Chinese translators, which is a nationally administered test such as the SAT. My boss thought I had a good voice for it, so she arranged for me to be a reader.

Last Monday, I spent about an hour and a half reading various sentences and passages into a microphone with an elderly British man named Geoff, and it now appears that my voice will be heard as an authoritative speaker of English by hundreds of Chinese test-takers in the near future. I can't believe I'm just like one of the voices on those listening comprehension tapes I used to despise in my high school Spanish class!

You really never know when you'll end up being when you grow up.

This cultural exchange works both ways, of course. One of the best meals I've had in this city so far was with the head of my company, who treated us to Beijing's specialty — Peking duck.

I'm typically not an adventurous eater (you should have seen my expression at the scorpions and centipedes cooked on sticks at the Dongzhimen night market), and I have an undying phobia of undercooked meat, so meals with people from my company slightly scare me since my fears are paired with the obligation to politely try everything.

I was alarmed at the start of the meal when the waiter brought out something in a plastic bag and showed it to my boss to "approve." The thing proceeded to jump because (drumroll please) ... it was a live fish. Twenty minutes later, said fish was steamed and on the table, and I swear it looked at me with beady reproachful eyes.

Who doesn't like to witness the cycle of life at lunch? I couldn't bring myself to eat him ... err, it. But luckily, this meal turned out to be excellent overall (all 12 dishes), and I loved the Peking duck. The place settings were so elaborate that I basically watched my boss the whole time to make sure I copied whatever he did with it.

These experiences have inspired in me an independence I've never known before. Every other time I've traveled to a new place, it's been softened by the presence of friends or family, but here, I feel so completely on my own.

I'm so eager to see who I am and what I bring home with me (lesson-wise, though the shopping bag's getting hefty as well) in August.

Oh yes, and in the spirit of cultural exchange, I'm thinking about being Mao for Halloween this year. A promiscuous Mao, of course.

Watch out, Franklin Street!

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Wayne Stayskal, Tribune Media Services



Welcome, Holden Thorp

New chancellor faces serious tasks, responsibilities

Greetings, Chancellor Holden Thorp! We're glad to have you at the helm, and we must congratulate you, as of July 1, for officially taking office. At 43, your career has been a model of upward mobility, and we're eager to see what you're capable of at this level.

And, of course, we'd like to extend a hearty "thank you" to James Moeser, who served the University for eight years and will be remembered well.

But let's get down to business. Mr. Thorp, we're sure you understand the magnitude of the job you've taken on. What you do here has effects everywhere.

Our actions as a university reflect not only this campus and the town of Chapel Hill, but also the state's university system and the Tar Heel state itself. Ultimately, we ask you to

keep North Carolina's interests at heart. Amid the multitude of tasks and challenges we're presented with, some stand out as the most pressing and the most crucial.

We look to you now to stand as a figure of strength and compassion as our community witnesses two suspects go through the legal process, charged with the murder of our beloved student body president, Eve Carson. Moeser comforted us in those first days in March, and we hope you will continue his work.

We need you to strike the right balance. With the economy struggling and the University in constant need of improvement and faculty retention, we need you to find a level ground on the issue of tuition.

With UNC growing, from increased freshman enrollment to Carolina North con-

struction, we need you to find a balance between providing an elite educational experience and enabling as many students as possible to access it.

And we ask that you not forget that development brings benefits, but also costs — aesthetically and environmentally. We need you to improve parking availability, so that students with cars can afford spaces nearby.

We need you to remember the little guy and the little girl. That means the gifted student who can't afford a UNC education. That means the janitors and the bus drivers and all the workers who keep this campus functioning, as well as those in our supply chain.

They say that you can assess a society's worth by noting how it treats those who are the least well-off.

We hope you'll keep that in mind.

America's reefer madness

Failed drug war produces high consumption, potency

American drug dealers and the Doritos board of executives must be ecstatic. A World Health Organization survey July 1 named the U.S. the world superpower when it comes to consuming marijuana and cocaine.

We even beat out the Netherlands, where you can go to a coffee shop, roll a joint and smoke it next to a police officer without repercussions.

About 42 percent of Americans admit having tried marijuana, while a little more than 16 percent say they have tried cocaine (almost four times the amount of the second-place country, New Zealand).

We should expect that our government will exploit this data to fuel its "War on Drugs" — a multi-billion dollar exercise in futility.

For instance, in June, a group funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse released findings that showed

marijuana had reached its highest potency ever — or at least in the three decades since it has been scientifically analyzed.

Researchers found the average marijuana sample contained more than double the amount of tetrahydrocannabinol (9.6 percent) found in similar tests in 1983.

The NIDA pounced on it. Its press release on the study came replete with fear-mongering rhetoric about how marijuana is the "gateway" drug and how the added strength could pose all sorts of harm.

"Particularly worrisome is the possibility that the more potent THC might be more effective at triggering the changes in the brain that can lead to addiction," said Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the NIDA.

But no link between high THC levels and addiction has been established, as Volkow concedes in the next breath.

Indeed, claims about the drug's dangers continue to be exaggerated or simply

unfounded. They are based on politics, not science. Unfortunately, a lie repeated often enough can become truth to many people.

As several doctors have already pointed out, increased marijuana potency does not imply increased harm. If strength increases, smokers simply adapt and smoke less.

Drug officials in the U.S. should consider the meaning of these two developments — the high rate of drug use and the increased potency.

These statistics suggest that the "War on Drugs" has failed and should not continue to be a drain on this country's resources.

But so long as organizations such as the NIDA produce dishonest conclusions, that cannot be the case.

The group's stated goal is to "lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction."

It's no surprise that their work can hardly be distinguished from propaganda.

Town rule wastes housing

Only allows four unrelated tenants per lease

Some anachronistic laws are so ludicrous and antiquated that we can't help but laugh at them.

For instance, in the United Kingdom, a pregnant woman can legally urinate anywhere, including in public. She can also request to use a policeman's helmet as a chamber pot.

But some regulations don't satisfy our sense of humor. Instead, they just strike us as foolish.

In Chapel Hill, for instance, the Town Code states that no more than four unrelated people can live together in the same house. They must be bound by "blood, adoption, marriage or domestic partnership."

And, unlike the U.K. law, it is actually enforced.

It's not that houses in Chapel Hill are built for only four people; the town's motivations lie elsewhere.

Complaints by neighboring residents about "vehicles being parked in the yards and garbage accumulating" are cited as reasons for the ban, as well as concerns about disturbances.

These grievances, while understandable, do not merit keeping this regulation on the books. They are symptomatic of many residents' antagonism with UNC students.

Indeed, many of the students affected by this ordinance were "told on" by neighbors who saw the houses being used by more than four people.

But problems such as noise

violations can come from four people as easily as they can come from six people. It's the type of neighbor that matters most.

Predictably, this regulation hikes up the cost of rent in town.

It makes four people split the cost of renting houses that were intended to accommodate perhaps five or six tenants. The subsequent lack of prime-location available housing in Chapel Hill also allows landlords to charge more.

And it is an obvious waste of space and energy. Spreading people out means more gas and electricity will be consumed, and it means more land will be used building unneeded homes.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

"There's a great history that goes with this place. ... It's a great, great traditional program."

TONY FLORKOWSKI, ESPN PRODUCER, ON UNC BASKETBALL

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

UNC police should secure Chatham park and ride lots

TO THE EDITOR: As all readers are aware, the park and ride lots are sites of crime. My wife's Honda Element was one of the cars which was targeted for a catalytic converter last week at the Chatham County park and ride lot.

Insurance had to pay \$1,800 for the repair and replacement! Such theft has been occurring for more than one year. Besides monetary concerns, the issue is one of responsibility for the safety of lives and property, especially at our park and ride.

Women and all other riders are concerned that there is no security in place at our location. Cameras will not stop anyone from stealing or breaking into automobiles or committing some worse crime. Only on-site employees will hinder illegal activity.

There are additional issues:

1. Who is responsible for security? It appears that while the park and ride lot is in Chatham County, the Chatham Sheriff's Office is not responsible. Only the University police have that responsibility.
- This is unfortunate due to the distance of the lot from campus. Also, it took three phone calls to report the crime and, in addition, each law enforcement office (Chatham, Orange County and UNC) told me at first that the lot was not in their jurisdiction.
- There needs to be better communication between offices.
2. While the expense of a full-time employee at all park and ride lots would be high, the alternative possibility could be something far worse — namely, bodily harm or something more ominous to commuters.
- The University should keep its "eye on the prize" — namely the safety of its faithful students, staff and faculty.

Richard Falvo, Chatham County Park and Ride User
Adjunct Professor
School of Medicine

Pa'lante grateful to locals for successful celebration

TO THE EDITOR: At Pa'lante's celebration of Latino high school graduates last month, a young man encouraged his younger peers.

"Even if you think you'll never get English, keep trying, because you will get it eventually. And keep studying until you graduate, because it's not that hard after all. And standing here ready to graduate feels really good."

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.

The Daily Tar Heel

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