

ELECTION 2008

Obama win prompts Franklin St. rush

BY NATE HEWITT
FEATURES EDITOR

Unsuspecting traffic slammed on brakes Tuesday night, including a screeching P2P bus, halting to thousands of students flocking to the corner of Franklin and Columbia streets.

But instead of being annoyed, many vehicles honked their horns in approval.

"This is a moment that we are going to remember for the rest of our lives, and we got to be a part of it," senior Chloe Bacon said while jumping up and down on Franklin.

Blue-lit police cars sped up to part the mounds of enthusiasts to the street sides, but the crowds soon resumed bumping chests and high-fiving in front of eager vehicles.

Students screamed and cheered and hugged each other, but at the sound of Barack Obama's voice, the crowd fell silent. A man holding up a boom box allowed the revelers to hear Obama's victory speech.

"I can't even say anything," said Patrick Turner, a 2008 graduate. "In first grade they told us we wouldn't see a black president in our lifetime."

Junior psychology major Heather Hall said she had never rushed Franklin Street.

But she had her first chance to rush when she joined others chanting "USA," "Yes We Can" and "Yes We Did."

"It's not like I'm not a basketball fan — I just haven't had the chance," she said.

Hall started her Tuesday evening eating pizza and sipping beer while glued to CNN's coverage of the 2008 presidential election.

"I'm here to see the polls come in and hopefully see Obama win," Hall said. "If Obama wins I'm definitely rushing Franklin, but if McCain

wins I'm flying to Canada."

While Tuesday was the first time most undergraduates had the opportunity to vote for president, it was a point of redemption for others.

First-year medical student Lindsay Foley said she was excited about this election because it was the first time she may have had an impact on the victor.

Foley, who earned her undergraduate degree from UNC last spring, voted for Sen. John Kerry in the 2004 election. It was the first year she was eligible to vote.

Just after the results from Vermont and Kentucky were projected at about 7 p.m., Foley said she had high hopes for Obama but was not getting her hopes up just yet.

"In the bubble of Chapel Hill, of course we think he's going to win," she said. "But you never know. There's still a chance."

Although people of all ages were eating dinner and enjoying drinks along Franklin, most sported Obama buttons, T-shirts and stickers. McCain supporters were scarce.

"I've seen a lot more people parading around with McCain stickers today," Hall said. "I don't know where they are. I felt like a lot of people would be out even if they are voting for McCain."

The UNC School of Law chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union hosted a nonpartisan scholarship fundraiser at Mansion 462.

"Of course there are plenty Republicans in the law school," said Michael Gordon, a first-year law student.

"I tried to get them to come out, but some either said they lived too far away to come or didn't want to be around a bunch of liberals."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

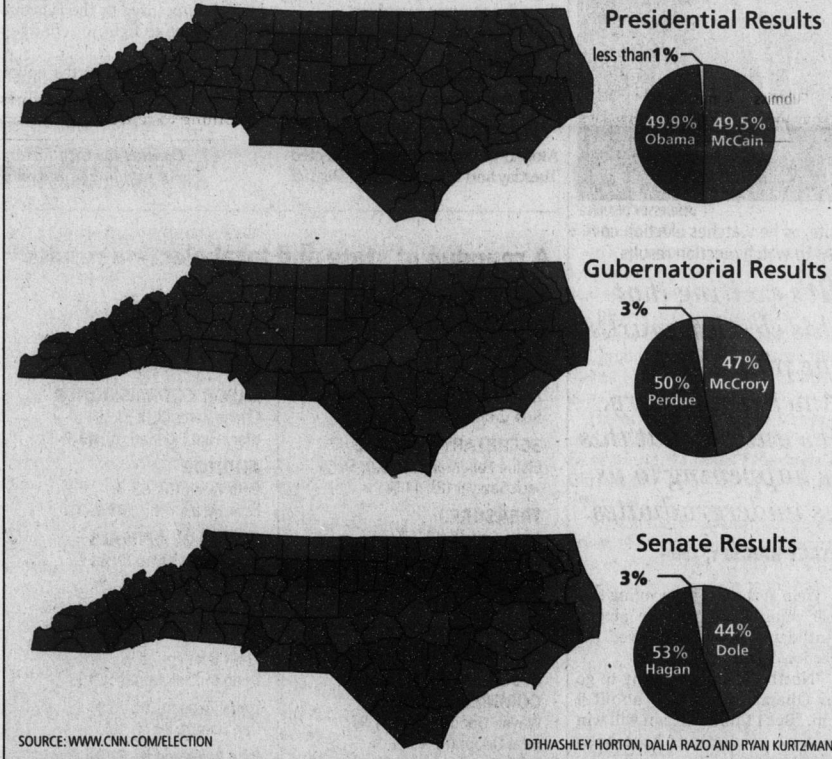


DTH/JESSE DEARING

Students celebrate right after Sen. Barack Obama wins the presidential election. "This is the only riot I've been in on Franklin Street where people are chanting 'USA' and singing 'The Star-Spangled Banner,'" said Frank Sturges, a senior philosophy and political science major. "It's just beautiful."

North Carolina Election Day Results

as of 12:30a.m.



Election Day turnout slim

Early voting eclipses Tuesday numbers

BY KATY MCCOY
STAFF WRITER

The biggest problem Orange County polling places faced on Election Day was boredom.

That was the general consensus at the Orange County Board of Elections headquarters on East King Street in Hillsborough.

Volunteer Melvin Beasley, of Cedar Grove, acted as a rover, visiting various polling places as needed.

"There were no long waits," Beasley said, adding that unimpressive turnout on Election Day was probably due to a high number of early-voting ballots.

In Orange County, 74,920 total ballots were cast in the general election — 71 percent of registered voters. About 55,000 of those came from one-stop early voting and absentee ballots.

For many polling sites in Orange County, excitement for poll workers was pretty limited.

The Westwood polling place saw only 195 ballots cast from 1,701 registered voters.

Polling sites at Union Grove Methodist Church, Smith Middle School, Mary Scroggs Elementary

School and others reported having little to no lines to vote at times.

Battle Park polling place had no one show up to vote before noon, said Tracy Reams, director of the Orange County Board of Elections.

Billie Cox, the board's chairwoman, said because of a change in the law regarding mail-in ballots since 2004, county workers could begin the 20-hour process of counting and checking mail-in and absentee ballots early.

This meant the turnout numbers were available by the time the polls closed Tuesday.

She suggested the county include miniature games in the packets for polling place officials to keep them occupied.

The county did not implement her suggestion.

"One of our poll workers asked if we could bring a poker deck by," said John Felton, an elections board member and retired chemist.

"We had about three hours this afternoon of good hard detail work: counting, tabulating and cross checking to make sure the

counts were right."

But low turnout doesn't mean voting numbers were low this year.

Although Aldersgate Methodist Church in Chapel Hill wasn't packed Tuesday afternoon, Kings Mill precinct members still voted in record numbers.

Only 45 voters shy of the 80 percent voter turnout mark at 3:30 p.m., this year will be a record showing for the precinct, said Roberta Black, chief judge for the precinct.

Cindy Brantley, who works for Durham County but has filled in for the Orange County elections board the past three years, said Tuesday's process went smoothly because officials were very well prepared.

"They have a good manual for precinct officials and were staffed well," she said.

Brantley spoke with voters and precinct officials all day. While she didn't hear many complaints from voters, she said some residents attempted to vote only to discover that they weren't registered.

Staff Writers Leah Hughes and Hillary Rose Owens contributed reporting.

Contact the State and National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

Roundup of the SWING states

as of 12:30a.m.

