

Stewart not at fault

As giggles and jokes about the great Wilmington earthquake recede, earthquake phenomena returns to the news as a small tremor, measuring from 3.7 to 4.0 on the 10 point Richter scale, struck eastern Kentucky early Monday morning.

The small quake had its epicenter near Harlan, Ky., a small coal town which has been rocked more in its history by savage coal wars and extended miners' strikes than by geophysical actions.

We can only hope that the larger lessons of UNC Geologist David Stewart will not be lost in relieved "I told you so's" or wonderings about how an earthquake could miss Wilmington and end up two days later in Kentucky at half its expected strength.

What Dr. Stewart has attempted to do, at some peril to his own professional standing, is to demonstrate the risks of seismic movement in the Wilmington area. The risks manifest themselves in ground swelling, tidal gauge and water pressure data gathered by governmental agencies and analyzed by Dr. Stewart and two other geologists. This data convinced the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to require installation of seismic monitoring equipment at a nuclear plant near Wilmington. The psychic prediction of Clarisa Bernhardt that an earthquake would strike that area Saturday was close enough to generalized information about area geology that it concerned Dr. Stewart and the U.S. Geological Survey. Stewart released the information to the public. The U.S. Geological Survey contacted him to prepare a description of possible effects and to record certain information for them should the quake occur.

The quake did not occur. But rash generalizations about the stability of that coastal region or about the lack of any seismic risk should not be

justified by the failure of the predicted earthquake to occur. The geological data, upon which Dr. Stewart based his prognosis of a major earthquake near Wilmington in the next decade, has not been refuted or rejected by the inaccuracy of a psychic's prediction.

Bernhardt has part of the protection enjoyed by the oracle of Delphi. That ancient seer always answered in riddles or ambiguities so that, no matter what actually transpired in future days, the oracle would appear in retrospect to have been right. Bernhardt has the ambiguity of a 365 day prediction to protect her, for her first prediction was that an earthquake would occur sometime in 1976, after which she picked January 17 as a likely date. Even that date was predicted with a three day before-or-after cushion. The third day after is today.

But Bernhardt is gone, and she will not bear the brunt of critical comment. However, Dr. Stewart remains in the Tar Heel state, in an academic department in which seventeen associates repudiated the psychic's claim in such a way as to distance themselves from their colleague. We must remember that at no point did Dr. Stewart endorse the Bernhardt prediction as accurate or probable; he only labelled it as significant in that it coincided with more generalized scientific data and that Bernhardt had some kind of success (still disputed) in previous predictions. Dr. Stewart felt that under these circumstances, the people of Wilmington should be given the available information and decide for themselves what they should do, if anything. Because the prediction was discussed at length among scientists and in the media, individuals assessed the risks, made orderly decisions and no one was hurt.

For his democratic sensitivities, Dr. Stewart is to be commended.

Art Eisenstadt

Playing politics with the utilities

Those local experts who predicted that the new Chapel Hill Board of Aldermen would be among the most intelligent, hard-working and controversial in the town's history are turning out to be correct.

The board's decision last week to replace Chapel Hill's three appointees on the Orange Water and Sewer Authority—with themselves—raises some questions as to how much the aldermen are concerned with the town's welfare in relation to their own power.

Mayor Jimmy Wallace, who, along with Carrboro Mayor Ruth West and Orange County Commissioners Chairperson Flo Garrett, first suggested the move Jan. 5, has said that having elected officials on the authority rather than appointed ones would make it more responsive to the public.

Perhaps—using the literal sense of the word "responsive." But for practical purposes, the shuffle will not make the authority any more responsive than it was before the move.

The previous members of the authority—James Lamb, Sid Rancer and John McKey—were appointed by and responsible to the Board of Aldermen. They served on a public body, one that is required to conduct its business in public under North Carolina law. According to the authority's charter, three members apiece could be removed at any time, for any reason, by the governing boards of Chapel Hill, Carrboro or Orange County.

Thus, the aldermen's action was certainly not illegal and technically not improper.

But the move raises two disturbing questions.

Fresh water and wastewater treatment and planning is a major issue today in growing communities such as Chapel Hill. A variety of factors—supply and source, chemical treatment,

environmental standards, energy efficiency, population growth and changing technology—make it essential that the authority members have both a certain amount of professional expertise and a responsive attitude.

This expertise was partially provided by Lamb, an environmental sciences professor and chairperson of the authority before being fired. Rancer, treasurer of the group, also demonstrated a knowledge of water and sewage treatment, plus had the advantage of serving two years on the Board of Aldermen.

Can the new members—Aldermen Shirley Marshall, Robert Epting and Jonathan Howes show us the same level of expertise? Probably not.

Perhaps more seriously, the board

opened itself up for criticism on the charge of playing politics with a public utility.

Marshall, Epting and Howes deserve great respect. But it is not understood why they, with their other aldermanic duties and regular jobs, would bring any more public awareness to the authority than already existed.

One alderman, Gerry Cohen, has said that he did not see any advantages in having aldermen on the authority rather than private citizens, but said he voted for the move since it apparently would make the authority more palatable to the other aldermen.

The board's feeling could have been made known through its appointive and dismissal powers, short of appointing three of its own members. It could have

required monthly reports from authority members, as the Carrboro Board of Aldermen does. The board is apparently wary of trusting any organization in which it is not directly involved.

The board has replaced known expertise with unknown entities. No one has shown how the authority's work will be any more in the public interest than it was before.

Maybe the aldermen did trade something for something else of equal value, but the chances are that it gave up more than it gained.

Why make deals like that?

Art Eisenstadt, a junior journalism major from Huntingdon Valley, Pa., is news editor of the *Daily Tar Heel*.



letters

Yet another idea for drop-add

To the editor:

Drop-add aggravates everyone. So at the risk of absurdity I will nonetheless venture the following proposal. Who knows? Student government might even leave off lawsuits and cannibalistic dirt-dealing among its officers for a day or two and mount a monster petition campaign to get things fixed up at Hanes Hall. (You can see I am a utopian all through.)

(1) Class cards will not be given out at registration. They will be distributed not earlier than the third or even the fourth actual class meeting, by the instructor, in the class itself. Pre-registered students will have first priority if demands for places exceeds the supply; students on the waiting list (see below) next, in order of their priority; and thereafter cards will be distributed on any basis the instructor finds appropriate or justifiable—for example, to graduating seniors, non-majors, students with certain other courses currently or behind them, majors, persons taller than six feet, flirtatious young women, whatever. Drop-add would cease to exist.

(2) Pre-registration will exist solely to produce complete lists of all students who would like to enroll in a given course or section, not (as now) to make up fictitious class lists and then merely close out all but the first X students who list it. As everyone knows, classes which are supposedly full, and for which supposedly no cards any longer exist, nevertheless are often not full at all.

(4) During the first week or more of classes shopping would rampant, chaos everywhere. Any why not? Students could attend any class on a trial basis which interested them being neither registered or not registered for it, rather than spend much of their time in drop-add lines. Those who were still around after three or four actual meetings, starting with those wise enough to have pre-registered, would receive the class cards, for of course they are the only ones who actually need or want them. Three weeks into the semester students would take their final cards to Hanes Hall and that would be it.

This scheme appears to me less ludicrous than it seems when I recall that it was the one used at the University of California when I was an undergraduate there and that even then Berkeley had more students to manage than UNC has now. I never had to stand in a drop-add line and I don't see why my students should have to either. Or rather I do see. Hanes Hall is simply wedded to a very lousy computer program for the whole affair of registration and has not so far had applied to it either the pressure or the funds necessary to get rid of it. Enrolling in classes was trivially easy at Berkeley. Why isn't it equally so here? Perhaps making it that way will appear to student government a project worth taking up between lawsuits this semester. I think everyone hopes so.

Roger G. Swearingen
English Dept.

Preserving Carr

To the editor:

An alien biologist studying life here on the planet Earth would probably classify Tom Carr ("They're lurking everywhere," Jan. 15) as a member of the human species, a highly-developed, bipedal primate with binocular stereoscopic vision, an omnivorous diet (albeit with a predilection for carnivorousness), a vertebrate with a single modification of the ganglionic net (or brain) and capable of rational or at least semi-rational thought. Our hypothetical extraterrestrial biologist would assume that, like most planets and almost all animals, especially humans, Mr. Carr would be a

sexually-reproducing organism. Indeed, he would assume that Mr. Carr would share, along with the immeasurable majority of humans throughout their species' history on this planet, complex socio-sexual behaviors that would deeply undermine his culture, his society and his thought with the obvious goal of being able to fulfill his natural biological role in the perpetuation of his kind. Carrying this bit of science-fiction a little further, however, and granting our alien scientist knowledge of human languages and access to the *DTH*, he would then be surprised. Mr. Carr is not a typical human being. In fact, Mr. Carr's beliefs might even lead our extraterrestrial to wonder if Mr. Carr is indeed a member of the human species, for Mr. Carr's socio-sexual behaviors are completely opposite from what they should be.

Now, being a rational creature, our alien biologist would seek to determine why Mr. Carr believes and behaves the way he does. But, being rational, the very irrational explanation that Mr. Carr would be likely to present probably would not even occur to the extraterrestrial. That Mr. Carr would actually prefer what might be called "sexual" relations with members of his own sex would appear so wholly irrational to our hypothetical alien that he might even consider the notion absurd. (*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines "sex" as "anything connected with sexual gratification or reproduction; especially the attraction of one sex for the other.") They key work here for Mr. Carr would no doubt be "gratification"; however, one wonders how such "gratification" could help but be linked with reproduction, especially in light of the fact that our complex socio-sexual behaviors, in particular the concept of sexual gratification, evolved for the purposes of insuring pair-bonding between the two sexes and thus reproduction. Gratification without reproduction, or vice versa, would be hard to conceive, and this is why I shy at labelling Mr. Carr's activities as strictly "sexual." Yet this would be Mr. Carr's answer to the alien biologist.

Undaunted, our ardent extraterrestrial would still seek for a more logical explanation for Mr. Carr's behavior, and, with careful study of the history of the human species and its present state of overpopulation and its overindulgence in the planet's natural resources, he might draw several conclusions. He might hypothesize that Mr. Carr is a noble, but doomed, member of his species. Obviously, Mr. Carr has, of his own choice, denied himself of the ability to reproduce his species and is, in effect, contributing his own solution to the population problem on Earth. Indeed, the entire "gay movement" might thus appear to be a massive self-sacrifice on the part of certain deviant humans for the betterment of their species, giving up their natural inheritance so that the rest of mankind would not overpopulate itself to extinction.

And, too, it would seem likely to our alien that an individual such as Mr. Carr (or any of his fellow "gays"), who would consciously violate the laws of evolution and of his species, would not have much adaptive survival potential and both he and his society would benefit from his eventual extinction, as he would no longer be compelled to engage in maladaptive deviant behavior and would leave no descendants to further plague his society. An insectal intelligence might, perhaps, even classify Mr. Carr as a "drone," or the equivalent in its society, except that such "drones" would not be

capable of any sexual desire, lacking, as they would, the biological equipment necessary to elicit such emotion. In all likelihood, though, any alien intelligence would classify Mr. Carr as one of a minority of aberrant human beings whose sexual preferences have somehow been altered to the opposite of the norm, and whether out of noble self-sacrifice or general stupidity, it could not rationally determine. At any rate, Earthly human "gays" are probably pretty rare in the universe, a sort of peculiar deviance in what is no doubt a fairly common life-form throughout the cosmos. Perhaps we should preserve Mr. Carr in formaldehyde for future biological study. Certainly, we should examine this curious and deviant phenomenon more carefully and objectively in the future than we have in the past few years.

Hank Parnell
622 Ehringhaus

More on smoking

To the editor:

In response to Jennings' letter appearing in the *DTH* on January 19 entitled "In Defense of Smoking," I would argue that smoking in the classroom cannot be defended because it is a hazard to the non-smoker as well as the smoker. The smoking ban is not an unjustified restriction on the rights of the smoker; rather, it provides a safer and more comfortable classroom situation for the non-smoker.

Fortunately, the majority of students at Carolina do not smoke in classrooms. As stated in the Faculty Council Resolution, nearly 80% of the 3,535 students voted for the smoking ban. 3,535 students is a good turnout relative to other referendum votes. With such an overwhelming majority in favor of the smoking ban, it is reasonable to assume that in a vote of all students, the majority would still favor the smoking ban. The vote in the Faculty Council meeting was 59 for and 5 against, which indicates enthusiastic support by the faculty as well.

Although many smokers will admit that cigarette smoke is irritating to their eyes, they are not willing to give up the privilege to smoke in a confined classroom situation. If classrooms had better ventilation, the problem might not be as severe; however, overcrowded classes and small rooms are typical at Carolina. In these confined classroom situations, non-smokers as well as smokers suffer from eye irritation, which is caused by ammonia gas in cigarette smoke. The 1975 Report of the Surgeon General documents the claim that smoke irritates the eyes. Research studies in the report show that cigarette smoke also irritates the bronchial passages. Other complications which non-smokers encounter are dizziness, headaches and nausea.

To clarify an erroneous fact purported by Jennings that the harmful ingredient in cigarettes is insecticide, I would cite a medically-proven fact that tar, not insecticide, is the hazardous element. Further, Jennings' claim that the smoking ban has the "underlying goal of legislating morality" is not valid. Medical reasons initiated the campaign for a smoking ban. The smoking ban protects the health of the non-smoker in the confined classroom situation and provides for a more compatible environment for learning.

Barbara Tuttle
736 Morrison

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In pursuit of truth, knowledge

The nucleus of any university or educational institution is the pursuit of knowledge—true knowledge; this applies to all fields of study, whether they be the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences. Acceptance of this premise, along with the statement that the University of North Carolina is indeed a university, necessitates the conclusion that the goal of all those constituting this university is the attainment and application of real knowledge. However, a question remains as to the circumference of our studies in this pursuit. Are they to stop at the stone wall on Franklin Street? Or at the boundaries of the campus bus routes? Are we to alienate our endeavors from the issues surrounding us?

Many pedantic scholars may answer affirmatively to these questions but I dare say that, given today's integrated and intricate social structure, we cannot afford to nullify the actions surrounding us. But we, as students, do. We, as pedants, often fail to coordinate our learned knowledge with the conditions and situations around us. And these conditions and situations will encompass and engulf our talents after we leave the university unless they are included in our quest for true consciousness.

An example of this languor among the students can be observed with regard to what many refer to as the women's

movement. Presently, in Chapel Hill, an effort is underway to establish a commission on the status of women in Orange County; although the University's Association for Women Students is fulfilling a vital part in this study (along with other local women's organizations) the number of students actually participating in learning exactly what the needs and roles of women are in the area is very small. But although the percentage of students participating is low, the most devastating aspect of this negligence are the potential resources left inert due to their unwillingness to place themselves outside of immediate academia.

This lack of involvement in area affairs is in itself antithetical to the principles of each conscientious student; they are alienating themselves from perceptions and awarenesses which will undoubtedly play a formidable role in their futures—both educationally and personally. It is not only through the women's issue that this societal disregard can be observed; it can also be noted in areas such as politics, social services, ecological concerns and senior citizen's programs. However, the example given is one of the most evident and potent issues surrounding the university and society today. Therefore it was chosen to exemplify the question of whether we students are indeed students, or rather merely persons

tentatively involved in the structured strata of education.

With such a situation, one must re-examine the goals and procedures involved in obtaining an education; indeed, one must question the definition of education itself. Is it solely for the attainment of future rewards? Future knowledge? Future quests? Or is the learning process exactly that—a process—where one gathers all available information and thought to integrate it with himself and his individual talents, thus producing a new understanding of the macrocosm?

If this latter assertion is accepted then it is for each student to seek his own enlightenment at the University—through his professors, his classmates and the community which he inhabits, for the procurement of true knowledge is impossible unless one seeks to discover truth in the elements of society as well as within the realm of institutional education. However, when one chooses instead to alienate or condone ignorance, the student at the University of North Carolina ceases to be a scholar; rather, he merely becomes a stagnant element perpetuating an inert society.

Sallie Shuping is a junior political science/English major from Greensboro.