

# Perspective

## Droughts not new to Chapel Hill; inadequate storage, poor planning cited as culprits behind problem

By NANCY HARTIS

Water shortages of varying intensity are recurring events in the Chapel Hill-Carrboro area, beginning as long ago as 1921, 1952 and 1954. In fact, in the past nine years, Chapel Hill and Carrboro have experienced six droughts.

Of the more recent droughts, the worst occurred in 1968, the same year that an emergency pipeline to Durham's water supply was hastily constructed to save dehydrated Chapel Hill.

Like this year's and last year's droughts, the water shortage in 1968 began during a dry July and steadily worsened. Although the lake level in August 1968 was more than ten inches higher than the present level, University officials at the time considered the possibility of suspending classes until the situation improved.

Part of the reason such a drastic step was considered was the absence of the pipeline from Durham at the time; also, there were no

The 1968 drought dragged on until cooler weather and fall rains combined to refill a bedraggled University Lake.

The University, owner of the water supply at the time, reacted to the 1968 drought by building an emergency pipeline to Durham and extended the lake's level by putting boards by the dam and raising the top of the dam, according to Robert Peake, Director of Utilities.

Peake said a study was made that year to find a permanent secondary water source for the area, and of the possibilities, the construction of a dam in Cane Creek was agreed on as the best choice.

A consultant hired by the University in 1968 concluded that the root of Chapel Hill's water problems was "inadequate storage."

Since 1968, no significant improvements have been made to the water supply, even though there have been five water shortages since then, and it may take as long as four years before Chapel Hill and Carrboro residents are assured of an adequate, year-round supply of water.

was in no danger of having a water shortage like the one in 1968, although he admitted, "Very little has been done to correct the town's water needs since the big shortage back in 1968."

The 1976 drought almost proved Culbreth wrong in his prediction that a 1968 water crisis wouldn't happen again; dry weather and increased consumption resulted in a drought that lasted from August to January.

The extremely dry summer of 1976 followed by an influx of 20,000 plus students (compared to 16,200 in 1968) led to the purchase of more water from Durham; city ordinances were passed prohibiting all unnecessary uses of water under penalty; the University even considered holding Carolina football games in Duke's stadium to save what was left of University Lake from thirsty fans.

Showers were cut off in Woolen Gym, fountain soft drinks were unavailable, paper plates and plastic cutlery were used in lieu of washable utensils, air conditioning was cut off in the Union, Undergraduate library and anywhere else water dependent cooling systems were used.

Students this fall can expect more of the same; this year's water shortage is even more critical than last year's. For example, last year on August 13, the lake level was 49 inches below the top of the dam; on August 12, 1977, the lake level was 82.5 inches below the dam's top.

Droughts in Chapel Hill and Carrboro have become dangerously redundant since 1968 this year has been no exception. Despite sharp criticism leveled at University officials, the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA, present owner of the water utility) and city and county government officials, no one seems to be willing to take the blame.

Authorities insist the issue is complex and no one party can be morally held at fault for the perpetual thirst Chapel Hill experiences year after year.



Staff photo by L. C. Barbour

### Droughts' Reasons

A lack of rainfall and increased yearly consumption are, according to Peake, the reasons for Chapel Hill's present drought. The problem is complicated by Chapel Hill's lack of adequate storage for the water it does have. Last January when the drought ended, Claiborne S. Jones, then-vice chancellor for business and finance, was quoted in the DTH as saying, "Our report this morning put the lake level at two inches above the dam - we're filled up and wasting water."

The lack of rainfall is virtually an uncontrollable factor, attributable to a dry weather condition that has plagued all of North Carolina this summer, crumpling crops and shrinking everyone's water sources.

Increased consumption is controllable by the University, but for obvious reasons, the University cannot be expected to cut enrollment in order to save water.

It's the third factor, inadequate water storage, that would seem to be the easiest factor to change; however, Chapel Hill's lack of adequate water storage has been a point for heated debate. Efforts to create adequate storage or a secondary water source have led to lengthy litigation. The effort has been blocked further by the University's decision shortly after 1968 to sell the water utility, along with the sewer, electric and telephone utilities.

### The Cane Creek Controversy

The biggest single reason that no significant improvements have been made to Chapel Hill's water supply since 1968 is actually a two-fold dilemma: The University wanted to upgrade the water utility - an engineering firm was hired by the University to suggest alternate water sources. UNC officials finally decided that construction of a reservoir at Cane Creek, located fifteen miles west of Chapel Hill near the Bingham township, was the best alternative for the area.

But unfortunately for the water consumers of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, the University, during the same period, decided to sell the water utility because of increased complexities in operating the system.

Legal problems involved in transferring revenue bonds necessary for building the Cane Creek Reservoir arose in light of the utility's impending sale.

Matters were further complicated when, in 1972, a state utilities study commission recommended the sale of the water utility to Chapel Hill or to an alternate joint-community authority if one were created.

Chapel Hill agreed to purchase in the same year, but backed down later to support the Consumers Utility Corporation (CUC) a forerunner of the OWASA, which is a joint organization of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Orange County and the University.

According to Jones, it took the CUC "an inordinate amount of time" to ascertain its tax and legal status as buyer of the utility.

Once the CUC did attend to these details, it was named buyer, but more time, in fact years, was taken up ironing out the legalities of the actual sale.

The water and sewer utility of Orange County was not sold until February 15, 1977.

But no sooner had plans been made to attempt a Cane Creek Reservoir, when residents of Orange Grove, the community surrounding Cane Creek, became upset with the proposed dam and 1,000 acre reservoir. They maintained that the project, among other things, would rob them of their future and livelihoods, and that they would not receive a fair price for the land that would be used for the project. The Cane Creek Conservation Authority (CCCA) has taken its case to court. The outcome is pending.

OWASA has considered other alternatives over the past year but none seem to work. The mere consideration of closing the B. Everett Jordan Dam in Chatham County and creating a 32,000 acre lake led to another court case, heated public controversy and a general consensus among city officials that the water from the Haw River would be undrinkable due to an excessive rate of eutrophy.

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"Water shortages are the best examples of the administration's shortsightedness"

city ordinances prohibiting water usage in 1968. Officials "suggested" shorter showers and "cutting back" on any unnecessary running of water, but did not enforce their suggestions with fines or similar punishment.

Predictably, the lake continued to recede, dropping to an all-time low of 94 inches below the spillway in October. The University suspended P.E. classes to eliminate the need for showers; sororities and women's dorms held contests to see which group could achieve the lowest water consumption; urinals were cut off in men's dorms and dish washers were laid off indefinitely in Lenoir Dining Hall.

### 1970's: A Dry Decade

Water scarcities of varying degrees have plagued this area since 1968; the worst, so far, occurring in 1973, 1975, 1976 and 1977.

In a 1975 DTH article, then-Director of Utilities Grey Culbreth said that the University spent roughly \$40,000 buying water from Durham during a 1973 water shortage.

The 1975 article dealt mostly with the drought occurring that year; the lake level was about 30 inches below the spillway and Culbreth was giving the town 25 days before emergency assistance from Durham would be necessary.

Culbreth, in the same article, said the town

## UNC and desegregation: A seven-year bureaucratic battle continues

By TONY GUNN

The U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) has not built up a good reputation in its many years of existence. And when one examines the department's dealings with the University of North Carolina in the state's desegregation policies, one can understand why.

HEW accepted the University's desegregation plan in 1974. The plan was so outstanding, in fact, that HEW suggested that it could be emulated by other states required to draw up similar documents.

The plan called for the elimination of racial duality in this state's institutions of higher education. And since it was put into effect, the plan has been successful.

In 1973, 82 per cent of all black students in the University system were enrolled in the five predominantly black institutions. By 1976, the figure had dropped to 75 per cent.

In 1973, 18 per cent of all black students were enrolled in the five predominantly white institutions. By 1976 the number had risen to 25 per cent.

HEW and the courts call that segregation, UNC President William Friday does not.

"The facts are that we do not now and have not for many years maintained a racially segregated system," Friday told a committee of the UNC Board of Governors last week.

"We do have a racially dual system," he says. And, "the elimination of racial duality is a process that will take place over time."

Now HEW wants the University to increase by 150 per cent the number of entering minority freshmen and transfer students at traditionally white campuses over the next five years. That, according to UNC officials, is not possible for a number of reasons.

First, the top schools in the Northeast attract the best black students from the state. Besides offering them the opportunity to attend a big-name school, these universities can give a good deal of financial assistance.

Second, the N.C. General Assembly has increased financial support to private colleges in the state. So now they, too, can attract more blacks.

Third, admissions officers say they have done a great deal to get the increase in the number of blacks enrolled in the state institutions. They doubt whether that number can be increased substantially over the next five years.

Fourth, HEW is ignoring other factors in blacks attending college, such as family income and whether the tradition of going to college exists in the family.

What HEW is asking, UNC Vice President for Planning John Sanders says, is neither realistic nor feasible. Nor is the formula HEW uses—the 150 per cent goal—related to any principle.

It has also been said that HEW does not know what it wants. On the contrary, they say they want to eliminate racial duality, and at the same time, strengthen the role of the traditionally black institutions.

HEW and the courts have overlooked the fact that these two goals are almost direct opposites. UNC is told it is in violation of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act—an act that prohibits discrimination against anyone for racial reasons by any program or activity receiving federal

money—and is simultaneously being told to maintain racial duality and preserve the traditionally black schools.

HEW also wants the University to consider race in making all of its decisions. "It is, therefore, a source of regret that we must be put in the position of responding to instructions... that would make the racial identifiability of institutions an overriding—perhaps a controlling—element in educational decisions," Friday says.

Friday is also upset about what appears to be a double standard in applying these HEW directives. Twelve other states with histories of segregation and racially dual systems some, like North Carolina, had segregated systems mandated by state law are not charged with violating Title VI.

While HEW has negotiated for years with the public system in North Carolina, it has yet to move against any of the 29 private colleges and nine junior colleges. These schools also receive large amounts of federal assistance.

Three years after HEW accepted the 1974 plan, the courts have rejected it, with little explanation. So the University updates the plan and hopes it will be accepted.

Friday said last week that North Carolina's ahead of the

other five states—Virginia, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Florida and Georgia—whose desegregation plans have been ruled inadequate.

"No one has developed a document anywhere near the size, content, seriousness of this one," he said. "In fact, I don't know of anyone who has approached the problem with the thoroughness of what we've done here."

### The Background

For years, though, HEW has challenged the depth of UNC's commitment to desegregation. The University's problems with desegregation date back more than seven years to when the director of HEW's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) wrote the chairman of the N.C. Board of Higher Education and the UNC Board of Trustees. The director said North Carolina was maintaining a racially dual system of higher education.

OCR asked UNC officials to prepare a desegregation plan for the state's institutions of higher learning. Similar requests were made to university systems in nine other states.

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Staff photo by L. C. Barbour

## Friday: UNC must make all education decisions

By TONY GUNN

UNC President William C. Friday is in a position these days he does not like: he is at odds with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), a situation that eventually could lead to a cutoff of approximately \$100 million in federal funds for the 16-campus University system.

For the third time in seven years, HEW has asked the University to come up with a desegregation plan. The department said the first plan was unacceptable. The second plan was acceptable and put into effect. Then a federal judge ruled it unacceptable. So now the system has updated its second plan—an action that was due soon, anyway—and is preparing to submit that to HEW by Sept. 5.

Whether HEW accepts this plan is the question. No one wants to put any money on a possible answer.

"I'm not seeking a confrontation with anyone," Friday said in a recent interview with the Daily Tar Heel. "I'm not that kind of person. But I know the most important thing in this process is to maintain the independence and freedom of this university in dealing with a governmental structure on an issue that is as sensitive as this."

Friday is adamant in this desire. "The University must reserve the authority to make educational decisions that have to do with the future of these institutions. That's all I'm trying to say, that's all I've ever tried to say, and I'm going to keep on saying it."

He points out that the system's objectives expressed four years ago are the same today: to enroll more blacks in the public institutions of all types, to develop a greater pattern of integration in these same institutions, and to do a better job in improving the quality of programs in the five predominantly black institutions.

And the University, he says, is meeting these objectives. "Until somebody shows us to the contrary, we believe and document that by resolution, acts of the general assembly, action of the (UNC) Board of Governors and every other way that rational beings can act, we have desegregated the University of North Carolina."

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