

# The Daily Tar Heel

91st year of editorial freedom

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## Sobering up

North Carolina's tough new driving laws, which went into effect 10 days ago, have had a sobering effect on drinking drivers. For the past two weekends, DWI arrests have been below normal. Apparently, the goal to cut down on alcohol-related deaths and injuries on the state's highways is being realized. If the laws save but one life, as they most assuredly will, the efforts will have been well worth the time and expense.

The new law has created a single offense of driving while impaired, with five levels of punishment — ranging up to two years in prison and a \$2,000 fine — based on aggravating and mitigating factors presented in court. The laws also provide for an automatic 10-day driver's license revocation for anyone exceeding a .10 limit on a blood-alcohol test. And perhaps the most visible impact of the law is the provision to raise the legal drinking age for beer and wine from 18 to 19.

About one quarter of UNC students — the freshmen — have been muttering under their breaths about the new laws ever since it sank in that they would soon be underage. The fuming 18-year-olds complain that if they are old enough to vote and to be drafted they should be allowed to drink. A prime subject of their curses, Gov. Jim Hunt, who spearheaded the effort to pass the laws, has even been the impetus for last-minute partying: "One fraternity had a 'Jim Hunt Party' to celebrate the end of legal drunken bliss for 18-year-olds. Many students spent their last legal night guzzling beer in bars. Some spent it walking about the street and contemplating the effects of the new law. Some flocked to convenience stores to stock up on their favorite beer.

All of the complaints, however, pale in comparison with the potential for lifesaving afforded by the new laws. The laws are asking a lot of everyone, not just students and others underage. Administrators — policemen, magistrates, judges — must put up with the time and frustration of additional, complicated paperwork. State highway patrol officials have said that under the old law it took about one hour to process someone arrested for driving under the influence. Under the new law it takes about twice that long to process someone arrested for driving while impaired.

Whatever consternation there might be, especially among those left high and dry because of the new laws, all this has served to raise the alcohol-consciousness level of the public. Never before have so many students been aware and afraid of what might happen. Never before have so many concerned themselves with holding back on that last drink in order to sober up before driving home. Or, better yet, they concern themselves with finding a ride home with a sober friend.

$$X = \sqrt{\% \text{C} \# \$ \& \% \$ !}$$

Question: What is the work done by force  $f(x,y) = 2-(x,y)$  in moving a particle along one arc of the cycloid given by  $x(t) = (t-\sin(t), 1-\cos(t))$ , if  $t$  is less than or equal to  $2\pi$  and greater than or equal to 0?

Wrong.

Ahh, College Bowl — the time of trivia, the season of statistics. Glazed-eyed students wander about campus, reciting the preamble to the Constitution. You know them by their looks of frustration as they frantically memorize the presidents, the vice presidents, their wives and the middle names of their first-born sons. They clasp Wordsworth's "Prelude" as they chant of mountains and moonlight. They won't speak, except to ask what was the capital of Montana, the name of the dog on the Jetsons and how many kids were on "My Three Sons."

Visions of the square root of three divided by six dance in their heads. How long would it take a car traveling at 40 mph to go 650 miles? What percentage is 13 of 253? (Here you can even distinguish between their majors — liberal arts by the way they search for extra batteries to their calculators).

These are the grown-up high school High-Qers of yesteryear. They can — and probably will — tell you all the little-known facts you never really wanted to know. And, you'll probably keep hearing those obscure oddities for the next few weeks — at least until the list of 48 teams is narrowed to the final two. It's double elimination in this competition, so even those who lose by embarrassing margins can have a second chance ... that is, if they can square the hypotenuse of a right triangle and have it equal the sum of the squares of the two legs.

## The Daily Tar Heel

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Recognize the overstatement as an overstatement

To the editor:  
Overstatement is often an effective means of making a point. Unfortunately, it sometimes ignores certain facts while cutting to the essence of an issue. But when one is making an important point tersely, overstatement is justified. I admit that my isolated comment, "They can send me to Lebanon to put bullets in babies, but I can't have a beer" ("18-year-olds had last lawful beers," *DTH*, Oct. 3), could be misleading and possibly offensive to U.S. servicemen. Yet Elizabeth Grant Fisher chooses to ignore the fact that this was an isolated overstatement from a conversation with a *DTH* reporter. Had she heard the rest of the conversation, Fisher might not be as likely to assert that my views are a perpetuation of "the idea that military service... is equivalent to governmentally sponsored and sanctioned infan-

ticide."  
My comment was not an indictment of all soldiers as "baby killers" but rather a testimony to the moral inconsistency of our legislators. What was the purpose of raising the legal drinking age? Gov. Jim Hunt and his safe Roads Task Force maintain that the measure was designed to "save our youth" from the slaughter on the nation's highways. Yet these same representatives seem to have no qualms about the possibility of our youth falling victim to the slaughter in the battlefields of Lebanon (or El Salvador, for that matter).  
Fisher repeats an obvious point: that the N.C. legislature cannot send anyone to Lebanon. But does it not seem inconsistent that these lawmakers could revoke beer-drinking privileges from the same individuals who could be called upon to kill or be killed in Lebanon? Eighteen-year-old

men have borne a great responsibility fighting for our country's "interests" but have not been afforded privileges given those who would not be called up to fight (and who are not registered for the draft). As an editorial in *The Phoenix* made clear, "Some of the Marines shipped back to the United States in boxes would have been refused a beer" on Oct. 1.  
As her final criticism, Fisher says I should extend my "concern to the babies who are killed on the highways of this country... by drunken drivers." She seems to be inferring, again from an isolated comment, that because I disagree with raising the legal drinking age I have no "concern" for the carnage on our highways. This cannot be further from the truth. Raising the legal drinking age is neither an entirely just nor a necessarily effective means of improving safety on our

roads. Why should all 18-year-olds suffer for the actions of those who drive drunk, only some of whom "are, yes, 18 years old"? Underage drinkers will continue to obtain beer, as they always have, and, unfortunately, more of them will have nothing to do but drink in their cars.  
Again, I would like to make clear that my comment was not intended to be an insult to U.S. servicemen. I hope that Fisher can recognize an overstatement as an overstatement and that in the future she will consider both the morality and fairness of the Safe Roads Act before launching such an ardent polemic.

Benji Sutker  
Morrison

## He shouldn't be senator

To the editor:  
In reference to the article ("King's birthday may be holiday," *DTH*, Oct. 4), I'd like to say a few words about Jesse Helms. Labeling Helms a "racist" is an understatement. His efforts to fight the passage of the bill making King's birthday a holiday and further plans to block IRS action opposing discrimination against blacks in private and church schools clearly makes him deserving of this label.

The purpose of making King's birthday a holiday is to honor a great man for his efforts to free blacks from racial discrimination, not to give laborers a day of "leisure." The same principle exists behind the observance of Washington's birthday — a holiday to honor a great man. Obviously, Jesse Helms does not think that the Reverend Martin Luther King was a great man since he describes King as espousing Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Marxist-Leninist doctrine (communism), as Webster's *New World Dictionary* puts it, is "a hypothetical stage of socialism, as formulated by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and others, to be characterized by a classless and stateless society and the equal distribution of economic goods and to be achieved by revolutionary and dictatorial, rather than gradualistic, means."  
King's efforts included a non-violent philosophy of working to eliminate discrimination against blacks — not a philosophy of "action-oriented revolutionary doctrine," as Helms believes. Jesse Helms has horribly misinterpreted King's goals and efforts and the efforts of black people. A man such as Jesse Helms should not be a senator from North Carolina.

Cezanne A. Gray  
Sandra Black  
Hinton James

## Why Fall Break?

To the editor:  
Concerning Fall Break: After several years of absence, I have returned to UNC and, as is to be expected, I have found a few things changed and new things established. One of these is Fall Break.  
Why do we need a Fall Break? I do not really see the need for a couple of days off in October (except to catch up on our studies) when in about a month we will have a break for the Thanksgiving holiday. It seems unnecessary to have a break now.

It is unfair for students who live in dorms and cannot go home to have to find a place to stay for four days because the dormitories will be closed. There are many out-of-state and foreign students at this University who cannot go elsewhere because doing so is expensive, and to them this situation is going to be extremely inconvenient and disrupting.  
It is not that I do not like days off, but I would rather have Fall Break abolished and those two days added to the Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays. It makes

more sense to have the final exams scheduled earlier so we can start our Christmas holidays sooner instead of having to stay here until Dec. 22.  
For students like myself who leave the state and travel far to be with relatives during the holidays, a few days make a lot of difference. Not only would we enjoy a longer vacation, but we would be able to take advantage of reduced air fares if we could depart before "high season" begins and the crowds go home for Christmas.

I hope those who prepare the University calendar give some thought to this alternative and consider the inconvenience of Fall Break and the benefit of adding these days to our December vacation.  
I am sure many students share my point of view and would welcome a change in the University calendar in the future.  
If we did not have Fall Break eight years ago, why do we need it now?  
Miriam Asenjo-Reed  
Romance Languages Dept.



## No cokes for poor

To the editor:  
Congratulations to Frank Bruni for his insightful commentary on American poverty ("If he were a poor man..." *DTH*, Oct. 5). As Bruni points out, the reality of the food-stamp budget is that it is simply not "adequate" in any real sense: it provides money enough to eat noodles and bread, but it does not allow for many servings of the more "expensive" items like fresh vegetables and fruit. The food-stamp menu is boring, unhealthy and demoralizing. I know: I too lived out the food-stamp experience.

Several weeks ago I agreed to follow John Block's example and live on a food-stamp budget for a week as part of a political science class. There was, however, one important difference: Block and family had lived on the maximum allowance of \$58 for a family of four (69 cents a meal per person); I agreed instead to live off the average allowance for food-stamp recipients, which is considerably less. I received \$11 for a week of groceries, or about 53 cents a meal.  
The seven days I spent on the food-stamp plan were not generally pleasant ones. My meals largely consisted of bread and rice with an occasional dash of vegetables or hot dogs or soup. I wasn't

able to afford "luxuries" like fruit juice, or coffee, or even milk. In addition, my social life deteriorated drastically — to go for a Coke with a friend would have meant spending half my daily food budget. Like Block, I did the experiment for only a week, and I consider myself lucky to have stuck it out that long. I quickly discovered how depressing it can be to face a meal that is poor quality, starchy and generally unsatisfying. And I realized how draining it can be to spend so much time and energy worrying about when, and how, I was going to eat next.

None of this is designed to elicit sympathy for the plight of a middle-class white woman who had to eat macaroni for a few days. The point is simply that most of us don't have any honest conception of what it is like to be poor. We are so busy guarding our tax dollars that we don't stop to consider what our unrealistically low food-stamp budget is demanding of our country's poor, 40 percent of whom are children under the age of 18.  
Bruni's article was an important statement about the inadequacies of the American response to poverty. Bravo.

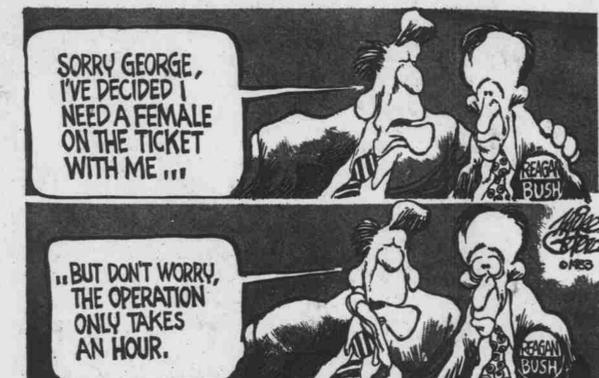
Melani McAlister  
Mallette St.

## Letters?

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes letters to the editor and contributions of columns for the editorial page.

Such contributions should be typed, triple spaced, on a 60-space line, and are subject to

editing. Contributions must be submitted by noon the day before publication.  
Column writers should include their majors and hometown; each letter should include the writer's name, address and telephone number.



## They had the spirit

To the editor:  
Let's hear it for the University of North Carolina Varsity Cheerleaders!!! For the first time since I've been here (Sept. 1980), the cheerleading squad has been allowed to do their job. And what a job they have done!!! Agreed, it was an ACC game and the first half was close. But I never would have thought that such true Carolina spirit could be seen all over Kenan Stadium. They didn't need jokes and innuendoes to succeed in arousing what I hope everyone considers the best of Tar Heel Spirit. The entire crowd was behind our team and involved in the game against the Deacons. Our cheerleaders work hard (and always have), but Saturday the squad was given

the place they deserve: alone in front of our eyes, and in our hearts!!! I enjoyed this game more than any other game I have been to in four years. I think that everyone at the game appreciates our cheerleaders and band and their time, effort, dedication, and teamwork. Mitch recognized the "Band of Champions" as they well deserve, but no one could use the microphone to say, "Let's hear it for our cheerleaders. What a job!!! You're great. We love you!!" The standing ovation they would have received might have been able to show our appreciation.

Amy F. Doster  
Granville South

## Taxpayers hurting, too

To the editor:  
The liberal bias displayed by your editorial page is always tiresome. It becomes infuriating when the writing is even more careless and ignorant than usual, as is the case with Frank Bruni's article "If he were a poor man..." (*DTH*, Oct. 5).  
Bruni, who has probably paid less than \$1,000 for taxes in his professional life, exploits the myth that taxpayers are by nature greedy and unsympathetic toward the poor. He ignores the obvious fact that the poor have no monopoly on tight budgets. In my middle-class family we eat steak perhaps once a year, partly because my mother spends a quarter of her income on taxes. It is preposterous and offensive to suggest that my family and others complain about their tax burden out of a lack of compassion.  
Even more irresponsible is Bruni's implication that putting more money into social programs is the solution to this

country's poverty program. I realize that a casual glance at the facts is too much to expect of editorial writers for *The Daily Tar Heel*. In this case, investigation would have revealed that the situation of the poor actually deteriorated during the '60s and '70s, a period of unprecedented expenditures on social programs. Bruni, like so many other journalists, finds it attractive to blame President Reagan's economic policies for a situation long in existence. To other observers it is manifest that the welfare system victimizes the underprivileged and perpetuates their poverty.  
If Bruni wishes to demonstrate real concern for the poor, he will spend a little energy exploring the realities of poverty instead of contenting himself with false expressions of pity and ill-considered accusations.

Lisa D. Jacobs  
Chapel Hill

## American Atheists not intolerant of others' religious beliefs

By ALLAN ROSEN

We were recently treated to an inside look at "The nuts and bolts of atheism" in a column by Ken Langston (*DTH*, Sept. 23). He claimed that American Atheists, a national organization with a chapter on campus, preached on what it means to be a true atheist. He compared this organization to the religious right and to fundamentalist faiths. He implied that our group is intolerant of religious freedom, closed to agnostics or religious persons in favor of separation of state and church and unwilling to admit that religious persons have made contributions to humankind.  
Every accusation or insinuation in his column is utterly false. I suspect Langston felt compelled to write such a malicious story because he was disturbed that atheists, agnostics and other free thinkers could be motivated to fight for separation of church and state because they feel that religion is generally harmful to society. To Langston's credit, he realizes that for separation of state and church to make any sense it must mean freedom from religion as well as freedom of religion.  
Our group does not suggest or tell people what to believe. People who join American Atheists are highly independent and would naturally resent this. At the meeting Langston wrote about, we did give an overview of the terms theist, atheist and agnostic. These terms are often misunderstood,

so we went over their popular definitions as well as how they are generally used by Western philosophers.  
Any comparison of American Atheists to a fundamentalist religion (or any religion) is absurd since we don't have any doctrine and don't dictate behavior. To be fair to Langston, I would say that American Atheists could be compared to other cause/political organizations with regard to their style of rhetoric.  
American Atheists can point out how religion has had negative impacts on society without being intolerant of a person's right to have religious beliefs. People should be able to criticize religion without someone shouting, "Oh, so you believe religion is the root of all evil." "Religious people have done magnificent deeds" and other straw man arguments. It is about time for people to recite not only the nice passages in their Bibles but also to think about the social effects from its bizarre notions about sex, its bigotry toward women, its intolerance of non-Christian (or non-Jewish) people, its glorification of war, rape, violence and obedience to authority.  
American Atheists is a good and productive organization. Although it is not for everyone, its policies have been able to attract members such as Isaac Asimov, Bertrand Russell, Margaret Sanger, Butterfly McQueen, Albert Ellis and Leonard Bernstein.

Allan Rosen, a graduate student in the School of Public Health, was the speaker at the first meeting of American Atheists.