

Traveling preacher practices 'open air dialogue' technique

By TAMMY BLACKARD
Staff Writer

A large crowd listened as some shouted questions at Cliffe Knechtle in the Pit Monday afternoon. Some students raised theological issues while others laughed at or ignored the atypical preacher.

Cliffe Knechtle says he is not a Pit preacher, instead, he calls his work "open air dialogue." The 33-year-old graduate of Davidson College takes his ministry around the United States to hundreds of college campuses.

Jesus Christ and the gospel are the topics of Knechtle's dialogue. After speaking for a few minutes, he asks for questions, welcoming even the hardest ones from students. He insists, however, that students think through their questions intelligently and open-mindedly investigate for themselves.

"The biggest barrier to people's accepting Christ is cynicism; it's not lack of information," Knechtle said. "When people reject Christianity because of things like the Bakker and Swaggart controversies, it is the essence of narrow-mindedness. An open-minded person must read and accept, or read and reject."

Knechtle stressed this point Monday when students questioned the

trustworthiness of the Bible and the deity of Christ.

"He's tackling some really controversial issues," said Joey Kowalski, a junior geography major. "I personally don't agree with his views on science and religion, but at least he's willing to talk about those things."

Jennifer Porter, a junior political science major, agreed. "Most Pit preachers just quote condemning verses and talk about how we're going to hell."

Junior education major Beth Fowler said, "I don't think this guy is as bad as some other people. He's more open-minded; he'll answer questions."

Knechtle has been to the UNC campus before.

Sophomore Bryan George saw him here last year. "He's a smart guy and knows his stuff," he said. "He gives replies that make people think and welcomes criticism and opposition."

The Bible Belt has not been one of Knechtle's favorite places to speak. "I didn't used to enjoy coming to Carolina," Knechtle said. "There was too much cultural Christianity here — in all the Bible Belt schools."

"There was an apathy toward spiritual things because everyone had grown up in Sunday school and

thought they knew all there was to know. People thought it was weird fanaticism to talk about God, but I see that that's beginning to change," he said.

Knechtle, originally from the New York City area, has wanted to tell people about Christ since he was in junior high school.

"New York City is not a strong culturally Christian area, so I saw a stark contrast between the difference Christ could make in someone's life," he said. "I've always had a desire to communicate the love and truth of Christ to those who do not know Him."

"I realized that the majority of us would prefer to run away from God. I wanted to make it as easy as possible for people to seriously consider Christ. Instead of making people come inside to hear, I took the message outside where people could give us a minute or an hour of their time," Knechtle said.

Knechtle raises his own support and is paid a salary by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF). The local IVCF chapters invited him to speak at the University this week.

Knechtle will be answering questions in the Pit every day from noon to 2 p.m. He will also speak in Gerard Hall Wednesday night at 7:30 p.m.

Sports

Meditations on a season gone by

James Surowiecki
Opinion

label denigrate their ability.

The other cliché oft-used this year was that the Tar Heels exceeded expectations. In national terms that statement is simply not true. In the preseason polls, UNC was ranked among the top three teams in the country. The ACC sportswriters picked the Tar Heels to finish first in their conference.

It is true, though, that UNC surpassed both Smith's expectations and the expectations of those who followed them all year long. Throughout the tournament, Smith seemed genuinely surprised at his team's success. The North Carolina beat reporters, divided on the Loyola game, were for the most part sure that Michigan would win.

The Tar Heels surprised many with their success. And indeed, given their lack of experience, reaching the Final Eight was a tremendous feat. As they are every year, they were burdened with the weight of tradition. In Smith's words, "They got too much respect." That respect does not diminish their success.

Still, the ghosts of years past seem to lurk everywhere, and a whim seems to whisper "Choke, choke." But there has ever been. The Tar Heels played a veteran, talented Arizona team that was completely sure of itself.

Yet the Tar Heels worked hard for almost 40 minutes, and cracked the Wildcats' poised facade for a little while in the first half. That Arizona played a splendid 20 minutes after

halftime is a tribute to the Wildcats, not a discredit to the Tar Heels.

Smith said after the game that he was "very disappointed," and the disconsolate looks on the faces of the UNC players testified to that. Perhaps the Tar Heels had been the underdogs, but as Smith said, "Once we got here we thought we had a chance to win."

Losing is never easy to take. But there is no dishonor in defeat. If the struggle has been waged with passion and effort, and UNC's performance Sunday was, then victory is simply an external reward, which cannot match the inherent rewards of excellence.

In the end, then, honor does not accrue from the end, but from the means, and the Tar Heels should be more than satisfied with the means they used. It was a good season. The players did their best. They should be proud.

Netters lose to W.F., 5-4

From staff reports

WINSTON-SALEM — The UNC women's tennis team lost a disappointing match to Wake Forest on Monday afternoon, 5-4. The Tar Heels could only watch as a 4-2 lead disappeared and the Deacons took the last three matches to get a tough come-from-behind victory.

Senior captain Landis Cox, junior Ann Stephenson, sophomore Valerie Farmer, and freshman Dana Kanell all won their singles matches on the afternoon before seeing the win slip away.

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Hardee's

I know it's over/And still I cling/ I don't know where else I can go/ Over and over and over — The Smiths.

Though Morrissey was writing of a lost lover, his words capture well the pain of a vanished season, as the UNC Tar Heels try to deal with defeat.

But in looking back at the season, there is no need for excuses. The Tar Heels don't have to apologize for anything.

They played hard all season long against some of the nation's best teams. They took the ACC regular season championship, won 27 games, and fell just one game short of the Final Four. As senior guard Ranzino Smith said after Sunday's loss to Arizona in the finals of the West Region, "This team has earned a right to hold its head high."

The obvious temptation is to credit the Tar Heels with overachieving, and perhaps that is exactly what UNC did. Seemingly not blessed with physical talent, the Tar Heels played emotionally and well within Dean Smith's system. Smith had just one great player, J.R. Reid, and even he was on-again, off-again. And still, somehow, UNC won 27 games.

To say somehow, though, is a joke. What does talent mean, after all? Talent is not defined solely in terms of speed, leaping ability and shooting. Talent may mean understanding the fundamentals of the game. It may mean having a knack for the ball. Perhaps talent should only be defined in terms of success.

Perhaps not. But certainly looking at the nation's teams, Michigan and Pittsburgh stand out as squads loaded with conventional talent, and yet both fell before the Tar Heels did. Maybe UNC did overachieve. Let not that

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