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The Daily Tar Heel

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Perot peddles politics for a profit

Billionaire cowboy Ross Perot is saddled up and ready to ride to America's rescue — for a price.

This seasoned salesman now peddles his latest lemon, a new book outlining his policy prescription for the country's woes. He's off traveling the television circuit once again to market a quality commodity that's out of date.

Six weeks ago, Perot stood at the national podium, commanding the attention of millions of voters. When he announced his withdrawal from the presidential race, his volunteer campaign army wept, and both political parties salivated at the prospect of an endorsement.

The political climate was ripe for reform. With eager eyes on him, Perot offered no more than the vague promises and calculated ambiguities that had come to characterize his unofficial campaign. The energy of a powerful grassroots movement fizzled as the devoted listened to the silence of their reluctant messiah.

More than a month later, Perot finally wants to break that silence and turn a pretty profit by peddling his vision for America.

Perot's book (obviously the product of innovative economic advisers rather than Perot's own family recipe) does merit praise for its politically daring proposals. "United We Stand" outlines concrete reforms such as a 50-cent gas tax (implemented over five years), limitations on Medicare and Medicaid and cuts in Social Security benefits.

If these plans had debuted during the televised

frenzy of his withdrawal, Perot could have forced the two parties to address and discuss progressive reforms. Weeks later, he has little chance of penetrating traditional campaign jargon.

But such altruistic concerns seem to have been eclipsed by dollar-sign decision-making. Perot appeared this week on ABC's Good Morning America where he made plugs for his new book and begged the consumers repeatedly to "buy it now."

Rather than specifically discussing the economic merits of his proposals, he continued to dole out his infamous old-fashioned aphorisms ("The national debt was like a crazy aunt we've kept in the basement. Everybody knew she was there, and nobody talked about it.") He repeatedly berated the Democrats and Republicans for skirting the issues — this astute observation from a man whose main platform plank was "trust me."

Worst of all, Perot continued to dangle the possibility that he might re-enter the race. "I want to do whatever is good for the country." This patriotic posturing, however noble, risks distorting and compromising a fair election in November.

Perot's presidential bid had the potential to inspire a searching debate of national problems. Instead, his defection bred disillusionment. Now this capitalist has prostituted his last chance to induce progressive discussion by placing a price tag on his message.

Perhaps it's finally time for the American public kindly to ask this Texas cowboy to get off his high horse and stop wrestling bull.

First aid for the Yack

It seems only reasonable that Student Congress — delegated by the chancellor to handle student fee money — would want to keep its power.

That's why it's clear that congress has a responsibility to bail out this school's historic annual.

The Yackety Yack, riddled with financial problems since its former business manager embezzled more than \$75,000 from the Student Activity Funds Office, is now facing a serious debt and possible legal problems. But Student Congress soon may have the chance to come to the ailing yearbook's with a newly created emergency fund.

Speaker Jennifer Lloyd proposed the fund this summer when she learned of a large surplus at SAFO, which oversees student groups' accounts. Congress members will discuss Lloyd's plan in the coming weeks and should give it careful consideration.

There's really no reason *not* to create the fund — the surplus already exists and is waiting to be put to good use. Using the money to help bail out the Yack may be a more contentious issue. After all, congress shouldn't have to make up the money that Tracy Keene pocketed.

But consider this: Delmar, the Yack's publishing company, will get its money somehow. All of it.

Because Keene can't cover the entire debt that he created, the result could be a messy lawsuit for the University. That brings in the additional expense of lawyers, court costs and lost time. Money from the emergency fund could keep both the pain and the cost of an already bad situation to a minimum.

Forget the obvious merits of saving a campus tradition. If students (represented by Student Congress) want to remain in control of their student activities fees, they have to prove that they're capable of doing so responsibly. Settling the Yack crisis out of court is one way to do this.

Everyone stands to benefit. The Yack will be able to stay afloat, Student Congress will have performed a valuable service, Delmar will get their money and the administration will stay out of court. And since the fund will not exist solely for the yearbook, other financially threatened groups will have a last resort in lean times.

Student Congress representatives: Don't give the students' power away. Create the fund and help the Yack before gray, old men control our fees.



Punks, codgers and glass eyes: a Torch farewell

I was working dutifully at my desk when he called me into his office.

As I put up my set of Lincoln Logs, I reminded myself that being called into the editor-in-chief's office usually means one of two things — either fresh-baked smores or a face shove into the wall. As I hate smores, I eagerly hoped it was the latter. Nothing, not even that "study punch" that my mom made me drink before I took the SATs could have prepared me for what happened.

"We're not going to be using your column this year," were the approximate words that crashed out of my editor's mouth. Even though these words set my soul crumbling into dust, I was able to keep my dignity and hide my shock and sorrow by immediately bursting into tears and hurling anything in my path madly to the floor, where I could stomp on it.

"How can you do this?" I screamed. "Do you have any idea how many papers I sell for you?"

My editor informed me once again that The Daily Tar Heel is, in fact, distributed free of charge to anybody who wants it, a fact which furthered my resolve to find that bastard who sells them to me for two bucks a pop.

The editor in chief may have had more to say, but I didn't hear it. I stormed out of his office for nowhere in particular, which means that I probably would've ended up at Scuttlebutt. I kept asking myself how this could happen to me, how could I have lost my column? Luckily, after a few minutes of asking, a kind stranger came up to me and, using a couple of bottlecaps and a diagram scratched in the dirt, made the situation clear.

Later, I was overcome with a sudden rush of anger and decided to vent my rage by punching my fist into a wall. Sadly, the wall I happened to be next to was one of those really thin, clear walls that you find in buildings and even cars every so often. Apparently, they're made of some fragile stuff that fragments into razor-sharp shards upon impact, for my fist shattered the entire section, pieces of which lacerated my hand into such a bloody mess that it looked like I had dipped my fist into a heavily sauced calzone.

As I stumbled throughout campus, bloody and beaten, I came to the sad realization that these wonderful times we've had together here, dear readers, were over. No longer would I be free to confide in you, to try to give your lives new meaning and, yes, perhaps even take your appetizer order. No longer could I abruptly switch ideas and go off on some tangent like this:

I have made an amazing discovery.

Punk Rockers and Old People

are two of the most sociologically similar groups of people in the world. Granted, I know that on the surface this theory may sound absurd, but allow me to state my case before you proclaim me mad.

First off, let's look at the way members of each group dresses and their motivations for doing so. A Punk Rocker is likely to wear a leather jacket torn apart and reassembled with safety pins, along with big, black boots with some kind of army pants or a torn plaid flannel shirt or generally anything along those standard lines. Essentially, the Punk's clothes scream conflict, they fight the norms and rules of how one is supposed to dress; that is their purpose.

Now, think about an old man. Old men frequently mix plaids in highly volatile arrangements and wear horrible dark socks with shorts and ridiculous floppy hats, disregarding every rule of taste. Why? Because all of their lives they've been told how to dress and what they can and cannot wear with this garment and that, and now that they're old, they just don't give a damn anymore. To hell with the system, old men's outfits seem to scream, I'll wear what I want! This attitude is exactly the same as the Punk Rockers. Both dress in manners that cause disgust in most other segments of the population, all because they are sick of being told how to dress. Only the process differs; the goal is identical.

Both groups express this same angry, anti-establishment attitude in other ways as well. If a Punk Rocker drives, chances are good that the car will be a loud, recklessly driven auto kept in poor repair that is a notable annoyance to anyone caught in its wake. Old people seek to annoy and disturb as well, only they accomplish this same thing by driving huge Lincolns really erratically and slowly and with one turn signal blinking constantly. This achieves a degree of annoyance that is at least the Punk's equal. All because they just don't give a damn anymore.

Like Punks, the Elderly feel abandoned by society and subsequently embittered. Many have bad attitudes and use profanity liberally, like my friend's grandfather who used to empty his pipe on my head. Punks possess



Jason Torchinsky
Turn Your Head and Cough

these same traits.

Punk Rockers frequently take many drugs. Old People are the most heavily medicated people you're likely to meet. Many old women have blue hair. So do many Punks.

If you're still not convinced, think about this: When most outsiders view a Punk Rock video or listen to Punk music, their reaction is usually ridicule, and then disgust. Now, ask yourself this: what your reaction was the last time you saw the Lawrence Welk show?

I think I've made my point. Punk Rockers and Old People are really the same, they just use different resources to achieve their goals. But, sadly, now that I no longer have this space to ramble, you shall never know this. My rantings of Punks and the Elderly will crumble to the dust from whence they came, never to be viewed by human or my relative's eyes. I only wish I could have remembered to make some crude record of them.

Saying goodbye is very hard to do. That is why most people resort to using the rather infantile-sounding "bye-bye." This is also the reason why most of my phone conversations end with a few choked syllables and a frustrated "goddammit" before the receiver is slammed into its cradle. And yet it is something I must do. Although, if you felt like it, my reader buddies, you could call the DTH at nine six two hyphen oh two four five and suggesting that perhaps letting me go isn't such a good idea. Only if you want to. Me, I'll be doing it myself with a wide variety of amateurishly disguised voices, but if you want to join in, please, I'd love to have you. By the way, I gave you the number in that written-out form in hopes that the copy editors would overlook it. So, uh, keep your traps shut about it, capisce? Good. Thanks.

I guess this is it. I may be gone from these pages, but I assure you, I'll be back. Somewhere, somehow, I'll con somebody into letting me reduce the amount of white space in their publication by filling it with my words. And to think I can barely sign my own name. Fascinating. Oh, one more thing. I know I promised last year when I began Turn Your Head and Cough that when my last column came, I would reveal which one of Sandy Duncan's eyes was the glass one. Well, frankly, I don't know. I was desperate to get readers, and I did what I had to do. I'm not proud, but I know it was worth it. Thanks for everything. Solidarity.

Jason Torchinsky is a senior art history major from Greensboro.



The Daily Tar Heel

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READERS' FORUM

Herzenberg should step down to regain respect

To the editor:

I was shocked to see the DTH throw up its collective arms in support of Joe Herzenberg. Peter Wallsten is missing the mark when he suggests that Herzenberg merely made a "mistake" and should be given a second chance. While I agree Herzenberg has been a valuable council member for years, he has sworn to uphold all laws, which happens to include paying state taxes. Nobody is saying Joe is a bad person. The point is he has admitted to betraying the public's trust. He should step down in order to bring it back.

Unfortunately, the wise town council does not have the authority to remove him. I congratulate Herzenberg for having the guts to appear in front of the council and admit his wrongdoing. He said he "would like to earn the respect back from the town." I have a better idea. Joe. It would take more guts to remove yourself from the council until the next election and let the voters decide your fate. In the mean time, you could sit in on committee and council meetings as a well-informed and active participant in the governmental process. That should probably convince the majority of voters you deserve another chance. Since you have no job and are living off the interest of a large inheritance, you should have plenty of time to devote to these meetings and begin re-establishing your integrity.

As for Peter Wallsten, I am a citizen of Chapel Hill also. When I cast my ballot, I expect the council members we elect to be law-abiding citizens to the highest degree. Thank goodness the overwhelming majority of Americans expect the same.

ROBERT C. WILSON
Junior
Business

Date rape laws not meant to victimize men

To the editor:

The views expressed by Mr. Miller ("Communication, not new rape charge needed," Aug. 27) are not only offensive and infuriating but perpetuate the "sex myth" as to when and what is sexually OK between a man and woman. Not all women believe that "anything that goes wrong is automatically the man's fault," but women are tired of being victim-blamed when it is the man's fault.

I do agree that good communication is not only necessary, but could prevent many date-rape cases. However, the law says that no means no, and if a woman is lying naked in a man's bed and says no to sex, this does not make it OK for the man to do as he pleases. In many date-rape cases, the situation is that the man and woman get together, the woman draws the line as to how far she will go, and the man has sex with her anyway, insisting that "she wanted it" or led him on. Well, here's a bulletin,

Mr. Miller: Just because I flirt with a man, kiss a man, even get in bed with a man, does NOT mean I want to have sex with him. And yes, repeated attempts to coerce me verbally or physically after I have said no are a form of sexual assault.

Most disturbing is your attitude toward women psychologically. A woman does not have a "mental breakdown" after having sex with a man she cares about. Women do have psychological problems and suffer mental anguish after they have been raped. And although in life we do things that we later regret, women do not cry assault because they are ashamed of their own behavior. Mr. Miller, you need to realize that sexual assault laws are there to help protect women, not injustice men.

ROBYN WEIERBACH
Graduate
Microbiology and Immunology

Letters policy

The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticisms. When writing letters, please follow these guidelines:

■ Letters should be limited to 400 words. Shorter letters have a better chance of running.

■ If you want your letter published, sign and date it. No more than two signatures.

■ All letters must be typed and double-spaced.