

# Prodigal son finds his way home

A freshman writer recalls his first journey home.

Another freshman first. Flying alone — one thing I'd never done before. Going home as an entire experience was very weird, and it only got weirder from the time I was

**Nathan Gunter**  
GUEST COLUMNIST

picked up by the scary airport shuttle guy. But I'm not here to rag on him. For many freshmen, the Thanksgiving and winter breaks are the first time home since August. For some, this is far too soon, and for others it couldn't come soon enough. Of course, if you've had time to think about it, I envy you.

Until the week before my flight it hadn't occurred to me just how quickly the holidays were coming upon us. It's a strange thought that I am sitting in my bedroom in Oklahoma right now writing this column. In 24 hours I will be one of thousands of befuddled college students and holiday travelers wandering through the complexities of the Atlanta

airport. I am sure I'll be thinking about just how little reading I got done over the break, or how I need to hurry back to campus to get started unpacking and getting ready to begin a new semester or figuring out how I can rearrange my room. I'll be checking and re-checking my boarding pass to make sure I didn't leave it in some random, sketchy place.

It has occurred to me just what an odd concept "home" is. When at school, I told people I was looking forward to going home. Now that I am here, I keep talking about what things are like "back home." So I've either got two homes, or I'm homeless. The Kerouac-esque romantic in me smiles at the thought of being a wandering vagabond the rest of my life. The ideal life of a ragamuffin: never really at home, but home everywhere just the same. Beat-up, dirty and travel-weary but always smiling, happy, deep and sad all at the same time. It's so poetic and it's the ideal life, and as I sit here at home I just have to wonder how things are going to turn out.

It's always nice to have a break. And it's really cool to be met by about 15 people at the airport. But the emotional and physical strain of trying to pay attention to everyone who's missed me since I've been gone, without neglecting anyone too much, has taken its toll, and now, I must admit, part of me is ready to get back. Of course, it was also nice to eat somewhere besides the Benson food court, and it was good to see my old high school friends and teachers

**When at school, I told people I was looking forward to going home. Now that I am here, I keep talking about what things are like "back home."**

again. Of course, things are so different.

My best friend has been growing his hair out, but thankfully for me he's still cracking the same jokes and making the same silly facial expressions. Still, we discovered that both of us are a little more introverted and quiet, and while there was more to be communicated there was less to be said. I am sure he saw in my eyes what I saw in his: the ragged-ness that comes from growing up. When the old group got together to hang out, it was like we hadn't skipped a beat, and yet we all had new stories and personalities that were a bit different. The more things change ...

I catch myself waxing entirely too philosophical and tell myself I must focus on writing, on the family that gathers to devour a pot of chili in front of a football game downstairs, on getting out of the bedroom in which I've spent too much time doing this kind of work over the past four years. Posters, awards, trophies and mementos that I spent 18 years of life gathering adorn the walls of this room, bringing back memories of times when I knew what home and comfort and security were.

The funny thing is, it's not often

that I miss such notions. There's something to be said for being a stranger to the world. Ah well.

My stomach rumbles and I smile in delight at not having to hand over a card to get a meal. I even chuckle at the thought that when I go downstairs, it will be family waiting eagerly for me to join them in watching the game or just gentle conversation. At the same time, it occurs to me that when I get back to North Carolina, there will be people here who want only these things from me as well. The exciting thing about going back is the fact that at college, there are so many more secrets and personalities and idiosyncrasies to figure out, whereas here I've got them pegged.

When I close my eyes, I can see a kind of pictogram of my life. One long, winding road leading off into a dark plane. Maybe it's a plane of unbound possibilities; maybe it's just a plane. Maybe there are mountains — there are certainly valleys. Right now, in this kind of peaceful, disturbed state both look appealing. To quote singer Rich Mullins, "No one tells you when you get born here how much you'll come to love it and how you'll never belong here."

Going home is always a good thing; I've decided that. Maybe I'll get used to this weird feeling of never having left and yet everything being so different. All I know right now about home, strangeness, comfort and family is that I'm going to get up, plod downstairs in my bare feet and grab a bowl of chili. Happy 1999 to you all.

# Student seeks life's purpose

Finding satisfaction is a personal journey.

Over the break I, along with a crowd of over 11,500 other college students, had the privilege of hearing an admired mentor and friend recount a story of how he had recovered from illness. With authority and passion he declared, "I'm just sick and tired of being a mediocre person!" With that statement a cheer erupted from the packed convention center in Fort Worth, Texas. I remember hearing the

**Joshua Janes**  
GUEST COLUMNIST

cheer, but it was the *words* he spoke that echo in my ears. I love being a part of our high-caliber, success-driven, humanitarian student body, but even here I crave more than mediocrity. I crave purpose. I'm not talking about goals — like to be successful, to have a family and financial security, to experience excitement and fulfillment, to improve this world and to leave an indelible mark on it, or even on just one life. These are all wonderful goals, but I'm craving *purpose*.

Those who are on top are there only because they recognize that there are others underneath. And those on the bottom, or lost in the middle for that matter, are constantly faced with the reality that they are not as good as others. All of them smile and are happy, though, and pretend that they measure their success and self-worth by their own personal standards. At least that's how we *should* operate. It sounds good and I like the idea, but I'm just not wholly convinced. Doesn't that relativism just leave you feeling a little empty? It should. It is a mediocre approach to a very, very real problem.

So, to everyone who is on top and feels like the view isn't as good as they thought it would be: The best view is right around the corner. And to everyone who is on the bottom and who really HURTS: There is comfort just inches away. But most of all, to everyone who is perfectly, 100 percent satisfied with who they are and how their life is going: I promise that there is something even better than that! There is something even better than mere satisfaction, and that something is purpose. Not just a lifelong, noble goal, but purpose that is *ultimately significant* and *immeasurably rewarding*. Can I tell you about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ?

NO! That would be my emphatic answer even today if someone asked me that. I say "NO" because 1) it's a waste of my time, 2) I've heard it before and it didn't make a difference then and it won't now, 3) who cares anyway, and 4) (and this is the biggie) I'm sick and tired of Christians forcing their beliefs on me! They preach and preach and preach and don't even care who I AM. Furthermore, the things they say are not at all in accordance with what they do. They preach love, but they hate. They preach service, but they spend their hours in their own Christian cliques. They preach success, but I see no difference between them and me. They preach righteousness, but they drink, smoke, cheat, lie, masturbate, steal, judge, mock, manipulate and ignore just like anyone else. They preach happiness, but they suffer all the time. They preach but they just won't SHUT UP! Case in point: They are liars and I might not call them that to their faces, but you can sure bet I'm not going to listen to them.

And, therefore, I'm not going to tell you about my personal relationship with Jesus Christ because I am guilty of everything I just listed, and if I wouldn't listen to me then I certainly don't expect anyone else to listen to me. I fail to stack up to others, I fail to stack up to my own expectations and I unquestionably fail to meet divine standards.

But given all that — the ugly confession and reality with which I live daily — I have a *view* and a *comfort* and a *purpose*. And that view, comfort and purpose is that while all people and all things have failed me, God has never ever even once failed me. My *purpose* is wonderful — to take the "I" out of my life and to wrap every other part around "Him."

We've all suffered from being sick and tired of mediocrity. It isn't fun — it's exhausting and it just hurts. I've come to the point in my life where my pride has been so shattered that I didn't even have to swallow it; I just had to look past the pieces. But whether you have to swallow pride or look past the pieces, don't give up. Don't beat yourself up trying to be a little bit better than the next person or to do a little bit better than the last time. Living life that way is a losing battle. Instead, *expect purpose in life* — it is there! "What makes life worthwhile," writes theologian and author J. I. Packer, "is having a big enough objective, something which catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance; and this the Christian has in a way that no other person has. For what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?"

And if the question remains, "why make my life goal to live for something in which I do not believe?" I say, "Why waste my life believing in something that is not worth living for?" The challenge is two-fold: First, are you brave enough to *demand* awesome, overwhelming satisfaction from life? And second, are you willing to doggedly search for what is *yours*? I, along with 11,500 students, will swear on all we know

MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA CONSTITUTION



# Lack of athletic support fans frustration

A dedicated fan finds athletic events disappointing.

As one of the three co-hosts on Sportsline, on WAKE TV, I hear calls each week complaining about the university's football and basketball teams. Although there has been plenty to complain about, the students do not have the right to complain if

**Daniel Ogle**  
GUEST COLUMNIST

they are not going to support our teams.

As a sophomore in my third semester I have seen plenty to complain about in terms of fan support, but two things this semester have made me decide that we may have the second worst fans in the country.

We are second only to Vanderbilt, where Dec. 30, Tennessee defeated Vanderbilt 41-0 and Rocky Top was heard all around Dudley Field. In fact, Vanderbilt's quarterback was forced to call a time-out because Tennessee's fans were so loud he could not hear.

Back to our university. The two events that appalled me beyond belief were the events in Shorty's Dec. 3 during the ACC opener against No. 2 ranked Maryland, and the Florida State-Demon Deacon football game.

Imagine this: You walk into a sports bar on a college campus. A bar that has been known as a place to go watch sports almost any night of the week from Monday Night Football to the World Series.

You go into the bar to watch a conference opener of the school in question against the number two team in the country. Anywhere else you watch the game along with your fellow students kick back, drink a coke, or a beer for those of age, and enjoy great basketball.

Sounds like fun doesn't it? This happens all over the ACC every week. Not at this university.

As I walked into Shorty's tonight to watch our Deacons play Maryland expecting a couple hours of clean wholesome family fun, instead I got to watch the first six minutes of Laron Proffitt, Terrence Morris and Steve Francis play against our Deacons until an officer of the schools official basketball pep group walks up turns off the television and tells me sorry, it was time for a jazz festival.

Apparently the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Black Student Alliance had reserved Shorty's for a jazz poetry event. I am not blaming the BSA or the Office of Multicultural Affairs for this problem, although they should have checked the basketball schedule prior to scheduling their event. I am blaming whoever is in charge of Shorty's.

These organizations have every right to have this event and everything I have heard is that the event was a good event. My problem is the event was scheduled in the place where students are supposed to come and

watch Demon Deacon sports. The event probably could have been held on the third floor of Benson where they have the Discovery Series. This would have allowed for a good turnout for the jazz festival, but also students could watch their basketball game in their bar. I know the event had no desire to interrupt the basketball game, but unfortunately it did.

This is not an isolated event; the athletic administration constantly does things without regard for the students. Case in point: Scheduling the tough Davidson basketball game and the Duke football game while we are on break therefore losing any homecourt advantage we might have had. The athletic department should work with the administration to see that these things don't occur.

The second and even more frustrating event this semester was the football game versus Florida State. I know this has not been the greatest football season in Demon Deacon football history. But at this game the Demon Deacon fans showed what they were truly made of: nothing. Your football team had given all they had for 35 minutes and after a long touchdown reception by junior Jammie Deuse had cut the Florida State lead to 10-7. As I looked in the crowd of my fellow students, I became shocked. I really shouldn't have been. I noticed that about two-thirds of the students who were there at the beginning of the game were gone.

I know it was raining, windy and the weather was not being cooperative, but that is still not an excuse. Let's examine the situation. I know most of our students don't come to the football

game for the football and that it is a social event. But if you can't stick it out and stay with your team when they have a chance to pull a major upset than when will you stick with them?

In my humble opinion, Florida State is the best football team in the country.

The Demon Deacon football squad had suffered through a long season and was within three points of the No. 5 ranked team in the country. What if we win the game? There would be no students there to rush the field for the biggest victory in our football history.

Many students complain about our athletics and how they are terrible. Our teams are not terrible. We have the 1998 ACC baseball champions. Not surprisingly when I went to baseball games to support my hallmates on the team, Scott Siemon, Adam Heaps, Tim Schilling and Carlos Cabrera-Brackley, I noticed that very few people attended even the big series.

This team won the ACC tournament and could be called the best team in the Atlantic Coast Conference; it's just a shame that no one took the time to see this. We were the ACC basketball champions back to back in 1995 and 1996. Last year our football team seemed to turn the corner and went 5-6.

There was a large amount of optimism towards this year, and unfortunately the team did not perform as expected. This does not mean that we turn our backs and abandon the team but instead we should support our teams and help them on to success.