

# In the end, Bush's tax cut will benefit all Americans

Targeted tax cuts will only bring about more class warfare and envy.

Well, political debate is alive and well on campus. I am pleased to see once again that the present political situation has provoked some of the members of our campus community to stop and think about what is going on around them, and to express those opinions in the

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editorial forum. I speak this week of the article by Matthew Barber in last week's edition of the *Old Gold and Black*. In this article, Mr. Barber takes issue with the presidency of George W. Bush and his plan to cut taxes for many Americans. On President Bush's administration, he says: "George W. Bush has no mandate. At least former President Bill Clinton received the approval of the majority of the electorate in the 1992 and 1996 elections." Unfortunately, this is just not true. Bill Clinton never received over 49 percent of the vote in either of his winning Presidential campaigns. Put in another light, the majority of the American people voted for someone

other than Clinton in 1992, and again, the majority of the American people voted for someone other than Clinton in 1996. While the position can be taken that this was not important because Bill Clinton won the Electoral College handily both times, that punctures the argument that I assume Barber is attempting to raise with this statement, that Bush won only in the Electoral College, because Clinton did not have a majority in the popular vote either. The country did not vote overwhelmingly for his opponent, the voting nationwide was about even. In 1992, over 50 percent of the American people voted against Clinton, but Clinton's mandate was never challenged. As for his conservative agenda, Bush is doing no more and no less than he promised to do during his campaign. Al Gore voters should remember 1992, when Bill Clinton beat incumbent President George Bush and immediately put forward a socialized healthcare plan that is as frightening to conservatives as a tax cut is to liberals. And speaking of tax cuts, it seems that we have reached the meat of the article with this issue.

Tax cuts have been a fundamental part of every true conservative agenda since the great *Ronaldus Magnus*, Ronald Reagan. It was the economic plans of Ronald Reagan, who recently was found in a phone survey conducted by Zogby International research to be the greatest president in the history of the country, which led to the

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great economy we have today. His support of the entrepreneur and the small businessman with tax breaks has allowed the Internet startup companies to begin. He increased the treasury from around \$500 billion to over \$1 trillion. I think that he is quite possibly the greatest President of the 20th century. As for the actual mechanics of the tax plan, I will review several scare tactics spouted at us by the liberal media: 40 percent of the tax breaks go to the wealthiest members of society, that there will be enough money in the tax cut for a wealthy person to buy a Lexus, but there will only be enough for a poor person to buy a used part that will fit a Lexus, and that America can't afford this tax cut. Now I will refute these: the wealthiest members of society pay by far the largest part of the tax burden. Ideologically, George W. Bush believes, as do I, that it is not the government's place to determine who is worthy of a tax cut. Targeted tax cuts foster class envy and hatred of the rich, two things on which the liberals

thrive. Once again, the assertion that the wealthy members of society have the most to gain from the tax cut is merely trying to make those Americans who perceive themselves as poor hate those whom they perceive as rich. Let's turn it around. A poor person pays no income taxes or, if they are in the lowest tax bracket, pay around 10 percent. A wealthy person pays as much as 50 percent of his income to the federal government. What would that allow the government to buy? The tax collected from the wealthy person allows the military to buy several Humvees; the tax collected from the poor person allows the military to buy a replacement muffler for a Humvee. Is this fair? Most would say yes, the rich person can afford to give more to the government than the poor person can. However, when it comes to giving back to the people who support the government, people accuse the rich of taking more than their fair share. How is it unfair to give a percentage tax cut to all American taxpayers? Speaking strictly in percentages, the poor receive more of a tax break than the rich. Their cut of the surplus is smaller than the cut of the wealthy because their contribution to the surplus is smaller. Furthermore, the rhetoric coming from some members of the Democratic Party is misleading in the extreme. The definition of a surplus is excess money collected from the American taxpayers that the government, under its current budget, does not need. The response

to this situation from the Democratic perspective is "well, we can certainly use this money, never mind that we didn't find it important enough to include in the budget, we'll just keep it all and find somewhere to spend it. If we can collect this when we don't need it, maybe we can raise taxes next year and get even more money from the people of the United States." Meanwhile, the response from the Republican side is "we didn't need this money when the budget was passed, and while we don't want to forget things like the state of Social Security and the national debt, we can give a little bit of this back to the people who paid it in the first place." The sense that the government must be able to "afford" a tax cut is ridiculous! The money is not the government's to spend; it belongs to the people who earn it. Giving it back to the people is not the rash move that some would make it out to be, it is a measured move to do the right thing after more money was collected than was necessary. If the Democratic Party is concerned about the state of the Welfare program and Social Security, then they have the right to contribute a larger portion of their income to the federal government if that makes them feel more secure for the future. As for me, I believe that George W. Bush has a great plan for America, and that his economic programs are not a return to huge deficits, but are sensible moves to give some amount of freedom back to individual Americans.

## The Intimidator's death leaves a huge void

Dale Earnhardt will be sorely missed among hard-core NASCAR fans and others.

I'm sure that when the Clemson men's basketball team pulled a shocking 75-65 upset of top-ranked North Carolina Feb. 18, a lot of you flipped over to CNN/ESPN at the top of the next hour to catch a few game highlights and enjoy a hearty chuckle at the Tar Heels' expense. When you saw – horror of horrors! – that an Atlantic Coast Conference basketball game

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wasn't the top sports story of the day, a lot of you probably decided to flip back to VH1 and forget about the game.

You should have kept watching. Maybe, just maybe, you would have been lucky enough to see the footage of Dale Earnhardt and his son, Dale Jr., laughing and chatting it up just before that afternoon's Daytona 500.

By the end of the race, Dale Jr. had finished second in the biggest race of the NASCAR season. By the end of the day, Dale Sr. was dead.

I'm not a NASCAR fan. I went to a NASCAR race once, and it was the most painfully earsplitting thing I've ever experienced – and I've survived an Offspring mosh pit. The whole concept of auto racing is ridiculous. So what if one Darrell made 2,000 left turns in a shorter period of time than another Darrell. Is it really worth risking lives over?

But I'm from the Southeast, and therefore it doesn't matter if I think auto racing is stupid and pointless and dangerous. What matters is that I have spent my life surrounded by people who live and die with each race. People with season tickets at Bristol Motor Speedway. People whose blood boils out of sheer hatred for Jeff Gordon. People who would, if necessary, come to blows to defend Bill Elliott's new paint scheme.

If you don't follow NASCAR, it's hard to explain how much Dale Earnhardt's death will crush these people. If Richard Petty was NASCAR's King, Earnhardt was the only driver man enough to challenge for his throne. And believe you me, Earnhardt had the support of the masses.

He was the Intimidator, but he was also a classic good ol' boy, and his fans found that nothing short of exhilarating.

For every John Deere cap or CAT hat in my hometown, there must have been five black No. 14 caps. Racing fans would go miles out of their way to stop by Earnhardt's Mooresville Chevy dealership, just so they could buy a sticker saying they'd been there.

You don't have to call racing a sport, but whatever you call it, know that Earnhardt had it down cold. He won seven Winston Cup Championships, equalling Petty's all-time record, and just missed his eighth last season.

For perspective, Michael Jordan only won six NBA championships. Tom Watson holds golf's record with six Player of the Year awards. Tennis? Just like the others, the record for number-one annual rankings is six, shared by Pete Sampras and Bill Tilden. Earnhardt topped them all.

I'm struck speechless by the man's death, if for no other reason than that I know people, men and women and children alike, who have certainly spilled their share of tears this week. If you're from New Jersey or Missouri, that must sound insane. But this is like the death of Tupac Shakur or John Belushi or Roberto Clemente – it's a case of a legend losing his life when he still had something to give his legions of fans.

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But like I said, I'm not big on auto racing. Is it fair for a NASCAR anti-fan to eulogize the sport's most dominant gladiator? No, probably not. What I'm saying would sound much sweeter and more heartfelt if it came from someone who has spent a Saturday or two tailgating at Martinsville with a couple of guys from work and their kids.

But I'm just hoping to provide some perspective on what a devastating loss this is – a difficult task, really, when it's a loss that most hipper-than-thou college types would rather deride than feel.

I guarantee you that unlike most places in North Carolina, there is not a single Mark Martin flag hanging anywhere on campus. Even that most ubiquitous and unparalleled of NASCAR pictograms, "Calvin and Hobbes" Calvin urinating on a rainbow-colored "24" – the "Starry Night" of rear-window decals – can be found nowhere in Lot Q.

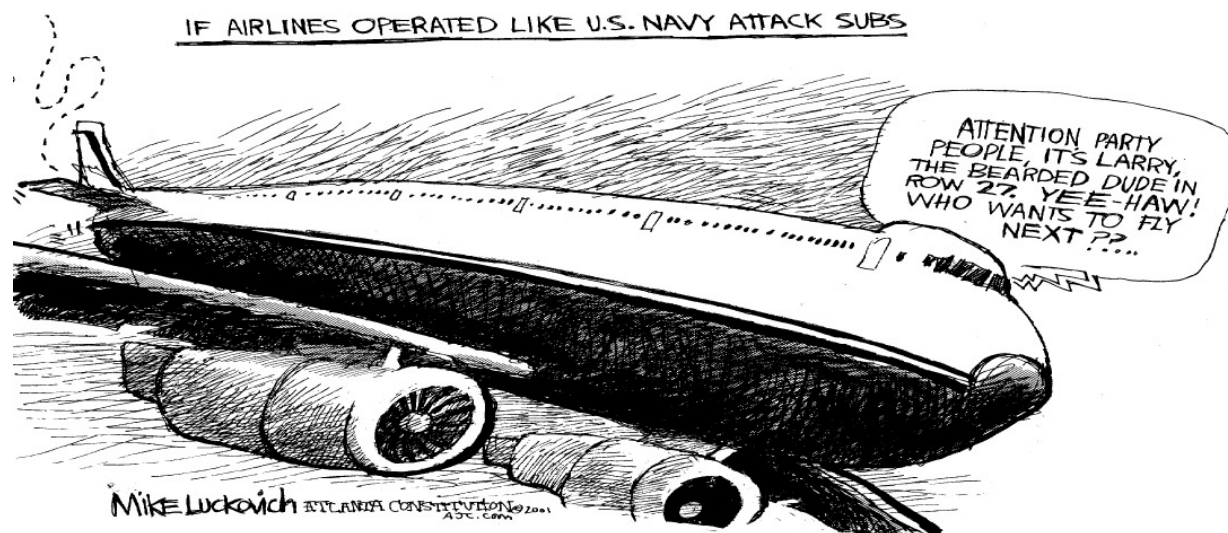
There may not be more than a dozen students at this university who bothered to think for more than two seconds about Dale Earnhardt's death.

Where I come from, people would shake their heads at this. Whether he was the greatest driver who ever lived may be open to debate, but there's no question that he was the most revered. He was auto racing's greatest hero, and his death at NASCAR's most prominent event casts across the Southeast a shadow as dark and intimidating as the man himself.

Clifford Allison. Neil Bonnett. Ayrton Senna. Adam Petty. Kenny Irwin. The list of racing deaths goes on and on and on. Sadly, resignedly, mournfully, the racing world is adding to that list the name of its most dominant superstar, Dale Earnhardt.

And while I still can't make myself enjoy NASCAR, I may just have to tune in for next year's Daytona 500. I've decided I'll pull for a 26-year-old driver from Mooresville who this year captured the most hollow second-place finish in racing history.

You probably know the kid I'm talking about. If you don't, flip on the news – you might still get to see that heartbreaking pre-race footage of him hugging his father and mentor for the last time.



## Love has sunk to the depths of commercialism

St. Valentine's Day has become a mess due to all of the corporate influence.

So I woke up last Wednesday thinking to myself, among other things, "Kill the alarm clock." When I finally got out of bed – that was probably the day I hit the snooze button from 7:30 a.m. until 9:00 – I realized what day it was, and I deliberately avoided putting on any item of clothing that rendered my appearance any form of attractive. I chose my bulkiest

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sweater, baggy jeans and my worn-out shoes in which I walked around Europe.

And on Valentine's Day, I went to work at the campus bookstore. And sure enough, there was half the campus, wanting flowers, cards, and balloons. So there I was, downstairs before a huge tank of helium and this gooey stuff we put in balloons to make them float longer or something – at times, I just felt dirty – making everyone's Valentine's Day something special.

So who invented this holiday? Surely not someone named St. Valentine, because no one worthy of the designation of saint would see fit to torture such a significant population of the human population in such a way. Or perhaps our culture has seized upon this holiday and, like every other day that was originally intended to represent something not so much worldly as spiritual, has twisted it to become yet another way for the massive sticker industry which employs so many hardworking souls every year a big day at the markets. A specific day to emphasize the lie we've all let ourselves believe: you have to be beautiful before you can be loved, and you have to be involved in a romantic way with someone else before your life can have any worth.

Call me an advocate of singleness. I have to come to grips with the fact that I'm just not as in control of my life as I'd like to be... until the next pretty face turns my head and I'm finding myself deeply longing. Since when did I let my unmet desires rule my life? Maybe that's the human condition. We can have all our needs and desires completely fulfilled and never really stop wanting more.

It's been awhile since I crushed. A long, long time actually. I should be content with that but instead I find myself wondering if something's wrong with me. Perhaps my self-esteem is so low that I just can't bring myself to care. Or even worse, perhaps my esteem for other people is so low.

And we're taught that as long as we have a warm body to love, our lives must somehow be whole. And believe it or not, as much of a lie as I see that to be, I still believe it. Pop songs probably shouldn't bug me as much. When a friend starts dating, tells me that "she might be the one," I should rejoice that his life has finally amounted to something.

Unless I learn to somehow be content with what I've got. I'd like to be the kind of person whose faith is enough to see him through those unmet desires. And sometimes I'm like that. And most of the time it doesn't bug me that I'm not dating. In the community with which I associate myself, singleness is celebrated. 1 Corinthians 7 and all that. *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*. Singleness is a gift. More time to focus on what really matters. Funny how it's a gift that nobody wants, right Derek?

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But maybe the problem is not learning to love romantically but learning to love in a broader way. Not in some flaky, nebulous way that we hear the word "love" used by people so tripped out on acid they'd show love to a packet of Saltines if it seemed PC. Instead, how about learning to love people where they are without expecting anything in return? Meeting their needs and seeing them where they are? Caring for them in a way that is unselfish and uncalculated? That's what I want to learn. Maybe that's what Valentine's Day should be about. Maybe that's what St. Valentine meant. I should read about him.

And you'd better believe that over St. Patrick's Day I'll be lifting a pint of Guinness and toasting to the next 11 months, and to learning that kind of love.