

# Guilford College student provokes mixed emotions

Columnist explores recent actions through lens of acquaintance.

Some of you may have noticed (those of you who didn't were probably on fall break) that recently, government agents arrested a junior at Guilford College named



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Nat Heatwole for his part in placing box cutters, bleach and matches on several airplanes a few months ago. As someone who is casually acquainted with Nat, I was especially surprised when the name of the individual arrested was released this week. I think that Nat's actions deserve some

scrutiny, because it's not every day that a college student not much older or younger than anyone here is the focus of the federal government's attention, and it's not often that that attention is due to an act that has such far-reaching ramifications.

First, I'll lay out a bit about what happened, as I understand it. According to the *New York Times* of Oct. 21 and the *Winston-Salem Journal* of the same date, Nat placed the packages, which contained bleach, box cutters and matches on several Southwest Airlines planes. The circumstances of his placing the objects are under speculation. However, what I find much more interesting are the implications of his doing so.

The explanation that I have read, which seems pretty straightforward to me, is that Heatwole, a dedicated pacifist, wanted to make a point about readiness and threat awareness within the Transportation Security Administration. This position is reinforced by the detail from the *Times* article that Heatwole included his e-mail address with at least one of the notes left on the plane, and communicated with individuals at the

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TSA soon after he left the packages on the airplanes. The argument goes that in doing so, Heatwole wanted to point out flaws in the system and chose to work as an outsider to make his point.

There are a lot of Democratic lawmakers who support him in this matter, including Edward Markey (D-MA). Congressman Markey's office has released a statement suggesting that Heatwole be sentenced to work with the Transportation Security Administration to beef up security at airports, and that the TSA should be called on the carpet because of how easily Heatwole was able to penetrate the usual post-Sept. 11 security blanket around airports.

People within the TSA and other lawmakers advance another explanation. They do not dispute

that Heatwole was convinced that he needed to point out the flaws in the security system implemented by the TSA.

A spokesperson for the TSA stated in essence that they could fix their own flaws, and that amateurs testing the system would be prosecuted in exactly the same way that terrorists attempting to hijack a flight would be. Conservative pundits and lawmakers have made the point that what Heatwole did was a criminal act, and that he should not escape punishment simply because it appears that he had a benign motive. Just Tuesday night, I heard John Gibson on Fox News blasting Heatwole, saying essentially that he should be thrown in jail.

I'll tell you the truth, I'm inclined to be sympathetic to Heatwole (I'll pause for gasps of shock from liberals and groans of dismay from conservatives). In the short time of our acquaintance, which basically consisted of trading e-mails, I've found him to be very sincere, and I can see him doing this sort of thing to make a point and sincerely believing that the TSA would welcome his action as a chance to review and fix some of the flaws in

their system.

I am also convinced that he is a pacifist and that if he did do something like this, that it would be very out of character for him to have a violent motive.

That being said, I also find it a bit unfortunate that he chose this way to express his opinion, even if his motive was to improve security at airports. No matter how much I and everyone else who hears about it might wish otherwise, the fact remains that what Heatwole did was essentially a terrorist action.

While some may quibble over the distinction between terrorism with pacifist motives and terrorism for terror's sake, the actions are essentially the same. On a personal level, I guess that Nat accomplished his mission, because I'm more concerned about airport security. On a national level, I don't see how he's going to get off without some kind of punishment. Being a governmental watchdog is a tough position, and doubly so when you're self-appointed.

Chris Plumblee is a senior communication major.

## Lyles' assumption of privilege rings false

Columnist takes issue with perception that wealth equates to virtue.

Jacob Lyles' column ("Society should favor rich," Oct. 16) is the depiction of stereotypical thought derived from spending one's entire life in a bubble of

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wealth and privilege without any view or consideration to the outside world—the outside world being home to the majority of Americans who are not wealthy. No doubt Mr. Lyles' disparagement of the poor is the result of deeply rooted classist sentiments regarding the "leeches" of our society, but I feel the majority of his points are based on narrow-mindedness and general ignorance about the lives of others who are less privileged than himself.

The author states that the poor in society are "loafers" and "leeches" while the wealthy are all "virtuous" and "hardworking." Is the immigrant who speaks broken English and makes minimum wage to clean Mr. Lyles' toilet five times a week and remove his trash a "loafer?" Is the welfare mom trying to sustain a family on wages far below the poverty line a "leech?"

Perhaps if she were only blessed with the strength of character and virtue that our wealthy citizens — for example, the pillars of integrity so wrongly persecuted during the Enron scandal — she would be able to figure out some way to afford child care and work full time. Yes, it must be *virtue* and *creativity* that she lacks.

Mr. Lyles, you attend an extremely expensive private university. You are a white male. While I do not know anything about your family or your background, it would suffice to say that you, as every other student at this school, have lived a life of privilege, being granted some sort of advantage along the way—whether it be in your neighborhood, school, religion, sex, race, or family background. Your place in life has a silver lining. The fact of the matter is, not everyone begins their life, or continues into adulthood as you have, with everything being handed to them. Yes, I recognize that you made the grades for admission to this school and continue to work hard in order to

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achieve highly gainful employment following graduation—but the reality is, *that* does not constitute "hard working" when compared to the struggles faced by the majority of Americans who begin with a disadvantaged lot, and it most certainly has nothing to do with your moral fiber. The idea of unequal distribution of wealth may have its flaws, as you state, but the distribution of *opportunity* is decidedly unbalanced, and arguing against this point only shows ignorance that you have no excuse for.

I would like to clarify that I do not feel the rich should carry "guilt" for their wealth per se, but rather, there should be embarrassment and outrage at the fallacious ideology Lyles perpetuates in this article. The idea of being "rewarded with income in proportion to production" falls far short of truth when we compare professional athletes to sweatshop workers, or Hollywood actors to American public school teachers.

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While I found the narrow-mindedness of the editorial to be both disturbing and insulting, its lack of humanity is entirely frightening. Using the accumulation of wealth as any sort of gauge for judgment of character and virtue is oppressive and demoralizing. Every CEO in this country, hardworking or lazy, virtuous or immoral, earns his or her position on the back of the exploited laborer. In reality, capitalism demands the disadvantage of some in order to allow for the advantage of others. This stratification is based on wealth and only wealth, and it has nothing to do with the character of any person.

Mr. Lyles, be grateful for the blessings that have been given to you—the fact that you were able to make it to Wake Forest and will probably never face hunger or poverty. Recognize these advantages for what they are — GIFTS — not a result of some innate virtue you were born with.

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## Fill-in-the-blank column

Writers offer an editorial Mad Lib to please all.

We are writing today for the sole purpose of *fostering dialogue* in hopes of stimulating something positive, like jello-wrestling foster children. We write as

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GUEST COLUMNISTS

a public service for all you would-be editorialists out there who quiver with anticipation, and every Thursday morning shake uncontrollably until you satisfy your jonesing for Wake Forest's most respected pundits. If you, like so many, crumble at the thought of putting your opinions to paper like the Berlin Wall under the weight of David Hasselhoff's musical prowess, then we are here to help — we offer you money for nothing, chicks for free, and this awesome template.

The following is our opinion on how to write your very own, mind-numbing and easily skimmed-over *Old Gold and Black* editorial.

As a helpful guide, we have taken the liberty of filling in a few of the blanks. Enjoy!

I had an epiphany yesterday (as tends to occur while using the sixth floor stair closet of the ZSR library) and I have decided to take priceless moments from your life to explain it poorly, yet with total confidence. I am \_\_\_\_\_ (exaggerated emotion) about \_\_\_\_\_ (issue to which you are overreacting). I would like to refute \_\_\_\_\_ (ugliest OGB columnist's name)'s comments last week in which \_\_\_\_\_ (he/she) stated that my views are comparable to those of \_\_\_\_\_ (historical racist figure). This couldn't be farther from

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the truth. Rather, as \_\_\_\_\_ (famous fascist) once said, "America is always right ... and so is Jenny Billings (omnipotent, all-knowing deity to whom you pray for guidance)." Which brings me, logically of course, to the purpose of my column: \_\_\_\_\_ (self-promoting and self-damning subject).

My opinion on the aforementioned subject is undeniably the right one. As proof, I offer you these historical 'facts' that I just made up. In \_\_\_\_\_ (insert any date), Oliver Cromwell convinced \_\_\_\_\_ (contemporary American conservative icon) that \_\_\_\_\_ (abstract concept) was morally reprehensible, and any who believed in such a doctrine should be exterminated from the earth.

As a result, Otto Von Bismarck, Liberace, \_\_\_\_\_ (Wake Forest Fraternal organization), and the damned, dirty \_\_\_\_\_ (nationality you have been taught to hate) forced the United States to enter into the Russo-Japanese War, bringing both freedom and incineration to millions worldwide.

In order to hide the fact that I know nothing about the topic to which I have just claimed authority, I will now change the subject to something truly relevant to the Wake Forest Community.

Puppies are smarter than kittens, turtles and \_\_\_\_\_ (color) people. Not through the actions of the puppies themselves, but because turtles are inherently slow and lazy.

Besides, \_\_\_\_\_ (same color) people deserve subjugation, just like \_\_\_\_\_ (synonym for "pinkish-beige color" Goff) deserved to legitimately win \_\_\_\_\_ (any) election. This brings me to my next point, the travesty that is guilt-ridden puppies worldwide with their downy-soft fur. For this I blame \_\_\_\_\_ (liberal political faction) and their mistresses. Being the moral authority on campus, I feel it is my duty to tell you that \_\_\_\_\_ (your social class) is virtuous, pious and most deserving of praise for our insight into complicated ethical conundrums, but more importantly for how much money we \_\_\_\_\_ (have/don't have). \_\_\_\_\_ (ambiguously sarcastic remark regarding heated topic like abortion).

And if you don't think that's funny, you owe *me* an apology, and remember that the right to editorialize is as important to the American way of life as \_\_\_\_\_ (unattainable goal) is to Wake Forest University.

On an unrelated note, \_\_\_\_\_ (social event you have never attended) is (sexist and demeaning to women/totally sweet).

Finally, I stand firm in my understanding of \_\_\_\_\_ ('ism' that you don't understand at all), and anyone who disagrees with me is a Lilting Banshee (naïve pinko commie/Bible-thumping racist bigot/self-aggrandizing libertarian/poo-poo head).

So there you have it! Your masturbatory egotism is expressed for all to read! And just for kicks, you can cut it out, make copies and change your opinions all over again!

Finally, if the only thing holding you back is the imminent campus backlash against you and yours, follow our example and co-author your piece!

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