

# Plaque change a disservice

Jeffries is part of university, national history.

I am a graduate of Wake Forest College, Class of 1949, and proud of it. As students, my friend Bill McIlwain and I wrote a little book called *Legends of Baptist Hollow*. All but one of the six legends were tall tales – stretched by our

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at a service, then implanted in the campus wall he labored to build. How can that plaque be explained? By the respect and affection that “Doctor” Tom had earned and had been given by many generations of students and professors. No college president, dean or professor was afforded such honor and affection.

Now, I hear, after many decades, some persons now at Wake Forest want variously to see “Doctor” Tom’s plaque removed or, if undisturbed, accompanied by a companion plaque that would be an apology for the “racism” and “disrespect” supposedly shown by the omission of “Doctor” Tom’s family name, Jeffries.

To my mind, to remove the plaque would be to censor and blot out a telling and endearing part of Wake Forest’s history and tradition. How could an institution dedicated to truth and enlightenment do that?

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To be honest, we would have much work to do if we were to begin erecting apologetic plaques.

As a start, we would need a plaque that says that Shorty’s, the campus food dispensary, is named for a man whose full name was Shorty Joyner. At Wait Chapel we would need a plaque that says the building is named for a man who was first president of an all-white, all-male college.

At the entrance to library, perhaps there should be a plaque that apologizes for the presence on the shelves of works by Mark Twain and Joseph Conrad, among others, who created fictional characters by names now regarded as racially odious.

At Reynolda House, the university might erect a plaque that apologizes for Wake Forest’s accepting millions of dollars from a family that grew rich manufacturing cigarettes, which have caused the deaths of untold millions from lung cancer.

And the movement could go national. Signs that say, “Welcome to Mount Vernon, home of George Washington, slave owner.” Ditto for Thomas Jefferson.

“Welcome to Indiana, North and South Dakota, Arizona, Utah, etc. Sorry about decimating the aborigines!”

I’ll try to put “Doctor” Tom’s plaque and these other matters in perspective, and yes, in my view, that is, precisely what is needed: perspective.

That means a sense of the wholeness of things, of the passage of time, of the imperfectability of humanity and even of the perceptible advance of humankind, when he (and she) strive to be good and do good and try to grow toward inclusiveness, brotherhood and community.

*Walter Friedenberg is a member of the class of 1949.*

## Walter Friedenberg

GUEST COLUMNIST

primary source, Shorty Joyner, the also legendary hotdog purveyor and pool hall operator, and further embroidered by us. But the last legend was quite different. It was a factual, respectful portrait, an homage to “Doctor” Tom. (Needless to say, I recommend reading it).

We wrote it and included it because we felt that the memory of “Doctor” Tom, enshrined in his bronze-plaque memorial, represented the spirit of Wake Forest College, the atmosphere, the sentiments, the principles, the traditions that pervaded the campus.

Wake Forest was then an all-white college. Not deliberately all-white, but passively, reflecting life and, in that time, years of execrable racial discrimination and prejudice.

All the more striking then, that when “Doctor” Tom died in 1927, his funeral was held in the college chapel with professors as honorary pallbearers. Six years later, the memorial plaque, the idea and project of students, was unveiled

# Staff health care costs too expensive

Affordable healthcare for employees is no longer a reality.

During this year in which we have committed ourselves to fostering dialogue, it is worth recalling that the greatest need for dialogue on campus is between the administration and the rest of the Wake Forest community. I’ll restrict

## James Hans

GUEST COLUMNIST

my remarks to only one example.

The administration waited until early June, long after the spring semester was over, to inform its employees about the large increase in their medical expenses.

Although there must have been good reasons for the delay, it also put off the bad news until the faculty was conveniently dispersed for the summer. The administration has increasingly made use of such delays in delivering bad news, and they contribute to the feeling on campus that those who make the big decisions aren’t interested in fostering dialogue.

In the case of medical benefits, it is not hard to see why. As a point of reference, I would include data from an Oct. 20 *BusinessWeek* article on health insurance. In 2003 the average employer in the United States charged \$201 a month for family medical coverage. A Wake Forest family is charged \$357.71, and if good dental benefits are included, the total is \$400.31.

Again, I’m sure there are good reasons why an employee here pays twice as much for coverage, but no one has ever proffered an explanation.

Equally pertinent, although Wake Forest has been committed to sharing the medical expenses with employees according to a 60/40 formula, there has been undeniable erosion of that commitment in the past few years. The university pays 60 percent of initial costs, but inasmuch as it has increasingly offloaded more of the costs onto deductibles and co-pays, it has diminished its share of medical expenses.

Aside from the problems inherent in the university’s claim that it pays 60 percent of employee medical costs, there is the curious way in which that contribution is reported to us: “For fiscal year 2003-2004 the University has increased the budget for the medical plan by 19 percent to \$5.7 million. If the past 6:4 ratio of employer contributions to employee paid premiums is maintained, the employees will pay a 17 percent increase in premiums and contribute

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approximately \$3.8 million toward the cost of the medical plan ... The total of projected employer contributions (\$5.7 million) and employee paid premiums (\$3.8 million) comes to \$9.5 million or \$800,000 less than the projected cost of \$10.3 million. This will require an additional increase in employee paid premiums or changes to the medical plan that will reduce the cost of paid claims by \$800,000 or a combination of both.”

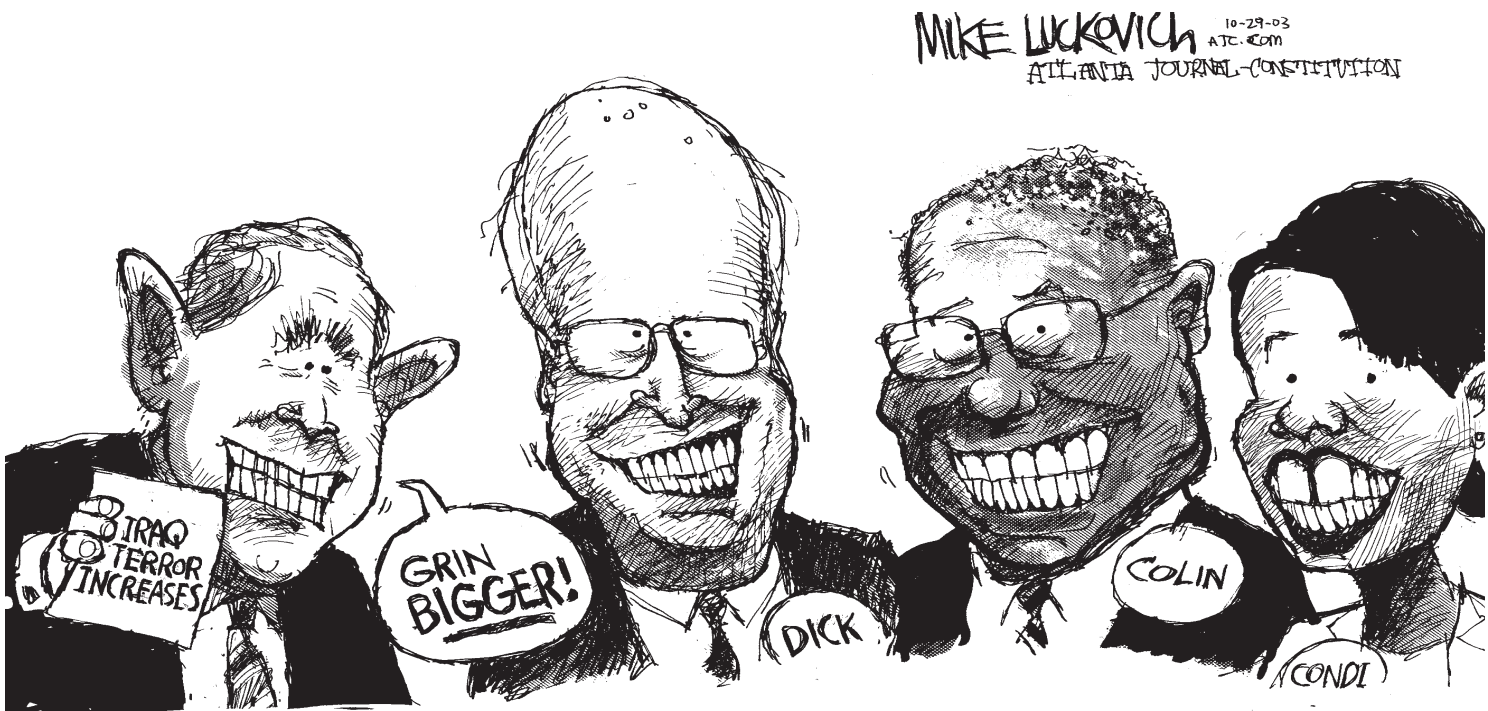
I don’t know exactly what that statement means, but it makes clear that the university will continue to pay less than the stated 60 percent of employee costs for the plan. The report makes it sound as though the administration simply decided what it was willing to pay, added the employee contribution, and then cut benefits to equalize the figures.

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There are many other things the Wake Forest community should engage in dialogue about, but the medical expenses for a typical employee on campus would be a good place to start. I might add that, as with the national budget figures, many of the effects of the changes in our medical plan over the past few years only gradually become known. A “small,” unannounced change a couple of years ago, for example, cost me in excess of \$7,000 this year. Another “small,” unannounced change on July 1 will cost me an additional \$2,000 over the next year.

As a faculty member who has been teaching for many years, I can almost absorb such expenses, but given my own experiences with our medical plan, I don’t see how my younger colleagues and the staff at this university can survive under such burdens, much less the monthly premiums. It may be that the administration has provided us with a plan whose “relative ‘richness’” (the official characterization of the plan) is more bountiful than we have any reason to expect, but that case has certainly not been made to me, nor, I suspect, to most others who have had to absorb these new costs.

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# Marxist musings are illogical

Criticism misses the point of the heart of the capitalist system.

The concept that CEO’s salaries and company profits come from “the back of exploited laborers” in Carrie Williamson’s column (“Lyles’ assumption of privilege rings false,” Oct. 23) is simply fallacious. It is rooted in illogical Marxist rhetoric,

According to Marxist doctrine, each wage earner is entitled to the fruits of his labor. This assumption rests upon the labor theory of value, which states the value or price of a product is determined by the labor put into it.

months or sometimes years after the original investment. They put down payments on buildings, capital and wages. If the product never sells then this money is all but lost. But yet, the wage earner risks none of this. He receives his wage regardless of how well the product sells.

Most importantly of all is the fact that wage earners receive the full benefits of the means of production owned by other capitalists. Their purchases are all due to the profits saved and reinvested by these capitalists.

The drastic increase in production that occurred during the industrial revolution and continues to occur today is a result of an equally dramatic increase in consumption.

The majority of the population consists of wage earners; they in turn are responsible for most of the increase in consumption. This can only occur if the wage rates of workers rise relative to prices, either through decrease in prices or an actual increase in wages.

Thus, by capitalists saving their justified profits the wage earner is better off. All of this would be impossible if workers were paid product value rather than market value for wages.

Today, the exploitation theory is used mainly in reference to globalization and sweatshops but again, such

arguments could not be further from the truth. Globalization is simply the further division of labor. Given the lack of regulations and lower wage rates companies naturally go to these developing countries to produce products more efficiently.

But in no ways are they enslaving or exploiting the labor force. Instead, they are liberating them from the squalor they currently live in. With such massive population expansion subsistence farming will not suffice. These countries are great consumers but they need production to support themselves and globalization provides this. Production, not consumption, creates wealth, despite what you may be told in your economics classes.

Yes, the working conditions and wage rates there are horrible relative to here, but that is irrelevant. Take a look at the working conditions 150 years ago in our country. It has been capitalism, not government regulations, that has increased our standard of living, and it will do the same in the developing countries. These countries may lose their cultural identities as a result of globalization but they will not lose their lives.

Marx has been dead for over 125 years and yet his absurd doctrines are still used as though they were true. It is sad an introductory economics course does not educate us on common fallacies. Never will we hear Bohm-Bawerk’s insightful critiques of Marxian economics. Instead, we are given a multitude of equations and graphs to look at, which can be used to justify government intervention. Marx is as dead as his ideas. Maybe in another 125 years, the world will finally accept this.

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## Andrew Robida

GUEST COLUMNIST

based on looking at society in terms of class warfare rather than in terms of competing individuals. The profits and salaries of executives and so-called “capitalists” are fully justified. In fact, it is these profits that eventually increase the quality of living of the wage earner independently of any efforts of his own.

According to Marxist doctrine, each wage earner is entitled to the fruits of his labor. This assumption rests upon the labor theory of value, which states the value or price of a product is determined by the labor put into it. This is obviously erroneous: value is subjective, not absolute. By the logic of this flawed theory, any profit the capitalist makes above the cost of production is a result of “exploiting” wage earners. However, this theory blatantly ignores the efforts and genius of the entrepreneur.

For one, the profits earned by the capitalists are simply interest for providing the means of production. Capitalists will not see their profits for

