

# Editorial

## Day of love offers hope for peace

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, "The Little Prince"

Today we honor the Saint of Love. With chocolates, kisses, love notes, red roses and full hearts.

Some link the origins of St. Valentine's Day with a saint of the early Christian church who secretly married young couples even though an order was issued which ordered young men to remain single.

Others say today is the day birds choose their mates.

Whatever the origins, this need not be a day reserved only for lovers.

A noisy bunch of chapped-cheeked first-graders gather at the back of their classroom, where a colorful array of shoe boxes lines the counter. Red ones with cut-out lacy hearts. White ones with red cupids. All are sticky and smell of glue. One by one the children pass the boxes, dropping in each a special note, a Valentine, that says, "I like you. Be my friend."

Despite the tradition, this need not be a day reserved only for the ritual of childhood.

Why do we honor the Saint of Love?

Valentine's Day is every man's holiday. It is a day when love can cease to be a private relationship and become instead a social one.

Although it comes only once each year, it is a day with a hearty message which, if internalized, can sustain us through the other 364: Love means we are all a part of something bigger.

The 1980s finds us as a nation seeking world peace through an extension of nuclear weaponry, as President Reagan's \$287.5 billion "more guns, less butter" budget reaffirms.

Yet religious and political leaders, intellectuals, artists and citizens worldwide have recognized throughout time the power, the universality, the healing quality, the hope and the peace inspired by a world that knows how to love:

"Man can live his truth, his deepest truth, but he cannot speak it. It is for this reason that love becomes the ultimate human answer to the ultimate human question," wrote American poet Archibald MacLeish.

Indian leader Mohatma Gandhi spread this message: "It is my firm belief that it is love that sustains the earth. There only is life where there is love."

"Love is the only freedom in the world," wrote Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran, "because it so elevates the spirit that the laws of humanity and the phenomena of nature do not alter its course. . . . In friendship or in love, the two side by side raise hands together to find what one cannot reach alone."

Recognizing the necessity of the day and its message is an obligation we each must make to the future. Syndicated columnist Ellen Goodman put it this way: "We need to flag one day down every 365, and wave a banner of reassurance at each other — a white one with a red heart on it. Maybe we need to consciously stop the dalliance, call a halt to habits and notice a feeling, notice each other . . ."



## The River

## Proposal commendable, but impractical Teaching skills 'untestable'

**R**ule 1: Often, when you scrutinize something too closely, even out of love for it, you end up losing the very thing that made it special in the first place.

Hold that thought.

Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, recently proposed that teachers be required to pass a national exam — similar to those used to certify doctors, lawyers and other professionals. He wants to closely scrutinize the teaching profession and make it better. I think he's off base.



**James A. Fussell**

His motives are simple, and commendable. He wants to elevate teacher quality and teacher income. So do I. So does the National Education Association, but they don't agree with his proposal either. NEA President Mary Futrell says the states should determine who is qualified to teach.

Shanker says the current teacher licensing exams are a joke, barring only the worst candidates from the profession. True enough. But he also says that his national super test will bring

not only fattened wallets, but better teachers to boot. Nice thought. Won't work. Rule 1.

Not that there isn't a first-blush attractiveness to Shanker's proposal. It looks good on paper. Tests like doctors and lawyers? Certainly sounds impressive. But its got a tragic flaw that becomes a glaring problem on second reflection. It's a fundamentally wrong approach to the essence of good teaching.

It takes more to be a good teacher than the skill to score a 98 on some stuffy old test. I remember the students in my high school who scored in the top 2 percent on college board exams. Dry as mud on a fence. I didn't like a one of them and wouldn't have them as a teacher on a bet. Most of them had the dedication of a '58 Rambler and a personality to match.

My point? Teachers are fundamentally different than doctors and lawyers. You don't necessarily make better teachers by turning them into boorish analytical automatons who can score in the top 2 percent with regularity.

I can see the slippery slope from here. More tests, more charts, more pseudo-experts, more computer projections about who's going to be good, who's not and why. No thanks.

Let's talk teachers, Shanker. Real teachers. How do you test things like loyalty, dedication, relationships, warmth, humor, personality, ability to motivate, capacity to give of yourself and to

try just one more time when you've plum run out of patience?

And answer me this. Would it help at all to flash your top 2 percent card at a Friday class full of wild-eyed spitballers whose biggest concern is the time and location of Rhonda's party, and not the Shakespeare sonnet you're trying to teach? We might as well give national tests in patience.

No, super tests are not the answer. For my money, I would gladly sacrifice more than a few points on some dry old professional test for some of those unquantifiable human qualities that are ultimately untestable, and undeniably relevant to good teaching.

In a way, I'm glad there's something we can't measure with a ruler, calculate with a computer or test with an examination. In a way, it's sort of heartening. When you least expect it, out pops the human factor — spontaneous, unreliable, magical and capable of feats no test can ever dream of.

Shanker's proposal for a national super test for teachers may attract a number of bonafide top 2 percenters all right, but it won't attract the loving, caring, *true* professional who does the most important job in the world, basically, out of the goodness of his own heart. I wish there were a way of measuring that.

Rule 2: Some things just aren't measurable. Love is one. Good teaching is another.

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## Safety belt laws restrict freedom

I am writing in regard to the editorial (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 12) on seat belts. I remember when President Reagan was elected the first time. He said he was going to get government out of our lives.

That is why I cannot understand bill LB495 or cutting aid to states that do not pass seat belt

laws. I feel as though we have enough restrictions and regulations already. I think someone who is old enough to drive and maintain a vehicle is old enough to decide whether to wear a seat belt.

I was involved in an accident and if I would have worn my seat belt, I would not be here today. Think about it.

Have a good day.

Paul Ballantyne  
 Junior  
 business administration

## Letters

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