

editorial opinion page



'Til death do us part.
Over two million couples will murmur these words before marriage altars in 1972. One-third to one-half of them will part in divorce rather than in death, according to one analyst.

Census figures for 1960 indicate the divorce rate was one in four. It has been rising steadily ever since 1895, when it was one in 12.

As divorce becomes more frequent, marriage grows more popular. Statistics show Americans are marrying younger and more frequently than ever before. The 1960 marriage rate in the United States was the highest in the western world. Sociologists estimate that all but three per cent of today's "younger generation" will marry.

If marriage is more popular and divorce is more frequent, are divorcees likely to remarry? Yes, in fact the

chances for divorced persons to marry are higher than for any other category. A divorced woman at 30 has 94 chances in 100 of marrying; a widow, 69 in 100; and a single woman, 48 in 100. The 30-year-old male divorcee has 96 chances in 100 of marrying; the widower, 92 in 100; the bachelor, 67 in 100.

These figures seem incongruous at first, because they reveal a marriage pattern that is not endorsed and relatively unrecognized in American society: marriage-divorce-remarriage. It seems that a sizable number of people find the lifetime marriage contract to one person unworkable.

Infidelity was reported over a generation ago by sex researcher Alfred Kinsey as a clear departure from marriage norms. In 1948, Kinsey revealed that at least three-fourths of all men admitted to occasionally desiring an extramarital affair; 50 per cent participated in one.

In 1953, Kinsey reported that 30 per cent of married women born since 1900 have an extramarital affair at sometime.

Marriage is entrenched in church doctrine and state law. The family is the principle economic unit for distribution and consumption, mutual property holding and inheritance. The adult world is suited almost exclusively to couples and families.

In 49 states, divorce is granted only after one of the marriage partners has been proved guilty. Only three states include incompatibility as grounds for divorce. Yet marriage counselors agree that divorce is seldom the fault of one person.

Divorce trials have become grueling public exposures of private lives, injurious to the couples and children involved. State laws often force people seeking divorce to engage in pretense and collusion.

There remains a social stigma attached to divorce, making it a heavy tax of guilt-feelings. The rise in divorce rates is even more striking in the light of these deterrents.

None of this argues that the present marriage model is no longer viable, but it

does say that not all people are suited to the present model. Law-making and social systems in America, rather than treating the growing number of divorcees as deviants or failures, should be creating and legitimizing new and humane marriage alternatives.

Halting responses in this field have been made. California recently enacted a proposal provision for no-fault divorce proceedings. Fifteen states, including Nebraska, are considering no-fault divorce proposals. These not only humanize divorce proceedings for parents and children, but they relieve the overloaded courts of excess baggage.

In both Maryland and New Jersey, bills were introduced last year proposing renewable contract marriage. Couples would agree to be married a certain length of time and would then have the choice of renewing the contract or not, without separation or divorce procedure.

Despite negative social pressures, numerous alternative marriage models, such as trial, group or homosexual marriage and communal living, are springing up across the country.

In trial marriage, couples agree not to have children. In group marriages studied, participants number from three to 15 and are in their 30's. They consider themselves committed to each other for life. Children appear to benefit from this arrangement, according to research done by Larry and Joan Constantine.

These alternatives, if legitimately integrated into social and political systems, promise to be far more humane than the marriage-divorce-remarriage pattern many families follow today. This is especially true when children are involved, which is currently the case in two out of three divorces.

Society and policy-makers should recognize and legitimize humane marriage alternatives to respond pluralistically to the plural needs of society. The best argument for liberalizing the marriage institution is that an increasing segment of society is finding traditional marriage unworkable.

janet
white
collide-
oscope

Brevity in letters is requested and the Daily Nebraskan reserves the right to condense letters. All letters must be accompanied by writer's true name but may be submitted for publication under a pen name or initials. However, letters will be printed under a pen name or initials at the editor's discretion.

Dear editor:

I wish to point out an error which appeared in the *Daily Nebraskan* Feb. 7. In an article on a Board of Regents meeting you reported that "Systems changes approved including moving the Graduate School of Sociology... to Omaha."

The change is slated for the Graduate School of Social Work. Once again let us reiterate: Sociology and social work are separate and independent disciplines, linked only phonetically.

This misconception is extremely annoying, especially in a university community.

Paul L. Riedesel

Dear editor:

In his article concerning the legalization of abortion (*Daily Nebraskan* Feb. 3), Barry Pilger seems to have grossly understated the problem of abortion and its legal ramifications. When he suggests "liberalized" statutes as the "only solution" to Nebraska's "dilemma," he seems to be basing his recommendations on several unfounded premises.

Need I remind him of the recent New York court decision which questioned the assumption that the unborn have no constitutional rights?

There was also a reference to a poll. I suspect that if one-half of the people in the country stated that it would be all right to suspend the Bill of Rights, Pilger would argue that the rights therein must be abolished.

As for the mother, it is ironically absurd to talk of the "right of privacy," which, legally or not, is depriving another of his actual and potential rights, including the most basic one. The question seems to be not one of rights for the mother, but one of the responsibilities of the woman and the man involved.

Morality itself is the question here. It is a very necessary factor in making political decisions.

I hope the Legislature will not condone the deprivation of political rights as proposed by the advocates of this outrageous atavism.

Michael K. Houlihan

Dear editor:

I had been expecting to read it sooner or later this year, but

I really hadn't anticipated coming across it in the *Daily Nebraskan*. I am referring to a Feb. 3 editorial on the positive aspects of the United Nations.

I am surprised John Vihstadt figures on winning over the minds of fellow UNL students by stating how much money the U.S. spends on the most efficient international monetary garbage disposal ever created.

He seemed pleased that America lost \$86.3 million in the UN Development Fund last year which was divided among 130 countries. What if that money had been divided among 130 American universities?

Also, how united is the United Nations if certain countries refuse to join their fellow nations in operations approved by the organization? Should the U.S. continue to subsidize such a disunited group in which the more powerful members care only of their own welfare, and not international betterment?

When one gets right down to basics one is forced to see that the only way anyone can stave off or end a war is either to threaten war itself or jump right in the ring with them until it's all over.

The U.S. should either leave the UN or pay only our dues. Dead insects in Africa aren't much of a dividend when many Americans need sufficient food.

Parasitic nations have slowed us up, left too many of our own hungry, uneducated and below full potential. In 25 years, the UN has started out slowly and kind of tapered off.

Jim Balters

Dear editor:

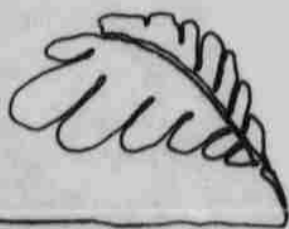
The intent of my article on Jan. 31, entitled "Try it—You'll like it" was not to compare retirement salaries of military personnel to those of university faculty members.

My intent was to inform our young people of an additional avenue of approach into the real world following their graduation. Students sometimes fail to look at all the options available. The only reason I mentioned a retirement salary figure was to inform... not to compare retirement salaries. I merely wrote the article to inform students of something I didn't know when I was a student.

I, too, think the plight of our emeriti is a deplorable situation and should be corrected. The article on Jan. 31 entitled "Aged Ask Equitable Pension Plans," was merely coincidental to my article. I was not the author.

If I caused psychasthenia to rain on Professor Gerken—"My apologies, Clay." But, at the same time, I must also repeat to the students—"Try it... you'll like it."

Norman B. Hemingway



to the
editor