

The media and the victims

john
michael
o'shea
distant
thunder

Considering the current competition for front page space between hostages and assorted body parts, it seems a critical time to reflect on the news media, its responsibilities to the general public and its responsibilities to the individual in a free society.

Our first case involves the kidnaping of newspaper editor Reg Murphy, who was supposedly being held by the American Revolutionary Army (ARA). He was abducted only two weeks after the Patricia Hearst kidnaping and was being held for a \$700,000 ransom.

The ARA, a right wing organization, claims the kidnaping was a response to a news media that have been "too leftist and too liberal." In addition to the ransom demand, the ARA claimed that its organization is "stronger, better organized, better disciplined and better spread around than the SLA" (the Symbionese Liberation Army).

A week ago in this column, I predicted the Hearst kidnaping would be only the beginning, and today I can safely make the same prediction about the Murphy abduction.

Kidnaping seems to have much of the appeal skyjacking had. It offers a chance for power and recognition on the 5:30 p.m. news. As of this writing, Hearst has been held for 18 days, and on each of these days the major news sources—radio, TV, and newspapers—have covered, analyzed and covered again that particular day's installment.

Is it any wonder another radical political group has demanded equal time?

Our second case involves the death of a young Lincoln girl and the arrest of her

possible killer. The girl had been missing for months when body parts were found near Table Rock.

The next evening a local television station not only showed film of farmer "Jones" pointing out where he found the head, but accompanied it with detailed speculation of where the rest of the body was and how it may have been scattered. That is important news. I'm sure the girl's parents and friends were glad to know.

Soon after the discovery of the body, a suspect was arrested. Within the day, his name and face were in every Lincoln home along with a label: murderer.

You may say, "But this is the public's right to know. We must know to protect ourselves." It seems the question is "Who needs protection?"

The accused is in jail. He cannot hurt anyone. But the premature label of murderer and the rolls of news film can hurt him. If he is not guilty, what defense does he have?

These examples illustrate the conflict in responsibility of a free press.

In the first example, the media actually becomes the tool and plaything of the kidnapers, heightening their sense of power by reporting their every whim or comment. And by doing so, the press may well be assuring the abduction of someone else. One must surely ask if the public is being served.

In the second case, it becomes a question of satisfying the traffic accident curiosity of the general public or allowing individuals to endure tragedy in private.

These are not easy questions to resolve, because they demand an accurate and mature definition of news itself. Yet the time is such that they must be considered.

to the
editor

Dear editor,

Regarding Mary Cannon's column against abortion (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 21).

The problem with an issue like this, "an unruly issue," as Cannon says, is that the supportive and dissenting arguments go around in circles. For every pro argument, there is a con. For every person who is aghast at the thought of abortion, there is one who believes in it.

Cannon, I think, loses sight of two facts. First, abortion is a private, moral decision. Second, women are seeking and will probably continue to seek abortions, no matter what the political climate.

Since that is the reality of abortion, the least women deserve is a safe one.

So, before we get into a round of debates concerning murder, battered children, promiscuity, contraceptive failure, etc., let's partially reconcile the facts. Those who do not believe in abortion are in no way being infringed upon. Those who do believe in abortion, for whatever reason, are free to live in accord with their beliefs.

Sue Aitchison

SCIENCE FICTION

we stock several hundred titles with new titles arriving weekly

as usual all books discount priced

Ten O'clock Scholar

around the corner from Dirt Cheap

1017 "Q"

MODERN CHINESE BALLET

The Tale of the White Hair Girl

Date: Feb. 26, 1974

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Place: Sheldon Art Gallery

Admission: member-50 cents

Non-member-75 cents

Additional

Program: 1) Masterpieces of Chinese Art
2) Documentaries from China

Sponsored by: Chinese Student Association

Nominations for Distinguished Teaching Awards are now being accepted by the various colleges. Students are invited, indeed urged, to make such nominations. Simply follow directions outlined by your college.

Agriculture:

Submit nominations and supportive material to Office of Resident Instruction, c/o T. E. Hartung, 103 Agri Hall.

Architecture:

Contact Dean's Office, 104 Arch.

Arts and Sciences:

Secure standard nomination form from Dean's Office, 1223 Oldfather Hall. Send materials to Joan Wadlow, 1223 Oldfather Hall.

Business:

Contact Dean's Office, 240 CBA.

Dentistry:

Submit nominations and supportive material to Dr. William S. Krerner, Dental Building, East Campus.

Engineering and Technology:

Make nominations through departmental student organizations.

Home Economics:

Nominate through the Student Advisory Council or directly to the Dean's Office, 101-C Food and Nutrition Building.

Law:

Nominations are made through an in-college process. Contact Dean's Office, 208 Law, for further information.

Teachers:

Nominate through Student Advisory Board or directly to the Dean's Office, 101 Teachers College.

Bud's Big!

--and when you say Bud--you've said it all!



L. M. KALIN DISTRIBUTOR
DALE HERMAN / DICK HERMAN