

opinion/editorial

Parents' vs. child's rights controversy not solved

Chad Green is dead. The three-year-old leukemia victim was buried in Hastings Saturday. He had become a national figure when his parents, in defiance of a Massachusetts court order, took him off chemotherapy and escaped with him to Tijuana for laetrile and vitamin treatments.

With his death, the debate about the moral character of the Greens has become moot. And, rightly, Gov. Charles Thone announced Monday that "The State of Nebraska will not add to their suffering" by allowing Massachusetts to extradite Gerald and Diana Green to face contempt-

of-court charges.

But even though this case has been closed, the social debate about parents' rights and children's rights has just begun.

Already there are other cases. In California, the courts have ruled that a boy with Down's syndrome cannot have surgery without his parents' permission. The parents of Phillip Becker have refused to give the permission because, they say, they fear Phillip will outlive them to live unhappily in an institution.

In another case, this one in New Jersey, a judge has said that a boy

with Hodgkin's disease can be treated with laetrile and metabolic cures, against medical advice but according to his family's wishes.

In both cases, the courts have responded by allowing these difficult decisions to be made by the parents. The court in California took special pains to make sure that it steered clear of the "quality of life" debate and made its decision on purely legal grounds.

There is a danger in following such philosophy. It is difficult to determine what is in the "best interest of the child" in purely legal terms.

Is it better to live in an institution for the rest of one's life, or is it better to die a natural death? If a child has a terminal disease, who should choose the method of treatment—especially if one treatment is painful (chemotherapy) and the other (laetrile) likely to be ineffective?

Those are not strictly legal questions and there never will be strictly legal answers. We cannot allow the courts to take a black and white approach to such cases. Always, "the best interest of the child" should be the deciding factor.



letters

Needless to say, we were dismayed when we read the headline in Tuesday's Daily Nebraskan which said "Pro-lifer to give talk on abortion controversy." The article itself, about Ms. Judith Levin's PRO-CHOICE presentation, was accurate. It is the mistake in the headline to which we object. To put the wrong label on the speaker is as serious an error as reporting that a Nazi will speak to an audience of Jews.

Ms. Levin, an American Civil Liberties Union attorney, from New York, will represent a pro-choice point of view in her lecture. To label her as she was labeled is an error of such magnitude that it boggles the mind. Her address, entitled Abortion: A Religious and Legal Controversy will be held Thursday, Oct. 25, 7:00 p.m. in the Nebraska Union Ballroom. The event is sponsored by the Women's Resource Center, the Student Y, the Nebraska Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights and the Nebraska Civil Liberties Union. We urge everyone to attend the lecture on this very important issue.

Mary Emanuel
Representing the Women's Resource Center

Pornography criticism relevant

I am writing in response to the Oct. 11 and 12 issues of the Daily Nebraskan. I was especially interested in the two articles responding to Nebraska student William Watters' speech to a small group of NU students on Oct. 10. I believe that the points Mr. Watters made regarding the guidelines for advertising in the Daily Nebraskan were relevant and responsible criticism.

Instead of supporting advertisers who advocate X-rated, pornographic films and theatres, why not take the opportunity to educate your readers about pornography? For a college newspaper to promote advertisements that degrade 50 percent of its readership seems in-

appropriate, if not abusive. Violence in pornography leads to violence in the streets, in the bedroom, and in the office. Perhaps if people were actually aware of how women and children are depicted in these films and magazines, they'd be weary of financially supporting these establishments.

It is my opinion that Mr. Watters was not attacking the Daily Nebraskan as much as speaking out on behalf of responsible journalism. For that reason, the editorial printed in the Oct. 12 issue seemed unfair. From its tone, it appeared to me that the individual who wrote the editorial had not even attended Mr. Watters' presentation. This leads me to further conclude that the paper responded defensively, rather than acknowledging Mr. Watters' ideas as valid criticism and suggestions for better serving the interest of your readers.

If the Daily Nebraskan's goal is to teach responsible journalism, I think it had better re-examine its editorial policy on such issues. I'm sure that there are plenty of local businesses which would be glad to advertise in your paper. You do have the right to be selective.

Stephanie Marino
San Diego

Director responds

I feel that I must respond to the story on page 1 of the Daily Nebraskan for Oct. 19. As I feared, when I was in discussions with various persons concerning the complaint raised by Leslie Harlow, that the story to be printed would put the whole matter in a simplistic light and that the reporter's delight in finding "trenchant" comments would result in inaccuracy of representation or give the impression that persons being quoted were on the verge of idiocy.

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Winter initiation is a common hardship, can crack isolation

Winter 1980. We have seen its commencement once again—and survived.

The annual initiation by the elements—that-be, into the dark, cold, eternal thing called Winter, exerts a powerful influence on the UNL community.

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It is embarrassingly easy to "blow off" trivial matters like deadlines, election days and prestigious guest speakers. But no one crossed campus this past Monday morning during the Great 8:30 a.m. Migration without subjecting themselves to total involvement in a common struggle against wet, windy snow.

What a unifying phenomena, right? Unlike tuition increases, the onset of bad weather is a visible, immediate hardship. And our exposure to its first occurrence provides us with an ideal opportunity for pulling together, for becoming friendly allies instead of competitors for grades and jobs.

I said ideal.

Once inside the classroom, the shared exasperation of demummifying ourselves for the first time can thaw the barrier of distance set up by so many people. But for the duration of time spent out in the weather, especially this first time, each person is on his/her own.

The wind whipped furiously around the bundled figures crossing the campus. A lead-filled sky suspended ominous, bloated clouds in all directions. A student wrapped in wool and corduroy struggled to reach her destination, but her footprints, refusing to set themselves down straight ahead, kept drifting off to the south, driven by the wind. This impeded progress and forced all the student's energy into deliberate walking, and she lowered her hooded head to strengthen her resistance.

The world around ceased to exist as the hood of her coat swallowed her ears and forehead.

Timidly at first, she skirted still newly-formed puddles, and flinched at each new blast of snow. The lonely sound of the wind created its own silence, and she wondered, "Is there no conversation this morning, or can I just not hear it?"

A venturesome peak from inside the drooping hood revealed other solitary figures before another icy blast forced a retreat into its confines. "At least they are there," she consoled herself as she let go of the panicky thought that it was really only Sunday morning.

This is isolation—the uncertainty that the rest of humanity is still within an arm's length. The hood itself doesn't matter; it can be Camp 7, White Stag, or Halston-designed, and still symbolize the effect of cold weather on our attitudes and behavior.

In time, we resign ourselves to the increasing cold, and learn to talk and fight the wind at the same time again. Even more importantly, this is Nebraska, and by late Monday afternoon, the clouds had dispersed themselves to where used storm clouds go, and the sun was once again highlighting all the golds and reds of autumn's trees. It could reach 70 degrees by Thursday.

And maybe it won't snow again until November. Monday morning, with its double sweaters and hiking boots and wet hair and cold fingers, might have been worthwhile if it causes us to appreciate a little more the temporary beauty of this Midwestern fall.