

Editorial



Poet laureate search using politics in recognition of art

The naming of a poet laureate for Nebraska grows more suspect with each mention of the process. The most recent was an article in the March 30 *Daily Nebraskan*.

What is suspect is the information that the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities "leaks." When the process to name a new poet laureate started in November 1981, letters sent to several poets said, "... as an official symbol of Nebraska's cultural life ... the poet laureate must be willing to continue to write for and about Nebraska as long as he/she lives." But in the *Daily Nebraskan* article, Anne Cognard, associate director of the humanities committee, said the position is not limited to a poet and would not have to last for life.

Another aspect of this process that is suspect is the way the committee has reacted to the position taken by many of the writers being considered for poet laureate. In November 1981, when opposition to the search was first voiced, the committee's reaction was to ignore this opposition. When a group of writers opposed to the search wrote a letter to the committee in early March 1982 asking it to end the search, the committee maintained its stance of silent ignorance.

At the end of March the committee finally decided to address the opposition, but the rules had changed. Cognard said in the *Daily Nebraskan* article, "The five people who are reviewing writings ... may select several writers to serve as a council

or award the poet laureate honor on an annual basis." This statement makes it seem the committee no longer supports any guidelines in its search for a Nebraska poet laureate. Instead of admitting to the committee's backing away from its original position, Cognard labels the opposing writers "misinformed."

Marshall Jamison, a member of the five-person review board, said in the *Daily Nebraskan* article, "Recognition of the arts in Nebraska is our first priority." Those writers opposing the selection of a poet laureate cannot disagree with the intention of the humanities committee to recognize the arts in Nebraska. But is this what the committee is doing? By picking up the let's-select-a-new-poet-laureate ball in November, running over the opposition until the end of March and only then deciding that the opposition hasn't been told how to play properly, is the committee furthering Nebraska's cultural life?

It seems the art being recognized by the humanities committee is the art of politics who will speak and who will not, when to speak and when to remain silent, which issues to address and which to ignore, and which group of constituents to heed and which group to dismiss.

Granted, politics is a part of Nebraska culture, but as an art form, it can, and will, exist very nicely without drafting one, five or 50 civilian writers.

Rob Wilborn

Nancy Drew: 'the girl sleuth' for all generations

As an author she had a stable of names.

She was Laura Lee Hope and Franklin Dixon and Victor Appleton, but above all others, she was Carolyn Keene. She wrote about the Bobbsey Twins and Hardy



Ellen Goodman

Boys and Dana Girls. But above all, she cared about Nancy Drew.

As a 9-year-old fan, I never got a clue about the real name of the lady who died March 27 at 89 years of age. Without a cipher, I would never have deduced that Carolyn Keene was Harriet Stratemeyer Adams.

But I knew her cast of characters: Bess, the slightly overweight blonde; George, the girl who loved her name; Ned Nickerson, college football player and boyfriend.

And most of all I knew Nancy, the "titian-haired" detective who figured things out for herself.

I can't remember why I read all the way through the Nancy Drew series in those years. I didn't much like mysteries then and I haven't read one since *The Clue in the Crumbling Wall*. As literature, Nancy Drew never made the list of great masterpieces.

But I guess it was Nancy who intrigued me. Harriet Adams' "girl sleuth" led me, as she has led 70 million others over half-a-century, into one adventure and out the next.

Nancy was different from the other characters who dotted my childhood. In the fairy tales on my shelves, girls waited to be rescued from their sleep or their cinders by princes. On the movie screens of my Saturday afternoons, men in black hats and white hats fought it out while girls stood by helplessly. I didn't have enough sense to realize that the weakness lay in the literature and not in the women.

But Nancy Drew rescued herself. Nancy Drew solved problems. Nancy Drew behaved the way a child of 9

wants to believe she will behave at 18: sensibly, competently, independently.

She traveled the world in pursuit of puzzles as if it were the most ordinary thing to do. She saved victims from drowning and escaped from car trunks and boats and planes. She was treated as an equal and an expert in a world of police chiefs and lawyers. Above all, she was blissfully self-confident. The way we wanted to be.

"I like to think I brought up Nancy Drew the way I brought up my own children and they brought up theirs," Harriet Adams said once.

But the author's own youth was not so straightforward. She was born in 1894 to Edward Stratemeyer, the writer who originated Horatio Alger and a host of other children's series. Stratemeyer didn't approve of women writers or workers. As a Wellesley graduate, his daughter badgered him into letting her edit manuscripts at home. But after her marriage, Stratemeyer wouldn't give her work to do.

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Gay rights quest infringes upon non-gays' rights

I'd like to respond to the March 31 guest opinion by James Holloway about homosexual rights. Holloway appeals for gay rights by saying, "All gays want is the right to live and work in peace, a right we were born with as Americans." He then goes on in hopes of giving us a greater comprehensive understanding, because we have "incomplete knowledge of the concept of homosexuality."

Guest Opinion

I believe Holloway is the one with the incomplete knowledge. There isn't any problem in the gays' public relations department. Rather, the problem lies with both sides' perceptions of manhood and womanhood. Compound this with the fact that most people find the homosexual physical act beyond comprehension and sickening, and you've got a genuine hot potato in the oven despite efforts to dilute it as "A simple expression of showing you care for someone."

I don't think the gay community realizes what a powerful force sexual identity is to many people, and let's face it, whether directly or indirectly, they're asking society to completely redefine its concepts of morals, values and sexual identity. That's a pretty tall order.

I don't believe in denying anyone rights for equal housing, jobs, etc., but the gays' quest for rights is unlike that of women and blacks who want their share of the

American pie. Gays want to go beyond the piece of pie: they want to take us into their bedrooms and force us to be aware of all the details. They want to invade our personal inner privacy and identity by making us aware of their lifestyle. They want us to accept their behavior and sanction it as normal and moral. Holloway says people have no right to force their morality and values on others, and I agree, but there comes a point where that works two ways.

Gays claim their lifestyle doesn't affect straights, and that is where we definitely part company. If you're straight, do you know what it feels like to have a gay put his arm around you when you're at a bar or make a pass at you in an airport in front of a crowd of people? Do you know how that can make a person feel who considers that type of lifestyle repulsive? Where are our rights when a gay makes us feel anxious or appear effeminate by making a pass because we've caught his eye? Where are my rights if my brother dies and they want to adopt his children, or mine if I die? Where are my rights?

The gays say we shouldn't feel the way we do, we have an attitude problem. Of course, there's nothing wrong with their attitude, is there? If all else fails, just blame it on society for "training us to be half persons," as Holloway says. They want us to take their feelings into consideration, but do they care about ours?

Holloway explains the homosexual orientation as a result of "exceedingly complex chemical, biological, chromosomal, hormonal, environmental and developmental factors." That's fine, but don't forget straights' sexual

identity is just as powerful as yours, derived from similar "exceedingly complex factors."

Also, I wonder if the gays fully comprehend the tremendous force they're up against. Gays believe a Gay Rights Amendment or the Equal Rights Amendment (which would give not only women but also homosexuals the same nondiscriminatory rights) is going to eliminate discrimination.

Let's be realistic. The prejudice and discrimination will remain just as strong as before, because gays are not changing the real root of the problem: People's morals, values and sexual identity are different than their's. Those are virtually unchangeable and will probably be passed on to their children. Without empathy from the public, the gays' hot potato patch is going to be difficult to hoe. And when they take the next step of wanting the right to marry and adopt children (after they get their basic rights), it's only going to make matters worse.

As said, this is a complex problem and not a simple one. Regardless, the fact is that gays are here to stay, and I believe it's only a matter of time before they get what they want. But let's not forget there are rights on both sides to consider. I don't know if a compromise is even a realistic concept, but like it or not, this is an important issue and a solution should come forth in a constructive manner. If only one side gets what it wants, all could be potential losers.

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