

Editorial

Sileven is the outlaw in showdown at Louisville

"(He) had secluded himself with about 100 supporters and had challenged authorities to arrest him."

"He was arrested inside . . . about 9:30 a.m. Friday, ending a 48-hour standoff between (himself) and county authorities."

"Lookouts were posted on the road between (one town) - the county seat and sheriff's headquarters - and the church in (second town)."

"Supporters . . . continue holding classes, despite renewed warnings that such action could land them in court."

The above quotations were taken from Omaha World-Herald accounts of the recent dramatic arrest of Louisville, Neb., pastor Everett Sileven.

But with the specifics removed, the quotes read almost like the script of a bad TV Western. Seclusion in the church, lookouts on the road, a standoff of authorities and finally, the big arrest.

If Everett Sileven staged his Friday arrest for publicity, he did a bang-up job. He got around-the-clock coverage.

But for a man who is supposed to be dedicated to religion - which most believe includes being a law-

abiding citizen - breaking the law certainly seems the wrong way to generate publicity for his cause.

His cause, as most know, is to get the state to allow him to operate his Christian school at Faith Baptist Church, in direct violation of state teacher certification laws. He maintained that he should be able to run the school without accredited teachers; the courts disagreed and in 1979 ordered the school closed. Sileven disobeyed, reopened the school and was sentenced to about four months in jail.

He was to be arrested last Wednesday, but instead began his "standoff." On hand for the drama were the national secretary of the Moral Majority, about 100 pastors from across the country and the president of the Christian Law Association, a group that helps small churches fight state regulations.

Faith Baptist Church students stood outside their school, wearing red, white and blue uniforms. Other supporters placed an American flag and a flag with a Christian symbol on each side of the church's door.

And then in came Cass County Sheriff Fred Tesch

and other members of the "posse" to take their criminal alive.

Now Sileven is in the Cass County Jail, with about 100 days of his jail term remaining. He deserves every day. Jail terms are what people who break the law get.

The disturbing thing about the whole incident is that Sileven is making a mockery of his cause. There is room for church-run schools in society. That has been proven with society's acceptance of thousands of parochial schools. But there is no room for church schools that violate the law. Sileven's comical "standoff" probably won him more hecklers than sympathizers.

A recent World-Herald editorial said Sileven has two options: He can challenge a law he disagrees with - the one that says teachers must be accredited; or he can challenge his sentence with a court appeal.

Although Sileven's attempts at both have failed, that does not give him license to break the law.

While sitting in his jail cell, Sileven should consider that perhaps he botched those two legal attempts because of his illegal sideshows.

Educational system teaches values accepted by society

It opens every September with the same clean slate, the same expectations. The first day of school always comes with the crisp snap of a fresh start.

But if last year's report card predicts this year's performance, soon we'll hear the bells ring with alarm over familiar classroom controversies. Textbooks in Texas, creationism in Arkansas, school prayer in



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Congress, sex education in one school system and corporal punishment in another.

For all the talk about skills, we still go back to the basics for our most heated debates about education, back to questions about values.

No institution, not even the Internal Revenue Service, touches as many lives as schools. This is one of the only countries in the world where everyone is supposed to stay in school until 16 years of age. We are almost all veterans or victims of the school system, connected by our childhood or our children.

We've all learned one common lesson, that school is the place where society passes on its curriculum of values to the next generation.

Those who object to the textbook portrait of mothers in aprons or the one of women with briefcases share the conviction that they are struggling for important turf. As right-wing textbook critics Norman and Mel Gabler stated in their own inimitable way: "Textbooks mold nations because textbooks largely determine how a nation votes, what it becomes and where it goes."

The view underlies our debates about creationism and science, patriotism and history, obedience and questioning.

There is nothing new in this. Values have always been taught along with the three R's. They called it moral education in the 19th century, and no less an authority than Horace Mann, the father of public education in America, stated that the purpose of school was ultimately "to form character."

Mann's faith in the ability of schools to form character was, to our modern ears,

quite breathtaking: "If all our children were to be brought under the benignant influences of such teachers as the state can supply from the age of 4 years to that of 15, and for 10 months in each year, 99 in every 100 of them can be rescued from uncharitableness, from flasehood, from cupidity, licentiousness, violence and fraud and reared to the permanence of all duties, and the practice of all the kindness and courtesies of domestic and social life."

A clear streak of elitism also ran through the commitment of those who established public education. They had no doubt that they knew what was best, no doubt that the state should educate children out of the influence of their parents.

When Mann worked, an assumption existed that education should turn immigrants into Yankees. The role of the parents and the community was just to fuel this scholastic melting pot.

"Every wise parent and community, desiring the prosperity of their children," Mann wrote, "will spare no pains in giving them a generous education."

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Thorough reading reaches new depths

For many, the university provides the first real opportunity to analyze literary masterpieces with any significant depth.

One of the first things you learn in college is that in classic literature, no one says what they mean. Evidently, this



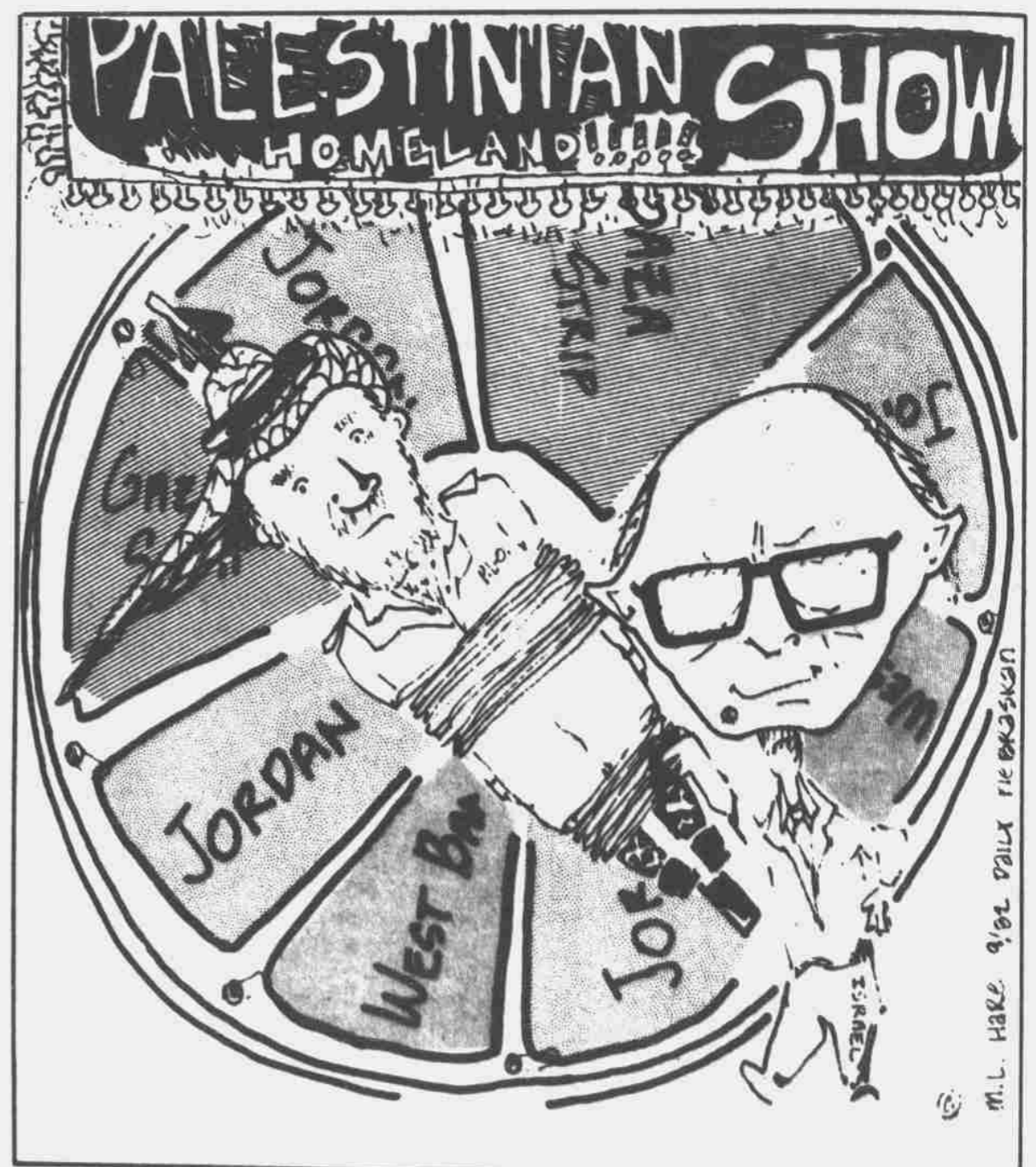
Mike Frost

ritual was some source of pride for writers. In fact, on his deathbed, William Shakespeare reportedly said "Hey, I'm feeling okey-dokey, really."

Therefore, one must examine everything he or she reads in college from a more abstract perspective, to comprehend the author's real meaning. For illustrative purposes, let's examine one line from Sophocles' "Oedipus the King," a play my mother loves, and search for the true and complete meaning of it.

The line: "O Zeus, what fate hast thou ordained for me?" Of course, some of you rashly concluded that this exclamation means something like, "Oh God, what next?" To the casual reader, this may be good enough. But we don't want to be casual readers, do we? No, we must probe this offering, word by word.

"O": Could this be an archaic spelling of "oh?" Or, could it be short for some-



thing? Perhaps for Oscar, who lived next door to Oedipus and often borrowed his gardening tools. Ancient Greeks, in case you were unaware, prided themselves on their neatly kept lawns.

"Zeus:" The ancient Greek god (are there any modern Greek gods?), you venture. Could be. Or it might be our friend Oscar again. Oscar Zeusopolis, the guy next door.

"What:" You're right, this is a trick question. It simply means what.

"Fate:" The final outcome? Actually, no. Good guess, though. In ancient Greece, the leading garden tool manufacturers were Fate & Hast, Inc. They achieved their fame by perfecting a forerunner to the modern lawn mower. So popular was their mower, in fact, that it was simply known as the Fate-Hast, instead of its proper name (The Lawn of the Father's Shearer), like we call them Band-Aids instead of adhesive strips.

"Thou:" You're right again, it means "you." No one is sure why they insisted on saying thou instead of you. Probably their way of being non-conformists.

"Ordnained:" Here, we encounter the problem of the ever-shifting nature of human language. Now, as we all know, ordained means decreed or ordered. However, the word once meant repaired. The meaning was changed in 1523 when King Skip of what is now Del Rio, Texas, proclaimed: "Lo, from this point forth, let ordained mean decreed and repaired

mean fixed. And let this yellow stuff be called hay since it seems to cause hay fever."

For some reason, everyone obeyed this edict from that point hence. However, "Oedipus the King" was written decades, nay centuries, before King Skip, so ordained still had its original meaning.

"For me:" In his book, "I Know Oedipus," Quincy M. Brown theorizes that 'for me' was actually a veiled reference to the god Formey, who was in charge of those squiggly lines you see when it gets real hot. Pahaw, say most literary experts. It probably means "for me," nothing more or less. Quincy was a mama's boy, anyway.

So, where does all of this leave us? "O Zeus, what fate hast thou ordained for me?" really means "Oscar Zeusopolis, what lawn mower have you fixed for me?"

This line seems to have little to do with the play itself. We must therefore assume that this was a bad day for Sophocles. In fact, "Oedipus the King" is nothing more than a series of thinly disguised insults to Sophocles' neighbors. In fact, Sophocles was probably something of a creep who was out for an easy buck. His plays, then, are worthless and hold no real significance for the modern reader.

The point is: never be content with the first reading of anything. You must read deeper into any work to fully appreciate it.