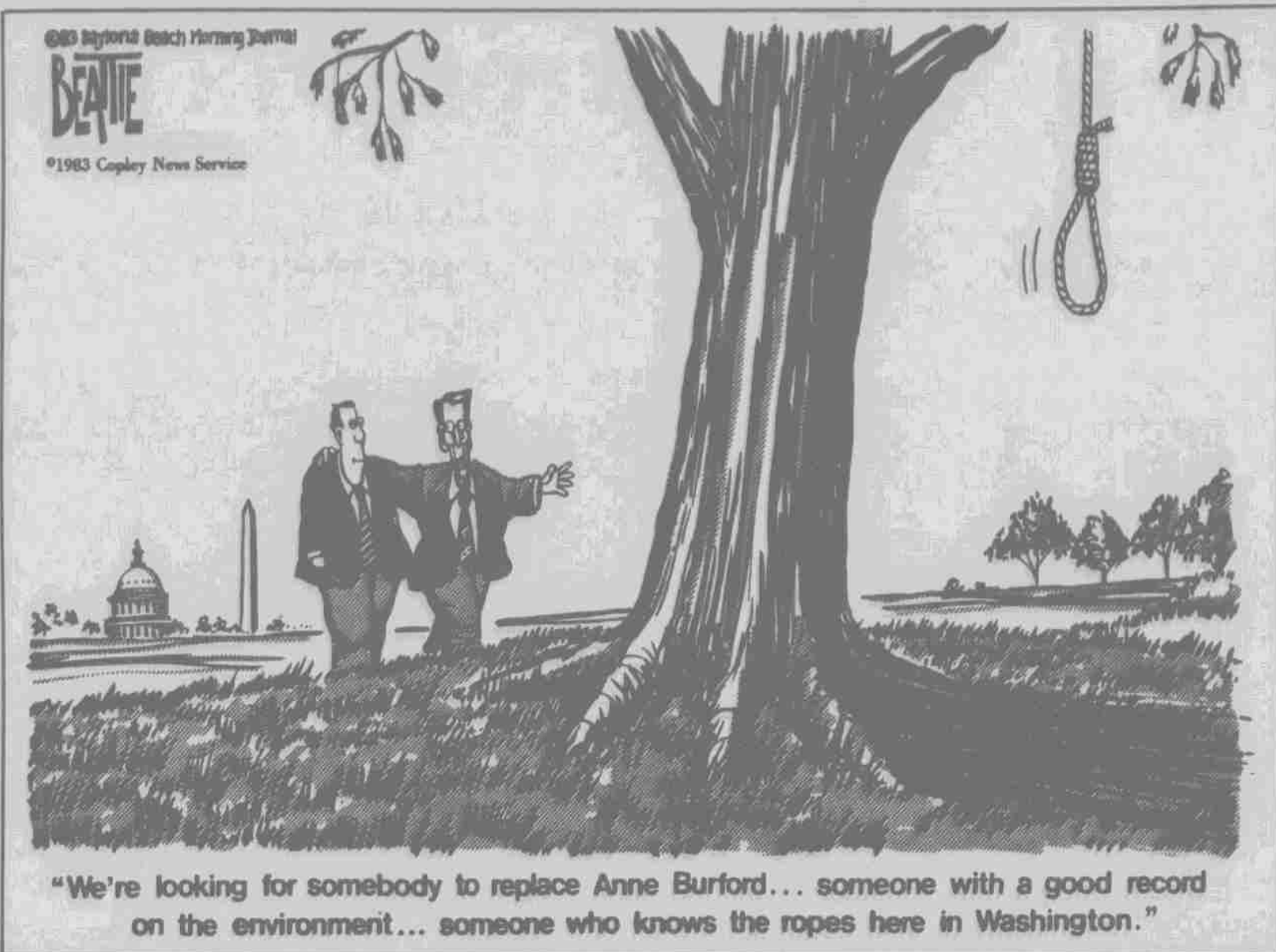


Editorial



"We're looking for somebody to replace Anne Burford... someone with a good record on the environment... someone who knows the ropes here in Washington."

Oh, to savor the sweet taste of tobacco

The maitre d' was pleasant enough as he asked, "How many?" I replied, "Two."

"Will that be smoking or non-smoking?"
"Smoking, please."

Silence. A look of utter disgust and then, "Right this way" as he ushered us into a smoke-filled room in which I recognized several faces through the haze. I made a mental note to deduct 15 percent from his tip. Making faces at a smoker is a serious offense, you know.

Smokers deserve much more respect than they currently receive in today's health-conscious and wellness-wishing society. Why, the risks alone that smokers stand



Becky Stingley

up to are numerous. How many others are willing to reduce the oxygen content of their blood, thereby reducing the amount of oxygen the brain receives each minute? Smokers take the risk. They even write great columns and accomplish monumental feats with this reduced amount of oxygen. Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote marvelous short stories and wonderful novels while sucking on cigarettes. Who knows, perhaps this reduced amount of oxygen inspires creativity and imagination.

Let's talk about the reduced levels of physical stamina that smokers endure. Smoking gives individuals the opportunity to wheeze and cough when climbing more than two flights of stairs. Smoking gives joggers the incentive to make it to the end of the block where they will reward themselves with the luxury of an extra-light 100.

Smokers can make greater claims for accomplishing the same physical feats as non-smokers. Everyone knows it takes more to run a mile, survive an hour of jazzercise, or dribble a basketball for four quarters if you smoke a pack or more of cigarettes a day than if you do not. Maybe the Olympics ought to be divided into categories of smokers and non-smokers so we can see who really deserves the gold medals.

Being a smoker entitles an individual to many personal benefits. First of all, there is the benefit of the lingering smell of smoke. Smokers continually have the smell on their breath, their hands, and their clothes. No need to spend money on aftershave or perfume since the sensual *eau de smoke* permeates a smoker's entire existence.

For careless smokers, there is the benefit of additional wardrobe purchases to replace those wearables having burnt holes and scorch marks.

The long-term benefits of being a smoker include having stained teeth, stained fingers (if you are compulsive enough about it), a hacking cough and rapidly aging skin. Yellow teeth qualify smokers to purchase special tooth-pastes, and a nasty cough is always good for waking up in the morning. The beauty of rapidly aging skin can best be seen in the tanning lotion ad that demonstrates the effects of baking your body in the sun, except the effects

of smoking are much more devastating than a few harmless rays of ultra-violet sunlight.

More than anything else, smoking is a social defense against other people. Puffers define the boundaries of their personal space by the smoke they spread around them. Smoking further provides a subtle irritation to non-smokers whereby smokers can rid themselves of bothersome individuals if they happen to be non-smokers. For example, if you are sitting in the smoking section of the cafeteria or the library and a person who particularly grates on you happens to make themselves comfortable at your table, you simply light up and begin demonstrating your chain smoking abilities until the aforementioned party politely dismisses themselves in the fog. (This only works with non-smoking nimrods. When tried with smokers, they borrow a cigarette and only make the headache you have just developed worse.)

For 95 cents, smokers have entire industries catering to their needs. In addition to the tobacco industry, there is the ashtray industry and the match manufacturers, to say nothing of the people who want you to flick their Bics.

Since each cigarette lasts five to seven minutes, depending upon how often and how deeply you inhale, each package of cigarettes provides more than two hours of pure pleasure. That makes smoking cost about 50 cents an hour if you smoke non-stop, and that's a lot cheaper than deriving pleasure from video games, movies or even books, unless you check them out from your local library.

Furthermore, the tax income from cigarettes supports vital programs administered by our state and federal governments, but don't try to blame defense spending on smokers. That's one more criticism they don't deserve.

Like eating *escargot* and drinking black coffee, smoking takes getting used to — one must develop a taste for it. Once you get over the initial coughing and the burning feeling in your throat and lungs, you can sit back and enjoy the sweet taste of tobacco.

Best-selling author Kurt Vonnegut smokes three to four packs of cigarettes a day. He claims it is the only sure form of suicide. Perhaps he is right. For the majority of tobacco users, smoking is a rebellion against the society they are surrounded by. It calls attention to the individual at a time when individualism is not applauded as vigorously as it should be.

Letters Policy

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available in the newspaper.

Letters sent to the newspaper for publication become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication, and request to withhold names will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

Submit all material to the Daily Nebraskan, Room 34, Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588.

Flocking gawkers: Swarming vultures in unpretty world

Life isn't always pretty. No day passes without its seeming quota of viciousness and trauma. A glance at the news confirms the impression. We can't ignore the ugliness. Journalists won't let us. Life won't let us.

The wishful complain they are given only the bad news. What of goodness, they ask. Seen through their rosy optics, journalists are grotesque vultures, forever circling above corrupt flesh.

Others, however, become resigned to the ominous nature of news and the world it reports. Daily doses desensitize them. They are immune.

Yet their glib acceptance of ugliness is no better than the wishful's glib denial of it. Though both strive to maintain ignorance, denial at least is a gesture of active resistance. Acceptance is passive neutrality.

My point is underscored by a March 6 news story everyone has heard by now. A Massachusetts woman was repeatedly raped on the pool table of a bar she had entered only to buy cigarettes. No one moved to help her. Most were merrily entertained. The live rape was no more significant to them than mud-wrestling. The sex and violence were merely a spectator sport, a passive pastime.

The incident struck me as remarkable, unusual, strange. It seemed bizarre, fluky, a confluence of weird chance. But I have since thought twice.

I spent spring break in a city in central Florida. The city is named Lakeland because of its many lakes. Life can be pretty. That is the happy news.

A week ago Saturday, Roger Pitts sat drinking at one of the lakes. It was an old phosphate pit some 30 feet deep. Somebody bet him \$5 he couldn't catch a duck. Pitts drowned in the attempt.

He reportedly was a good swimmer. But when his body was dredged up, nearly five hours later, the alcohol in his blood was found to be three times the legal limit.

As one police and one fire department boat trolled for the body, more than 100 spectators lined the banks. As one afternoon wore on and more gathered, the tragedy took on a carnival air.

Some, impatient for the corpse, began to heckle the search party with obscenities. A Pinky Dinky ice cream truck cruised the crowd, vending treats and blaring rag-time music.

One man watching the rescue effort drove his truck into the back of a woman's car, then started to drive away. The woman jumped from her car and tried to stop the man by yanking at the steering wheel through the truck's open door. Those gathered watched as she was dragged along shouting for help.

It is common knowledge that gawkers flock to most accidents, many disasters and some crimes. That isn't remarkable, unusual or strange anymore. My question is: Who are the real swarming vultures in our oftentimes unpretty world?

David Wood

Daily Nebraskan

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THE DAILY NEBRASKAN (USPS 144-080) IS PUBLISHED BY THE UNL PUBLICATIONS BOARD MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY DURING THE FALL AND SPRING SEMESTERS, EXCEPT DURING VACATIONS. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE DAILY NEBRASKAN, RM. 34 NEBRASKA UNION, 68588. SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$13/SEMESTER, \$25/YEAR. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.

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