

Editorial

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An ugly precedent: school book banning

1584: William Carter is sentenced to death for printing Catholic pamphlets.

1987: Nebraska leads the nation in book censorship attempts with 12. One book, "When the Sky Began to Roar," is removed from Lincoln junior high libraries because of pressure from parents.

In the last 400 years, journalists have fought against the licensing of print. And now the battle has moved from the newsroom to the libraries.

With the recent bicentennial celebration of the U.S. Constitution, it seems only fitting that libraries and bookstores all over the nation are promoting "Banned Books Week — Celebrating the Freedom to Read."

Kathryn Totten, general book manager at Nebraska Bookstore, said the store has set up a window display and several posters listing banned books.

"We want to make people aware of what books are banned or trying to be banned," Totten said. "I find it real scary. There are classics on that list."

Parents groups, with support from Citizens for Excellence in Education and the Eagle Forum, have pressured school boards across the country to remove books such as "Cujo," "Pet Sematary" and "An Indecent Obsession."

Phyllis Schlafly of The Eagle Forum said, "Parents have every right to object to what they find offensive and to express their views. There are millions of books out there, if a parent objects to one, give them another book."

Privacy disregarded by UNL administration

Although students were able to get their names removed from this fall's buzz books, their names, addresses and phone numbers still are available in the administration building.

If students are concerned enough to get their names removed from the directory, it should also be removed from the desk book. By removing their names from the buzz book, students are stating that they don't

censors argue that the content of some books is too strong for children. The Lincoln parents opposed "When the Sky Began to Roar" because the book contained profane language, condoned sex outside marriage, group sex, drug use and encouraged children not to respect their parents.

Censorship is ambiguous, though. What may offend one person might not offend someone else.

Although some of the content is strong in the banned books, it's still the parents' duty to monitor what their children do, whether it's what they read or what they watch on TV. By the time children reach junior high age, their parents should have passed their morals along to them. Therefore, the problem lies at home, not in the library. Instead of spending so much time debating at school board meetings, parents need to be at home with their children, teaching them right from wrong.

Book banning sets a frightening precedent. Parent groups could use it to justify banning cable TV and other sources of information that touch their children each day.

Book banners forget that they live in a democracy. People are free to choose where they live, what they eat, say and yes, even what they read.

"It seems like a few groups are out to make a decision for everyone," Totten said.

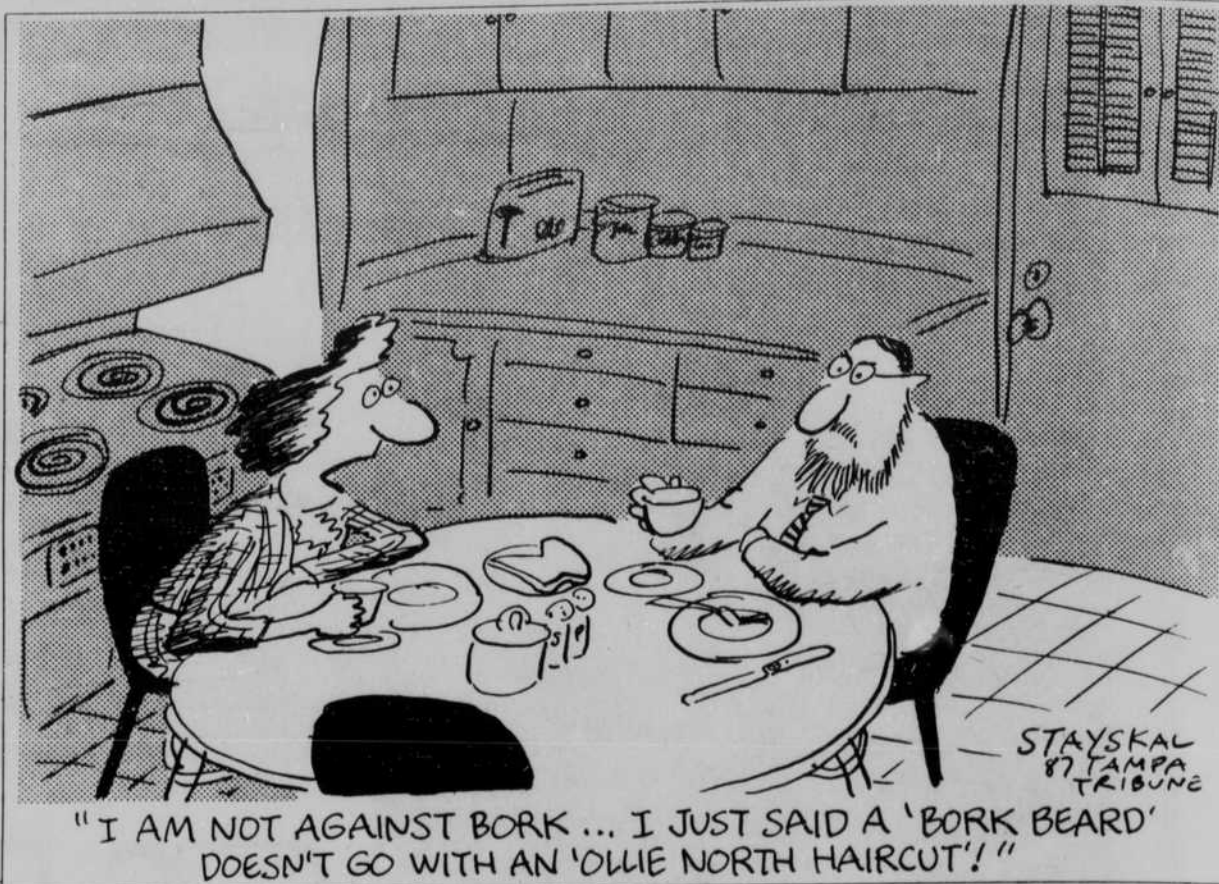
It needs to be a personal decision — one that William Carter and his readers back in the 16th century never had.

want their private information publicized. That's their right.

But officials in the administration building say it's public information. Apparently, they have their wires crossed.

Some students need or want to avoid harassment and prank, obscene or threatening phone calls, such as teacher's assistants or editorial columnists.

This is a dangerous situation and it should be rectified.



War realities not found in films

Movie moguls take taboo off war, don't encourage thought

In Hollywood and on other film sets around the world, moviemakers are re-inventing, recalling and, in some cases, refighting the Vietnam War.

Just when the more progressive-minded among us thought a new generation of filmmakers — Francis Ford Coppola, Oliver Stone, Michael Cimino — who attended college during the volatile years of the war, had exorcised the war movie from the American psyche, they seem to be appearing again. Some are appearing with a more compassionate set of ethics and a motif here and there suggesting that war might not just be hell, it might be unnecessary.

And that was always the standard cliché. No matter how many times John Wayne said "I hate this war," the audience knew he felt he had to be there, that he would have swam to the war if a troop carrier hadn't delivered him there.

The same ego that prompts a superpower to involve itself in a Third World civil war for the sake of world security, prompts directors to re-invent wars. There is nothing on earth that gives a filmmaker more thrills than actually staging a war where no one gets hurt, detail by detail, explosion by explosion.

It wouldn't actually surprise me much if, in some directors' unconscious set of lenses, there aren't dreams of an auteurist society where some members of the populace are selected to give their lives for the perfect shot in a war movie.

If you give a director a million dollars, he or she will settle for some ketchup and a few smoke bombs, maybe he or she will even rent an abandoned building and shoot some plaster off the walls. If you give a director \$10 million he or she will find a way to get some choppers, maybe go out of his or her way for an accurate location shooting.

If you go beyond that, the director

gets shaky. For just a little more, a director could level Saigon and rebuild it just as it looked in 1974. He or she could hire the indigenous population of some verisimilitudinous latitude to flail, writhe and scream for a powerful wide-shot of a napalmed landscape. Eventually the shaky director will enter "Heaven's Gate" territory and, with one eye developing a nervous twitch and the other taking on that special "Son of Sam" glaze, he or she will ask if there isn't some way they could put a big tinted dome over the whole island to repaint the sky.

Charles Lieurance



"How could we get the sun to set a little earlier?" he or she will ask the assistant director, a small catamite just out of UCLA film school.

"Well, sire, I mean, sir, we could, uh, talk to someone...."

Many members of the crew that worked on Coppola's "Apocalypse Now" commented that as the filming progressed Coppola became more and more like the film's megalomaniac king of Cambodia, Kurtz. He was no longer filming Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," he was recreating it and, slowly but surely, the filmic illusion was becoming the filmic delusion. With the advent of budgets beyond the midmillions and technological advances in cinema that allow even the most bizarrely imagined nightmares to be faithfully rendered on celluloid, the nature of film illusion is becoming a questionable thing.

Is there really much illusion to it anymore?

In Hollywood, the current thought seems to be that a war is a terrible thing

to waste, and the moguls almost wasted it, allowing it to fall into the hands of poets instead of the hands of hacks who could turn a profit from the conflagration. "The Deer Hunter," "Apocalypse Now" and "Full Metal Jacket" are intellectual/metaphysical debates. "Platoon," "Go Tell the Spartans" and "Hamburger Hill" are war movies. The nature of good and evil enter into them only as melodrama. These are Hollywood films, full of cheap thrills and paced for the average joe.

The question is whether it's better to recreate the war with a Hollywood mainstream director or leave it to a megalomaniac maverick who loses the war in an overstuffed bed of allusion and metaphor. From the intellectual standpoint, looking at war through the poet's eye is more cerebral, but the historian may find more in "Go Tell the Spartans" or "Platoon" that rings faithful to the actual events.

The last straw is that Hollywood has to film the war. Vietnam will be on film for a very long time now because the taboo is off the war movie. That's not such a bad thing really. The idea that the genre war film somehow caused the nation to be more apathetic about war's evils is absurd. Note that while no studio would touch a Vietnam War movie — while film's like "Apocalypse Now" and "The Deer Hunter" were sinking in — America was gearing up for Ronald Reagan. Genre films do not encourage deep thoughts and the regeneration of the "war film" is not likely to send us reeling into a real war.

As for accuracy, you can find poets in the film community and you can find hacks and you can find moguls, but you probably won't find reality. And why would anyone even look for it there?

Lieurance is an English major and DN assistant arts and entertainment editor.

Reader says Iraq, not Iran, aggressor in war

This is in response to the guest opinion of Nawaf Soleman (DN, Sept. 12).

This country seems to have a bias against the country of Iran. In the war between Iran and Iraq, the United States appears to be taking the position that Iran is the aggressor. Unfortunately this is not the case. Iraq has been the instigator throughout this long and deadly war.

Iraq was the one that invaded Iran. They were also the ones to use chemical weapons, a violation of international law, against Iran.

They initiated the cowardly attacks against the shipping within the "Arabian Gulf." Attacking Iran's only means of support, while their own oil exports were being shipped out via pipelines through other nations.

As far as the cease fire goes, it was Iraq that broke it by resuming its attacks against shipping and civilian population centers.

As far as terrorism goes, Iraq was the first to use it as a means of national policy. They were supporting the likes of Abul Nidal and the PLO long before

the current regime was in power.

Iraq is also the only one that in the course of the war, and in the war zone itself, to have taken American lives

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when the U.S.S. Stark was attacked. They (and the United States) have excused this as an accident, but would this have been so readily forgiven had it been an Iranian aircraft? Would we

have said it was an accident?

With all these "accidents" of history, it doesn't appear that the Iraqis are as peaceful and fun loving as Mr. Soleman and the U.S. press would lead us to believe.

With all that we've done to destroy that regime in Iran, I believe that the time has come to attempt a reconciliation rather than threatening to go to war because they don't accede to our wishes.

Iraq deserves all the punishment Iran can impose upon them.

Iran is not the aggressor and never has been throughout this long war. They have just been protecting what is theirs. With all the destruction Iraq has caused, no one can blame the Iranian's if they demand reparations, even if it requires the removal of the king. The United States did no less when they defeated the Japanese in World War II.

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