

ANDY FREDERICK

Despite pain, we know nothing

“S ticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me.”

Funny, isn't it? It's funny because anyone who has watched any part of the Clarence Thomas hearings or has read of them in the newspaper or has heard of them from others knows that it just isn't true.

Thomas has been hurt by the allegations that he sexually harassed Anita Hill.

Hill has been hurt by the opinion of some that everything she has been saying about Thomas is a lie.

The men on the Senate Judiciary Committee have been hurt by the accusations of many people that they are insensitive to the hurt of victims of sexual harassment.

The press has been hurt by the charge that it has acted appallingly by making leaked information public.

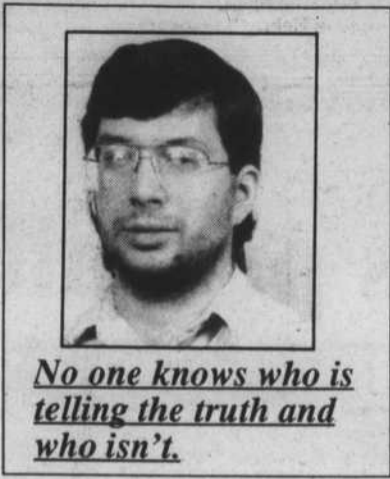
Thomas' confirmation hearings have caused a great deal of hurt to a great number of people in the past week. But has it been worth it? What do we now know that we didn't before?

We know that a person cannot prove that he didn't say what he's accused of saying 10 years ago. We know that another person cannot prove that he did say what he's accused of saying 10 years ago.

We know that all Americans are concerned about sexual harassment. We know that no one knows exactly what sexual harassment is.

We know that senators have a hard time agreeing on how to treat evidence in such a unique and difficult situation as this. We know that Thomas will continue to deny the allegations of sexual harassment and that Hill will continue to insist that they are true, regardless of which evidence is admitted and which isn't.

We know that Hill has a great number of friends who support her and believe she is telling the truth. We know that Thomas has a great



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number of friends who support him and believe he is telling the truth. We know nothing.

No one knows who is telling the truth and who isn't. No one knows whether Thomas likes pornographic movies or whether Hill fantasizes about relationships with men or whether Thomas asked Hill out for a date. We are no closer to the answer than we were before.

But the ordeal hasn't been a complete loss. Some lessons have been learned along the way. Unfortunately, not all have been positive.

We have learned that the days of the Red Scare are not over. Even today, a person can avoid the criminal justice system and, by making unsupported allegations in front of the entire country, absolutely demolish another person's reputation.

During the Red Scare, such character bashing was justified with communism. Today it is justified with sexual harassment. But what is sexual harassment?

In the case of Thomas, it is not demands for sex, it is not improper physical contact, it is not indecent exposure, it is not threats to a woman's job security for refusing to satisfy sexual demands. It is alleged to be

crude speech, 10 years ago, before the 1986 Supreme Court ruling that sexual harassment was in violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Is it necessary to destroy a man for doing something improper even though there is no evidence to indicate that he continues such behavior to this day?

In fact, there is much testimony to the contrary, that he absolutely abhors sexual harassment. If Thomas was once a man of low morality, all evidence indicates that he has changed.

We also have learned that much needs to be done to refine the definition of and to increase the understanding of sexual harassment.

Victims of sexual harassment are forced to choose between career and conscience. Often a person must go through a lot of pain to end the illegal behavior of another, but such is the price of justice.

Both men and women must give priority to having respect for others. When a person's words or actions bother another person, he or she should care enough about the other person's feelings to change the bothersome behavior.

And finally, we have learned that most Americans only care about the affairs of their government when scandal is involved.

Does anyone know or care about what went on during Thomas' confirmation hearings before the allegations of sexual harassment were made public? Did anyone rush home to their television sets to find out how Thomas had answered questions about abortion?

It's just a shame that neither the committee, Thomas nor Hill, all of whom are indirectly responsible for the events of the past week, have gained anything despite all of the pain they have been put through.

Frederick is a senior news-editorial journalism major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist and photographer.

JAMES ZANK

Wild remnants need protection

Only to the white man was nature a wilderness and only to him was the land infested with wild animals and savage people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery.

— Luther Standing Bear of the Oglala Sioux

Because I was born and raised in Lincoln, my experiences in the wilderness have been few but varied.

The first time I experienced the wilderness was during my family's journey to Yellowstone National Park.

Other than the tourist trap of Old Faithful, the most memorable portions of this trip were terrible meals at the Yellowstone Hotel restaurant, shoddy beds in a cramped cabin and waking up briefly to hear a man screaming for his friend in the middle of the night.

Somewhere along the way I picked up the idea that his cries were bear-related. That fascinated me, far more than souvenir shops and hikes on trails by hot springs.

My next intense wilderness experience came two years ago when I went tree-planting with friends at Fort Robinson State Park over Easter weekend.

I found this far closer to being wild than the manicured tourist areas of Yellowstone. Our tree-planting was done in Smiley Canyon, which a couple of years prior had been burned by forest fire.

People think forest fires are inherently bad. When people are raised with the propaganda of Smokey the Bear and the intellectual insight into forest fire provided by the film "Bambi," it is easy to see why.

Actually, fire can be considered part of a forest's ongoing natural cycle. It rids the forest of undergrowth and keeps a check on overpopulation by single species. It provides the forest a chance for renewal.

That was part of the message that Smiley Canyon provided. Among the black charred tree trunks, toppled over and dying, birds hunted for food, and



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the forest floor was beginning to come to life as a new green carpet spread from the decaying trees.

Regardless of whether we planted trees, the forest would live. That was indisputable. We were helping to speed the process, trying to restore some of what was lost.

Still, we were able to recognize that this process would not be accomplished solely by a bunch of college kids on a weekend expedition.

That is a lesson that many still need to learn. Even as I write this, logging roads are being made to better serve timber companies' lust for raw materials in the Nebraska pine ridge. The Forest Service aids in the road construction, thus helping the timber companies in this process.

The trees of the state's forest are, or should be, considered the property of the state. The maintenance of these areas is provided with our tax dollars.

The Forest Service aids the timber companies in harvesting trees from our forest. What or whom does the

Forest Service serve?

It does an incredible disservice to the forest, opening it to rape by the timber industry. It doesn't seem to be doing too great a job for the taxpayers, unless selling off the forest is to be considered good management.

The forests are there for another purpose as well. They provide refuge for animals that do not survive in areas encroached upon by humanity.

The forests that remain in America are survivors of generations of man's ignorance and indifference. Wild places have suffered by the hands of man since the Columbus ended his botched voyage to the Far East.

As the Europeans advanced in the New World, they encountered many "wild" creatures. They treated them in much same way that the indigenous people were treated.

If not slain outright by the white Europeans, many members of the Native American tribes were put on reservations. There is little difference between a refuge and a reservation when your way of life is made impossible by foreign invasions.

As many treaties as were broken by the invaders of North America, it comes as little surprise that the Forest Service sells ranchers the opportunity to graze their cattle on protected lands.

Much of the deforestation done to the North American Continent in the past 500 years was done to make room for cattle grazing. Many species, such as the grizzly and the coyote, have been hunted nearly to extinction by ranchers trying to protect their cattle.

This is, of course, not an unusual situation in the American way of life.

Our Forest Service gives big timber corporations permission and help in ravaging the forests of the Northwest states.

Americans, humans in general, need to keep some of their wilderness, if only to remind them of what the world was like before they wrecked it.

Zank is a junior art and English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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