

Policing hate

Gay officers unpopular, but necessary

The police chief in San Jose, Calif., took what many may call a radical step last week, announcing a drive aimed at recruiting gay police officers.

Chief Lou Cobarruviaz said he hoped having more gay police officers would encourage victims of anti-homosexual hate crimes to report the attacks. Now, gay men and lesbians could be prevented from reporting the crimes because they may be afraid to approach the police, he said.

The drive merely expands on a minority recruitment program already in place in the San Jose Police Department. Cobarruviaz himself helped start the minority recruitment project during the 1960s.

Too often, gay men and lesbians are ignored in programs directed to help members of minority groups. But when it comes to hate crimes, gay men and lesbians rarely are ignored.

Sadly, "gay-bashing" is common in America. Worse yet, it is accepted — and condoned — by far too many Americans.

Hate crimes against other minority groups receive a great deal more publicity and outrage than attacks against gay men and lesbians. But the pain caused by such attacks cannot be ignored, even by the most closed-minded people.

If it succeeds, the San Jose Police Department's policy will help bring such crimes to light. And the path toward ending such hate crimes will begin when more gay men and lesbians are able to report the attacks.

Police should do all they can to make victims of crime more comfortable. In some instances, that means providing an obviously sympathetic ear.

Police departments without women officers to hear victims' stories of rape or without African-American officers to hear victims' stories of racially motivated crimes would be unthinkable. The same should be true for hate crimes against gay men and lesbians.

San Jose was not the first to begin such recruitment efforts. The San Francisco Police Department began recruiting homosexuals in the 1970s.

Nevertheless, Chief Cobarruviaz's "radical" move probably will not be popular.

Until Americans realize that all hate crimes cause needless pain, gay men and lesbians will have to rely on themselves for defense.



PAUL SOUDERS

Biological acts merit attention

Tucked away on the third or fourth page of most American newspapers last Tuesday sat four paragraphs of hope. Hope that, for once, a visible political body did something sensible.

Only two of the nation's nine supreme court justices agreed to hear a plea from the Bush administration and private advocacy groups for reviving a government ban on "indecent" media material. Four justices were needed simply to resurrect the ban and hear arguments on the case, but Bush couldn't even conjure up that amount.

In a court that basically is the long arm of the Reagan/Bush law, this is tantamount to mutiny. The court, in essence, is saying "this idea is SO stupid we won't even waste our time on it."

While I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for this particular court to uphold my civil liberties, I'll sigh a tiny puff of relief. My constitutional right to publicly talk about doodies and wee-wees on broadcast media has been protected.

The ban aimed to eradicate that worst of social evils, "indecent" material describing "sexual or excretory activities or organs," ostensibly for the purpose of protecting our children's tender minds — children who supposedly never spend time thinking about sex or excretion.

Well, I can say with firm conviction that children at least have the business of "excretory activities" down pat; they've been practicing since birth.

All of this begs the question, "So what?" What's so tragically wrong with sexual or excretory activities or organs that some people don't want us to talk about them? I'll wager that, barring sleeping and eating, sex and excretion are the two things almost everyone on Earth who has ever lived can do well.

The fact that very few people die of urine retention shows that we seem to have mastered excretion, while the sheer number of Homo sapiens getting in the way of everything else demonstrates that humans are really awfully good at sex.

But where this ban concept comes from, I can't even guess. I imagine lots of long-haired psychologists have all sorts of repression theories to explain this characteristically American fussiness, and historians will point to white America's puritanical heritage.



I'll wager that, barring sleeping and eating, sex and excretion are the two things almost everyone on earth who ever has lived can do well.

Well, I don't much care where American stuffiness came from; I just wonder why we have it at all.

Every item on the list of words unacceptable on prime-time network television is related to either sex or excretion, although (as I've already pointed out) these are things we do all the time anyway. And, let's face it, they're pleasant enough pastimes, especially if one eats plenty of fiber and has no compunctions about reading with one's pants around one's ankles.

But even the most socially loose American gets a little warm about the ears when his or her small child announces loudly in Perkins that "I gotta go make doody."

Those of us sitting a table away snicker quietly and then politely pretend the whole thing never happened, since nobody, even a small child, has a need to excrete in so popular a place as Perkins.

Frank discussions of gluttonous eating habits are perfectly acceptable — even encouraged — in most restaurants, but heaven forbid expressing a necessity for either a) a relaxing excretory episode, or b) a fleetingly ecstatic sexual encounter.

I know already that this column will be loathed by more than a few readers, solely because of its content. Never mind that I'm a really nice guy. "Literature," I am told, "exists to

ennoble the human condition; to lift humanity, through rationality, from its pathetic quagmire of filth and animalism."

This is all nice and good but nonetheless flies in the face of the fact that we spend our entire lives pursuing basically four goals: food, sleep, sex and excretion.

These are perfectly acceptable activities that most people enjoy, so why not pay a little lip service to biological function? There's nothing terribly rational or noble about it, but I'll spend the rest of my life doing it, and so will everyone else.

Except Abigail Van Buren. "Abby" of "Dear Abby" fame is a notoriously non-biological person, which makes me wonder if she isn't really some sort of android.

Virtually every Dear Abby scenario can be summed up as: X has love problem with Y, with little hope of reconciliation, and so X goes to Abby for advice. Abby suggests X deliver ultimatum to Y (alternate solution: X rationally discusses the problem with Y), and if Y fails to pass muster, he or she was wrong for X anyway.

What Abby (and she's not alone) seems to have forgotten is that there's nothing at all even remotely rational about love. Love generates such couplings as same-sex, interracial, inter-social-class and inter-generational relationships, despite such rational reasons as family scorn and social disapproval for behaving otherwise.

Human beings are always falling in love with one another for apparently no good reason at all except for, often, some sort of sexual chemistry, and I can't exactly call that reasonable.

Plenty of you out there will chide me and deride me for thinking about, discussing and even (gasp) committing blatantly biological acts of sex or excretion or ingestion or sleep, although not generally all at the same time.

To them I offer no apologies, because, well gosh, I like it. To my soul-siblings, the rest of the hedonists and flesh-worshippers, I ask of you only one thing: Give me a call once in a while, huh?

Souders is a Junior English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Playboy ad 'weakens the will'

I am writing in reaction to the Playboy ad you published on page three of the March 3 edition.

We are not each in our own world — our own cubicle untouched or affected by others. We may be as separate as those walking through a revolving door. Yet, if someone does not push, or in any way impedes its revolution, the others are affected. Perhaps they may not get through.

Similarly, by publishing a sexually explicit advertisement, you impede any or all aversion one may have to viewing pornographic material. Yes, we all may make a choice. We need to make a good choice, and you are not helping. We have a God-given free will to make choices. This is good in and of itself. However, to view a full-page ad of pornography weakens the will by posing to it natural, sexually inclined barriers that impede its origi-

nal decision — thus making it harder or perhaps impossible to choose correctly. In fact, it may impede the will so much that every time it comes in contact with such barriers it must choose the inclination. Therefore, our will is in fact not free anymore.

All of humanity is falling under the weight of such sexual advertisement. Beer commercials, car commercials, jeans (I won't mention Bugle Boy), pop and even breakfast cereal ads employ sex appeal in order to weaken the wills of the buyer. So please, print what is newsworthy, but quit making it so hard to choose what is right. Wrong is chosen easily enough as it is.

Michael Lilly
senior
secondary math education

DN shouldn't bend to pressure

The Daily Nebraskan, in front-page stories Monday and Tuesday, referred to a certain newsmaker as "UNL student Andrew Scott Baldwin." Accurate? Absolutely.

But Baldwin wasn't the subject of a 10-paragraph story on Monday and a 19-paragraph story on Tuesday because of his status as a garden-variety "UNL student." His story is front-page fodder because — and only because — he is or was a Nebraska football player. Neither story refers to Baldwin — charged with assault in the beating of Gina Simanek — as a Nebraska football player.

When pinning labels on people, journalists should pick the one from which the newsmaker derived his or her notoriety. If Tom Osborne, for

instance, were to make news for reasons not related to football, he still should be referred to in news columns as Nebraska's football coach. He may well be a red-headed churchgoer who can catch big fish and fly small planes — but that's not why he's in the newspaper.

Not all DN stories have affixed to Baldwin the over-inclusive nametag. The hope here is that the DN is not backing down and intentionally sacrificing good journalism in order to mollify those who berated the paper for its complete and commendable coverage of a sad incident.

Steve Thomas
second-year law student