

Forward march

St. Pat's parade should be open to all

Everyone loves a parade — unless, of course, some of the marchers don't espouse parade organizers' beliefs. On Monday, a federal judge refused to require organizers of New York's St. Patrick's Day parade to allow a gay rights group to march. The group marched along the parade route Tuesday anyway — an hour before the official parade began.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians, a Roman Catholic fraternal group, organized the parade. Group leaders claimed freedom of association in turning away gay marchers and said that allowing them to march carrying a gay pride banner would have contradicted the church's stance against homosexuality.

The parade seems to represent the First Amendment's ultimate clash: between the Hibernians' right to publicly display their beliefs and the gay marchers' right to publicly display theirs.

But the question of whether freedom of religion or freedom of speech would prevail in this instance remains unanswered. Instead of addressing the constitutional issue, U.S. District Judge Pierre Leval ruled that the gay marchers could not be moved ahead of others on a parade waiting list, even if they had been discriminated against.

So, the sticky First Amendment mess remains.

If the Hibernians were operating a religious rite within a religious setting, perhaps their argument would be more justifiable.

But to deny participation in a public parade along public streets for reasons of religion appears to violate the separation of church and state doctrine — especially for a holiday that, for all intents and purposes, is more of a social celebration than a religious one.

And the gay marchers shouldn't think they are alone.

In Savannah, Ga., the Hibernian Society declined to invite the city's female mayor to a traditional post-parade banquet.

"In the past, it's always been an all-male affair, and it will continue to be so," society President Thomas M. Spillane said.

It's about time the Hibernian Society, along with the rest of society, realizes that St. Patrick's Day now belongs to everyone — not just straight, Irish men.



BIOLOGY QUIZ: CAN YOU FIND THE CANDIDATE AMONG THE CHAMELEONS?

KIRK ROSENBAUM

Larry King's talk is cheap

Our country's taxpayers have many ways of venting their frustration and hatred toward elected officials. Some do it around the water cooler, some do it at the polls and some do it from the window of a book depository in Dallas.

The overwhelming majority, however, seem to do it while participating in talk radio and television programs. They share their fury in venues ranging from local cable-access shows to network call-in nights. Since the news of the foul Congressional check-bouncing scandal was released, these programs are even more virulent.

Most callers on the rubber-check issue are possessed by an ugly rage that can be felt plainly by the casual listener. It's not difficult to imagine thousands of American phones, tightly gripped under white knuckles as their owners gnash their teeth and wait for their turn.

Never one to miss a bandwagon of fear and loathing, I phoned the "Larry King Live" program to ask his guest, Rep. Newt Gingrich, a weighty question. The Newtster was in the process of being flogged on behalf of his shamed colleagues for a grocery list of hideous crimes against the voters.

Since the check-kiting mess doesn't particularly interest me, I attempted to ask Gingrich what sort of tattoo he would get if forced to get one, and where on his body he would put it. Unfortunately, my question was cut off by Larry's small army of fixers and screeners before our fine House Whip even could hear it.

Enraged at my abrupt omission from participatory democracy, I redialed the number several times but only got busy signals. In my lifetime I have been hung up on by much better people than him, so while the rest of America was wondering how Congress could betray the public trust, I was intent on finding out how a third-rate hack such as Larry King ever managed to climb the media food chain in the first place.

King commands roughly 50 percent of the radio dial on any given week night with his massively syndicated talk show. He uses it to peddle everything from "Hooked on Phonics" to the ginseng tablets that he insists give him the pep to make it through a busy day.

Where do these people come from, these Larry Kings, Bryant Gumbels, Dan Dierdorfs and Phil Donahues? More importantly, why does anybody listen to them?

At least Rush Limbaugh ponders the strange duality of vegetarian na-



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ture-Nazis who wear leather sandals. And the people who host advice programs make a genuine attempt to help their callers patch together their shattered egos and busted relationships. Never mind that their own lives are dysfunctional ruins; these advice-givers are trying to provide a service.

But King serves no purpose whatsoever. Besides his radio show, King has overestimated the importance of his own life by writing a couple of autobiographies. He also writes an occasional column for USA Today, has an hour-long show every night on CNN, and shows up to share his stale wit at hundreds of luncheons and fundraisers.

His alimony payments reportedly are staggering, which probably is the reason he loads up on ginseng and runs from appearance to appearance like a greyhound on speed.

Usually, a person like Larry King should be applauded for being able to seize the American Dream and make it work. This is the '90s, after all, where mediocrity is rewarded shamelessly with book deals, record contracts, free agency, elected office and Supreme Court nominations.

So why pick on him just because he has less talent than either Milli or Vanilli? Larry King's very existence is a hot poker in the eyes of all the people who ever have toiled away in the heart of darkness that is undergraduate journalism and then spent the rest of their lives covering sewer board meetings in Hastings or Rulo.

The capstone of King's media

empire, as well as the most insulting aspect of his success, is his column in USA Today, usually an excellent newspaper. It's packed with plenty of colorful pie graphs, the stories don't jump from page to page and it's easy to read with a hangover.

King's contribution is a themeless mess of endorsements, value judgments, dumb ideas and rhetorical questions.

Whoever answered the phone at USA Today wasn't prepared to divulge the specifics of King's contract to someone who claimed to be Gerardo Rivera, although I tried to sound professional and authentic. When I called Rivera's office pretending to be Larry King I was treated in an equally cold fashion by one of his dozens of secretaries.

What sort of gods had smiled on men like these, allowing them to be rewarded for their mediocrity? Why can't my inability be just as high-priced and overexposed? To be sure, the Daily Nebraskan offers an excellent contract, although the chauffeur can get a bit mouthy at times.

Maybe the only way to duplicate King's success is to duplicate his cheap style and hope for the best. Therefore, here is a sampling of Kingish journalism:

All Interstate speed limits should be repealed . . . "Let's Lynch the Landlord" is the finest Dead Kennedys song, ever . . . Is Hillary Clinton the Yoko Ono of American politics? . . . Are Colorado football fans genetically inclined toward ignorance and savagery or do they just follow the coach's example?

Duffy's Tavern offers fine atmosphere and booze at excellent prices . . . The fiend who stole my autographed copy of "Morrison Hotel" should have his teeth ripped out with a pair of pliers . . . If Elvis Presley gets a stamp, why not John Belushi and Jim Morrison? . . . Nothing typifies America better than the image of the older, "Vegas" Elvis — bloated, sequined and medicated.

But enough of that. Larry King and his ilk are more than hideous examples of the American Dream. They are models to be emulated by everyone who ever has wondered if their own talent will be enough to make them succeed.

The good news is that talent is no longer necessary. The bad news is that we need people like Larry King to prove it.

Rosenbaum is a senior history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Star Trek' series superior

What a relief — a Page 4 editorial that's not beating up on gays, women or Bob Kerrey. Instead it's just picking on my favorite TV series.

The truth is, Alan Phelps' March 16 column comparing "Star Trek: The Next Generation" to "The Love Boat" was very funny and not totally undeserved. Aside from a few quibbles with his spelling (it's Gavin "MacLeod," "Charo" and "Riker"), I see that Phelps actually missed a couple of things.

First, of course there's a space-going Charo on the Enterprise — Deanna Troi. It's hard to ignore her unidentifiable accent, excessive hair, and of course, her cleavage. Then there's the stream of guest stars who've taken over the last couple of seasons: Matt Frewer, Dwight Schultz, Jean (NOT Gene) Simmons, Samantha Eggar, Theodore Bikel, David Ogden

Stiers and Leonard Nimoy all have had problems raised and solved in 48 minutes by the Enterprise crew.

Still, "Next Generation" is the barren wasteland's unmatched bright spot. The acting is consistently superior to most network series, and while the writing is uneven, it's occasionally brilliant. Over the last five years, the series has presented episodes dealing with slavery, brainwashing, parenthood, spirituality, terrorism, militarism, medical experimentation and yes, even unrequited love. Sometimes the show takes itself too seriously (and its fans usually do), so it's fun to deflate the myth as Phelps did. But I'd put "Next Generation" up against the non-ideas of "L.A. Law" or "Northern Exposure" any week of the season.

Joan Ratliff
Lincoln

Editing misrepresents letter

The letter to the editor that appeared in the Daily Nebraskan on March 17 and bears my name is a gross misrepresentation of my actual letter. In my actual letter, I document with facts my claim that "Israel has been the victim of organized terror time and again." This was central to

my argument. Had I been consulted, I would have asked that my letter not be printed in the form in which it appeared.

David Berkowitz
assistant professor
chemistry

LETTER POLICY

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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted.

Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a letter or guest opinion is left to the editor's discretion.

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Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.