

JENNIFER ERNISSE

Not guilty prevails, justice is won

It isn't everyday that I have a run in with the Lincoln Police Department.

The first day of school I was driving home to my new apartment. I headed east on E Street coming to a yield sign. I looked both ways after stopping and saw the driver of a green car going west and turning at the intersection. He had a yield sign, as well. There was no cross traffic so I proceeded. I see the mean, green crushing machine coming towards my tail end, I swerve, but it's too little, too late.

SMASH! It sounded minor. I get out and see that I have no taillight, quarterpanel, or bumper. At least the gas tank is still intact.

In theory this is no loss. My rusting 1980 Honda Civic is no car to brag about, but giving it up is like losing an old boyfriend.

Master of Destruction comes over and says he's sorry; he didn't see me.

"Wow, this is a lot of damage."

After he offered to fix the car instead of opting to call the police, I sensed there was something wrong. I asked him why he did not want to involve the law.

"See, I ain't got no driver's license." And certainly no grasp on grammar either. That double negative means you actually do have a license. Except, we checked that out, and you didn't have a license in any of the three states you lived in.

While I was trying to gain this guys trust so he wouldn't take off, the purveyors of the law show up. Thank God.

We go to our separate cars and get all the usual goodies; license, registration, insurance. I don't know why the Terminator even had to go to his car. He didn't have any of the three.

Now, I realize that any of my friends can attest to the fact that my driving is

not that good. But regardless of the fact that I once hit a Wendy's, I know I can drive better than someone without a license.

So we sit in the back of the cop car. My story is the same as I just wrote. He, however, now claims that I never stopped at the yield sign.

Mr. Apologetic, sweet-talking, no-drivers-license-having, new-story-for-every-situation-political-candidate-wanna-be says he never saw me because I darted out of nowhere. I slide away from him but realize I can't get out of the back of a police vehicle.

Ivan the Terrible gets a ticket for no drivers license. I get one for failure to yield because butthead's wife said I did not stop at the yield sign. His ticket is \$71, mine is \$81.

I tell the officer I didn't think the ticket was fair, and I would protest it. Disgruntled, I go home and call my mom.

Four weeks later, I go to my court date ready to argue my case. The defense attorneys call my name, telling the judge why I'm there.

It's hard to figure out who the hell I'm supposed to talk to. I turn my body all the way to the judge and speak into the microphone: NOT GUILTY. This should be a category on Star Search — plea entering.

"Go with the Bailiff." I have flashes of Bull from Night Court, but my guy is fat and has hair. He leads me into another room with more bureaucracy than you can shake a stick at. They want me to sign a paper that says "trial" at the top. I am not pleased. "What I am signing?"

"It's a form for your trial." Oh, I see, you're a rocket scientist disguised as a secretary for LPD. I try to get across to her that I don't understand but it is crystal clear to her. The word "lawyers" get muttered. I freak but sign anyway. Disgruntled, I go home and call my mom.

It's October 15. Police report and yellow legal pad in hand, I proceed to

courtroom 13. Great number. I see the policeman who gave me the ticket. I try to smile but he doesn't, won't, look at me. I sit by this woman who was my saving grace. We sat there talking about people filing in front of us, the militant DWI convict, the bicycle stealer, a guy on crutches. Was he faking it?

They call my name. I play the game again, trying to figure out who I'm talking to. They ask me again how I plead. I step up to the mike and say, "NOT GUILTY."

"Have a seat," the same judge mumbles.

The lady and I continue chatting. We can't believe we are in the company of such derelicts and criminals. We are scared; it's obvious.

After an eternity, they call me again. She asks me if I want to have my ticket dismissed. I reply "yes." The judge mumbles, "You're free to go."

WHAT? It was like bad sex, so barely there you don't even get the satisfaction inherent in the supposed length of the act, much less feel anything.

I stumbled to my seat, dazed. The cop gives me the finger. Not the middle one. He is motioning to come over to him. He whispers to me, "When I looked at your car again, I realized it was a bad ticket. I asked them to dismiss it." He walks out of courtroom 13 quickly.

After telling my friend the details, full-well knowing that if I would, in deference to my fear of authority, have backed out at the last minute, the whole scenario would have been different. I walked out of the courtroom elated that I won but with a disappointed, jaded feeling as well.

Disgruntled, I went home to call my mom. This time, we both thought, justice prevailed.

Ernisse is a senior pre-med student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

SAM KEPFIELD

Pain, not issues focus of election

I have finally figured this election out.

I now know why character doesn't matter and why people don't want to talk issues — only what the government will give them — why we refuse to believe the economy is recovering and why the "change" mania has taken over and shut down voters' frontal lobes.

Election '92 has become the national 12-step program.

Years ago, the self-help shelf at B. Dalton was the preserve of Bob Vila or the Chilton's shop guide to the 1973 Ford F-100. Now, it's been taken over by a slew of books on "finding your inner abused child," overcoming just about every sort of addiction known to mankind — to alcohol, to food, to sex, to bad TV movies.

Too fat? Not nurturing enough? Find yourself constantly getting into bad relationships? Don't blame yourself, blame your parents for their child-rearing practices or their genes. Blame society. Blame your dog. People are more willing than ever to stand on a rooftop and let us know their most intimate, disgusting problems.

It's the Oprahfication of America, where the bizarre is celebrated as courageous, and the normal is condemned as oppressive and demographically incorrect. We have enshrined dysfunction as a viable alternative lifestyle.

And therein lies the secret of this election. The Democratic National Circus featured a representative of every miserable affliction known to mankind. AIDS, the homeless, and on and on. The only thing lacking was a spotted owl.

Clinton's speech was a soliloquy of pain about coming from a dysfunctional family, where his poor drunk father used to whup him constantly. How brave was young Bill to rise above it and love his father and stand up to him.

The crowd ate it up. It's the sort of

emotional vampirism that they diet on every day with Phil and Sally.

Clinton's tag line, "the courage to change," is right out of an AA guidebook. You see, we went on a binge in the '80s, where the rich got richer, the poor got poorer, and the country went to hell. Only we were in denial then.

We were doing bad things like making money, but we really weren't responsible. It was our dysfunctional co-dependents, Reagan, Bush and supply-side economics, that really were to blame. We were innocent dupes.

Then came the recession, the crisis. We saw how naughty we'd been, what a problem we had. We faced up to the problem. We sought help, from any candidate who claimed to not be George Bush — Buchanan, Brown, Tsongas and finally Clinton.

Now, we acknowledge that our salvation can only come from having faith in a power greater than ourselves. In AA, it's God. In Election '92, it's government. Big government.

This is why, despite everything, we still refuse to believe that the economy is not all that bad. Compared to the recessions in 1973-75 and 1981-82, unemployment is lower, inflation is a lot lower, and the deficit as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product is half what it was then. GDP itself was up 2.5 percent in the third quarter of 1992. But do we hear this when we watch the news, or read news headlines?

We need to feel miserable, and not only that, we need our leaders to feel miserable along with us. How else to explain the idiotic question at the Richmond, Va., debate? "How has the national debt affected you personally, and if not, then how can you know what it's like for us?" This, asked of a billionaire, a policy wonk in government all his life, and a member of the eastern establishment elite.

There is a deep vein of self-flagellation in the American psyche. It goes back to some of the first settlers here, the Puritans, who were big on self-denial and abstinence. America has spawned more than her share of

hellfire-and-brimstone preachers and sects proclaiming eternal damnation for doing something that feels good.

So it's no surprise, then, that this inbred guilt combines with the current misery fad to produce electoral insanity. When Bill Clinton gets "the look" — bites his lip, casts his eyes woefully downward, with an almost imperceptible shake of the head, and a voice is dripping with pity and tells us how sad he is about the pitiful attacks of the Republicans, he's pulling off a clever psychological ploy. George Bush, the demographically incorrect white male — breadwinner, with dutiful hausfrau at side — becomes the respected Rotarian who secretly beats his wife and kids while drunk.

I have a feeling, though, folks, that it won't last. There are signs that it is all beginning to wear thin. There is something going on underneath the surface that augurs well for the reelection prospects of George Bush.

First, the Blue Jays won the World Series. Since 1930, every time an American League team has won, the Republicans have taken the White House.

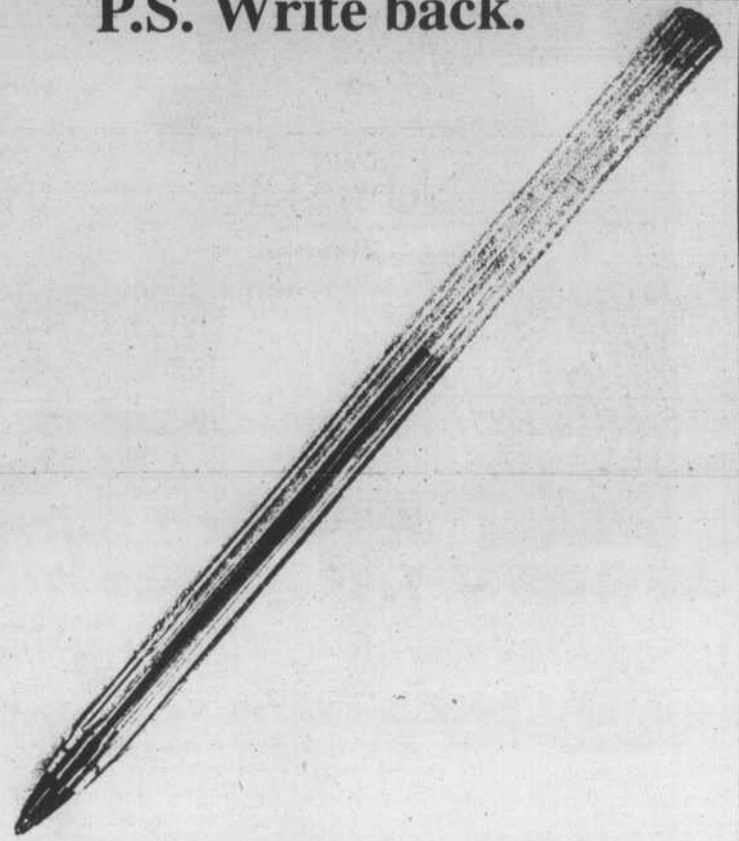
But, beyond that, I believe that there is a silent mass of Americans who are sick of being told who the President is weeks in advance of their decision. And these people know that while things aren't perfect now, they could get worse if we have "the courage to change." They don't answer polls and, with the current climate of fear and loathing in the media, may be reluctant to support the President or his party. Come election day, they will be heard.

My prediction — George Bush 42 percent, 290 electoral votes; Bill Clinton 39 percent, 240 electoral votes; Ross Perot, 20 percent, 0 electoral votes. You heard it here first.

Get out and make your voice heard Nov. 3.

Kepfield is a graduate student in history, and alumnus of the UNL College of Law and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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