

RAINBOW ROWELL

Theft attempt thwarted — almost

I do my part to fight crime. I never walk alone. I lock my doors. And, every week, I tune in to see if any of my cousins are on "America's Most Wanted" yet.



I've always felt sheltered from crime — that is, until last Wednesday at Nebraska Bookstore when crime reared its ugly head.

Usually, I live a very paranoid but very safe life. It's true that swine-eating criminals once broke into my family's home and helped themselves to our TV, a frozen ham and some Polish sausage; but that didn't affect me much. I don't even like ham.

I've always felt sheltered from crime — that is, until last Wednesday at Nebraska Bookstore when crime reared its ugly head.

My roommate Melissa and I stopped at the bookstore so she could pick up a proportion wheel for typography.

Ever since some lame-o took her bookbag from the Nebraska Union last year, we have both been very careful not to leave our bags unattended. But neither of us had a quarter for a locker.

I already had my supplies, so I offered to stand by the door and watch her bag.

"Just leave it on the rack," I said. I admit it. I wasn't taking my job very seriously. I paid more attention to some guy at the customer service counter than her bag. He looked kind of like Andrew Ridgeley, the cuter, less-talented member of Wham!.

Remember Wham!? "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go," George Michael, thousands of screaming 12-year-olds . . . remember? I loved Andrew Ridgeley. Somewhere, I still have hundreds of glossy Wham! posters. Hundreds.

So, naturally, I was ignoring her bookbag. Melissa's bookbag has never, ever made me flash back to the glorious dawn of my adolescence.

As I wallowed in the past, humming "Everything She Wants," the guy and his friend walked toward me. He stood by the bookbag racks, deep in conversation. Then he reached behind his back — without even turning his head — and grabbed Melissa's bookbag.

Her new bookbag. The one I was supposed to be watching.

No episode of "Cagney and Lacey" could have prepared me for that moment. As much as I knew it was my responsibility to stop him, I couldn't say anything. I couldn't move.

For a sixteenth of a second, I considered letting him take it. After all, she has a knapsack or a duffel bag somewhere, and books can be replaced. Besides, he looked big. Well, not VERY big, but big enough to hurt me if he hit hard enough.

And then I thought, no way. He can't get away with this. I won't let him.

Just because I'm a girl doesn't mean thugs can go around stealing bookbags from under my nose. I can stop this. I will stop this. I am woman — hear me roar!

I was getting ready to take a big old bite out of crime. As I stood there, stunned and silent, my mind raced.

Maybe saving Melissa's bookbag would be a good career move. I could quit school and become a bookstore bouncer.

Maybe I'd be featured on "COPS." Bad boys, bad boys, whatcha gonna do?

"Hey!" I'd shout whenever some rogue tried to pinch a bag during my shift. "Get on out of here with your bookbag-stealing self. You disgrace this university."

People like Melissa would never be victimized when I was on duty. It could even mean a neat nickname like Eagle Eyes to have embroidered on my official bookstore bouncer's jacket.

Armed with this ambition, I firmly seized the bookbag and shouted — yes, shouted — "HEY, this is . . ."

I looked down at the bag and noticed it bore an unfamiliar label. Further investigation revealed Melissa's bag sitting near my feet.

"... obviously your bag."

I gave him his bag back. Then I begged for forgiveness and offered him a piece of candy. He was pretty gracious considering I'd just falsely accused him at the top of my voice in a crowded store.

"Forget it," he said. "What if I was trying to steal it? You did the right thing."

Before I walked into that bookstore, I'd thought I was already as moronic as I ever could be. But suddenly, a new world of stupidity opened up for me.

To comfort myself, I like to think the whole fiasco taught me a lesson, a few lessons.

First, puberty should never be relived in public places. Second, always carry a quarter.

And finally, "Stop, thief!" just isn't a very good pickup line.

Rowell is a junior news-editorial, advertising and English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Prayer

The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska has received considerable criticism concerning its support of the retention of commencement invocations and benedictions. Some have questioned ASUN for spending time on a matter they consider frivolous. Others have called on ASUN to get with it and become more progressive. Even the Daily Nebraskan, that champion of free speech, has called upon ASUN senators to shut their mouths.

In our representative democracy, the general rule is that majorities decide. The minor rule is that certain rights are protected from majority decision making. These rights are codified in our Constitution, and the Supreme Court tells us authoritatively what is and what is not protected. Whatever is not protected is decided by majority vote.

I trust us to govern ourselves. That is why I introduced a resolution in ASUN calling on the UNL Commencement Committee to return this issue to the students. If students vote to abolish commencement prayer, that will be fine with me because the majority will have spoken. If they vote to retain this tradition, their choice can be implemented in a non-offensive manner. Let students decide — not an autocrat, not the DN editorial board.

Ron Schmidt
second-year law student

I am a graduating senior after six years at this university, and I oppose prayer at graduation. I resent and I am angered by those who would force a Christian blessing on me at graduation. No one has the right to make me accept this.

To those who insist on an organized prayer, let me ask you, are you so insecure in your belief or your faith of your god that you have to have someone else ask for your blessing? I am secure enough in my belief of my Goddess that I can ask for Her blessing in a moment of silence, so why can't you? That way, I can ask for my own blessing, the Christians can ask for their own, the Muslims can pray in

their own tradition, etc., and the atheists can hang tight for a minute.

It's as easy as that; but if you don't feel comfortable enough to do something so simple, then go to your minister or pastor or whatever and ask for advice. Don't cram your blessing down my throat.

Lynn Baxter
senior
English and history

Sam Kepfield accuses me of being close-minded because I don't believe prayer should be included in a graduation ceremony at a public university.

I am open-minded, I accept other people's religious faiths and their rights to exercise their beliefs. However, open-mindedness goes both ways; it also means that people would accept my atheism and not impose their religious beliefs on me by leading me in a prayer at my graduation.

We do not all celebrate the idea of God as Kepfield claims. This idea is not held by atheists, Buddhists, Muslims and others. If some students believe celebrating God is necessary at graduation, then a moment of silence for reflection should be an acceptable solution for all.

Elizabeth Gamboa
freshman
English

No Sam Kepfield, it is not the "idea of a God that we celebrate." The legal definition of religion is not limited to one god, or for that matter, any god. Go ahead, Sam, check the cases. While you, or the majority you claim to represent, might not mind prayer led by an established and accepted religion, would you not object to prayer by some of the fringe religions? The Constitution, Sam, operates to protect the minority, not bow to the will of the majority.

Your approach to the issue of prayer at commencement, as well as most of the issues you have written about, reflects your shallowness and insensitivity.

John C. Josefsberg
third-year law student

ALAN PHELPS

Right to bear arms not free

I was looking over my gun collection the other day, and to my dismay, I realized it wasn't that extensive.



"WIN FREE GUNS" the envelope read. Sure, I was excited, but the materials inside sent sugarplums dancing through my head.

But to my pleasant surprise, the National Rifle Association of Good Ol' Boys recently sent to the Daily Nebraskan a chance to win free guns. That's right — the "Pick Your Own Gun Collection" sweepstakes.

"WIN FREE GUNS" the envelope read. Sure, I was excited, but the materials inside sent sugarplums dancing through my head.

"You know this feeling, don't you," the letter said. "You're in your favorite gun store, admiring all those Rugers, Remingtons, S&Ws, Weatherbys and so many other guns you'd just love to own . . ."

Ah, a feeling I know so well it hurts. All those guns, sitting useless inside my favorite gun store, glittering inside those glass cases. Just sitting there, like puppies in the pet store, waiting for someone to love.

And how I'd love them back, fully strapped, sending those bullets zipping down that long, metal tube. . . .

The best thing about this contest is that I won't simply WIN FREE GUNS, but the guns I want. Six little checklists, one for each type of gun, allow me to tell those helpful NRA gun-totin' officials exactly which firearms I'm missing from my arsenal.

For instance, in the category "9mm pistol," I can choose from "Browning Hi-Power," "Beretta 92FS," "Smith & Wesson Model 5904" or "Other."

"MORE GUNS THAN EVER BEFORE!" the brochure exclaimed.

I chose the Beretta 92FS, the Ruger KGPF-331, the Benelli Montefeltro, the Dakota Arms 76 Classic, the Marlin 990L and the Glock Model 21.

I really need all of those. Right now, the only gun I own is the "Super Soaker" pistol model. It doesn't command a lot of respect. Sometimes I'll

bers in the U.S. Congress." The gun grabbers, I suspected, were keeping my gun from me, grabbing it, or whatever they do with them.

When you call the general NRA number, expect to remain on hold for a while. I spent the time thinking of target practice and protecting my home against intruders.

However, I was in for a shock. "We don't give out guns," the NRA man who finally took my call told me. "I would imagine you'd have to purchase them, possibly, if you qualify."

But, I asked him, isn't it our right, as set down in the Constitution by the Founding Fathers, to bear arms?

"I've never heard (of) anyone just giving them out," he said. "Maybe I have different feelings from you on that."

What's going on here? A guy from the NRA disagreeing with me that everyone should have guns?

I phoned NRA headquarters in Washington, D.C., intending to alert them to the evil disinformative liberal propaganda being spewed out by the people who work at the hotline. Instead, I was talked down to and laughed at.

"If you want one for free, you have to join army or the police," Mr. NRA said, adding that the government is under no obligation to furnish the populace with weaponry.

We don't have to pay for our other rights, I said. But Mr. NRA mentioned the army again.

The Constitution clearly states we have a right to "bear" arms, which means to HAVE them, not to PURCHASE them.

What the hell?

Phelps is a junior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan managing editor and a columnist.

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