

KATE PEISTRUP

Death can't be beat, even legally

I'm sure you've heard of death before. Perhaps you were even lucky enough to catch "Weekend at Bernie's II," the tender and thought-provoking summer blockbuster that left a nation quivering and alone in its theater seats like helpless Jell-O jigglers waiting for a cannibalistic Bill Cosby to slurp them into his billion-dollar tummy.



Doesn't the United States, a traditionally Christian nation, guarantee in its Declaration of Independence from oppressive mother England, life as well as liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

The biting realism and gritty outrage of the film forced me to deal with many difficult questions.

You think you have trouble getting a job now; you just wait until you're dead. Employers generally frown upon laziness, let alone complete immobility. If I contract this apparently common medical condition, my opportunities for career advancement will be virtually eliminated.

I will have to be somewhat imaginative if I hope to receive a considerable salary during my post-mortem career.

There is the retail option. But generally folks refrain from visiting the interred bodies of persons unbeknownst to them. So it is almost certain that if I want to ensure large after-life profits at the hands of willing consumers, I must achieve a measure of fame.

Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery, even Egypt's Great Pyramids, all receive thousands of visitors a year. The marketing of "Memorial Merchandise" such as that of Graceland has been greatly successful but has barely been explored by other places like Arlington Cemetery. With a little enterprising spirit, these could be turned into huge money bonanzas. What child wouldn't want a Cheops' tomb Lego fun set; what favorite uncle, an Eternal Flame cigarette lighter; what housewife, a Lincoln's armpit can opener?

The odds, however, of my achieving fame given my circumstances of

birth and lack of ambition seem more limited than most.

Avoiding death altogether is another option I considered. If I convert to Hinduism, I will probably return to the life state again, perhaps inordinately wealthy, and I could, for example, afford to eat a food substance other than my current dietary staple, Cream of Wheat.

Conversely, I could return with as little earning potential as, say, a fungus.

Yet, it seems unfair to me that I should have to give up my religious convictions to avoid the death epidemic. Doesn't the United States, a traditionally Christian nation, guarantee in its Declaration of Independence from oppressive mother England, life as well as liberty and the pursuit of happiness? Jefferson, in the name of the U.S. government, promised U.S. citizens life 200 years ago and has yet to deliver!

This sounds like a class action lawsuit to me. I must call Ronald J. Palagi; this clearly isn't my fault. I will fight for my right to live. In the name of all Americans who think there is no dignified death, who see no shame in being a quadruple amputee with no bladder control, who has stared with drool forming on their lips at the 300-year-old Chinese guy in the "Guinness Book of World Records" who tangoed with Napoleon, the Superior Court of Nebraska shall hear my cry!

Racing from my hovel to my office, a.k.a. the phone booth outside the 7-Eleven on 14th Street, I hastily telephoned Cassie Brugh, whose father is a lawyer in York.

"Cassie, I need some advice in your capacity as my legal adviser."

"Yes?"

"I'd like to file a class action lawsuit against former president Thomas Jefferson charging that he has failed to deliver on his promise to provide the American people with life."

"Kate, you left your wet clothes over here on Saturday night. Did you wear anything home?"

"Miss Brugh, I'm paying you as a legal consultant. Handle personal matters on your own time."

"Call a judge."

I could see this legal thing was not nearly as easy as I had assumed. I guess those Sally Struthers correspondence courses really do separate the men from the boys.

I stepped from the booth wearily.

How far I have come, how many are the tears I have shed. I wish I could continue to fight for my brothers, but the system has beat me. One woman can only stand so much. I bowed my head and spied a piece of lint on my frock; I didst pluck it from me.

Verily now I can only march on, bravely home to my television set, for "Star Trek" is on.

Peistrup is a sophomore English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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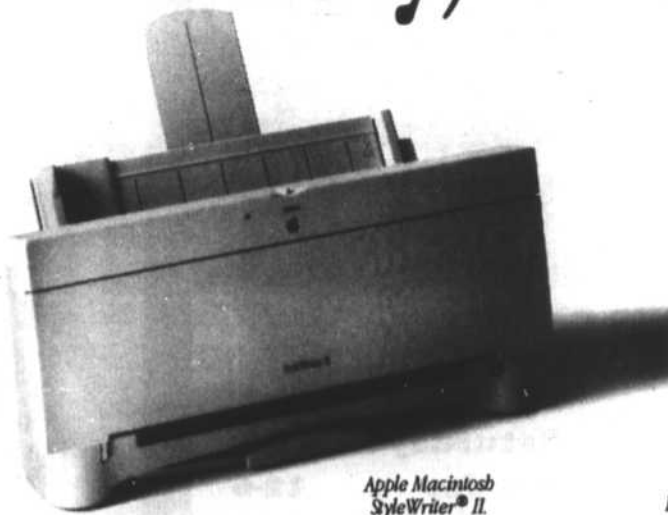
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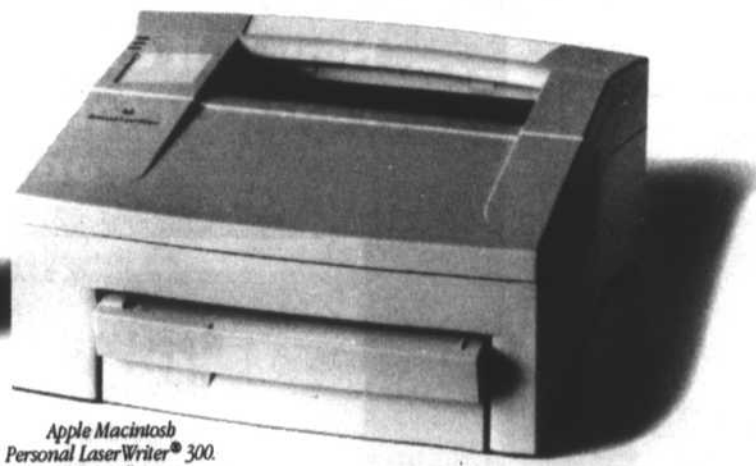
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