

DEB McADAMS

Valued children value others

Four kids in Florida may face the death penalty if prosecutors there have their way. Can you say "electric chair," boys and girls?



Congress didn't hesitate to spend more than \$160 billion on failed savings and loans, but they will carry on like alley cats before they bankroll immunization and prenatal care.

These four kids, ages 13 to 16, are charged with the murder and attempted murder of two British tourists at a highway rest stop. Maybe a good old-fashioned electrocution will show the world how much we value the foreign tourist dollar ... as opposed to how much we value our children.

If standard of living is any indicator, we don't value our children. In the early '90s, the Census Bureau reported that 38 percent of the 33.6 million poor in the United States were younger than 18 years old. The federal government defined "poor" in 1990 as a yearly income of \$13,359 or less for a family of four.

A single person can barely rent a trailer and feed a wiener dog on \$13,359 a year.

That means nearly 12.8 million kids in the United States probably didn't have enough to eat. They couldn't have new shoes or a decent winter coat. They couldn't get glasses, dental care or medical attention. Possibly as many as half a million poor children had no homes. Some were living in shelters with their mothers. Some were eating out of garbage cans and sleeping in doorways.

The Children's Defense Fund estimates that every 53 minutes, a child in the United States dies as a result of poverty. Immunization rates against polio for black children in the nation fall below that of Albania and Botswana. Infant mortality rates among minorities in large U.S. cities rival the overall infant mortality rates of the Third World.

Congress didn't hesitate to spend more than \$160 billion on failed savings and loans, but they will carry on like alley cats before they bankroll immunization and prenatal care.

Health care won't prevent teenagers from committing violent crimes,

but it will be a step toward placing value on all children. As it is, a generation of poor children has been excluded from mainstream society. Television gives them an opportunity to see what they can't have. They see expensive cars, CD players, \$200 running shoes, mountain bikes and bottled water. They see that Americans value money and stuff.

If a poor child wants to be valued, society is telling that child to get money and stuff. One way is to learn to read, go to school, go to more schools, and maybe, get a job. Another way is to get a gun and take someone else's money and stuff.

Getting a gun appears to be easier than learning to read, which may have something to do with the condition of some of our schools. The disparity between public schools is ridiculous. Children in affluent school districts have computers, weight rooms, language labs and college prep courses. Children in East St. Louis and South Chicago go to schools that may or may not have plumbing on a given day.

Equity in public education and a national commitment to increase literacy won't ensure the safety of foreign tourists in Florida, but it will create more opportunities for children to use school instead of guns to get what they want.

Poverty is a progenitor of the violence committed by our children, but it's not the only one. Both rich and poor children are abused, emotionally and sexually. Divorce knows no economics, and it's so common we've

almost forgotten how it traumatizes children. In this atmosphere of instability, kids are expected to make decisions about their futures while they are still in junior high.

They are responding to these pressures and uncertainties with alcohol and drug abuse, teen pregnancy and suicide.

Marion Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, says it takes more than two parents to raise children. Two diseased parents can damage children as much, or more, than the street, as an affluent Omaha family recently demonstrated. A 16-year-old boy stabbed his mother to death after enduring years of her hysterical abuse, yet the family appeared to be so "normal."

It's "normal" in the United States for a child to run away from home every 26 seconds. Edelman says it takes communities to raise children.

Children need communities that insist on equality in education. They need community centers where non-competitive, after-school activities are available. They need competent counselors who will intervene when a family home is a private holocaust.

This year, we will spend \$241 billion on the military, and half our children that graduate from high school won't be able to read a job application.

If we continue to do nothing, "Sesame Street" may become a hit on death row.

McAdams is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

RAINBOW ROWELL

Years of soil-searching pay off

I know something you don't know.

I have solved one of life's greatest mysteries: What makes boys tick.

Oh, many were the slumber parties that my friends and I sat around, asking each other over and over: What makes boys do the wacky things they do?

Most of the time we pierced each other's ears and played M.A.S.H. — "You are going to be a Supreme Court justice who lives in a shack in Reno, Nev., and you are going to marry Corey Feldman."

But by midnight, we'd be lying in our sleeping bags asking the most worldly among us — usually someone who had "gone with" half of the fourth grade class — about boys.

What do they think? Do they think? Do they think about me?

Ever?

But I wonder no more, thank you very much. Now I know. And knowing's half the battle.

The answer to our adolescent query? Dirt.

That's right — dirt. And I learned it from Sassy magazine.

Now I'm no die-hard Sassy fan, but I did purchase the December issue last night. See, I was stuck in the union with no cash and a thirst begging to be quenched by some overpriced soft drink.

Stay with me, this is all about to seem dangerously relevant.

So anyway, I booked down to the University Bookstore where they will let me have anything I want if I just show them my student ID, with one small hitch. There's a \$2 minimum for charge purchases. I can't JUST buy a pop.

Last week when I was in the same situation, thirsty and broke, I bought \$2 worth of Lemonheads and Necco Wafers, which made me kind of sick. Hence, I decided last night to avoid the candy section.

I ended up in Periodical Alley,



For a pregnant moment, I lingered over the magazine. Should I venture deeper? After all, it was a boy thing, and I'm not a boy. There might be some Boy Patrol that monitors all magazine readers.

that little tunnel in the bookstore where they sell magazines.

And then I spotted it. Sassy — but wait, there's more — in a cellophane bag that virtually screamed, "Buy me Rainbow, buy me now!"

Actually, it said, "FREE DIRT MAGAZINE — It's a boy thing."

I'm a big sucker for free stuff. I'll buy something I don't want or need if I have a double coupon or there's a two-for-one special.

"If I buy a can of Spam I get a free box of Triscuits? Set me up!"

I'm shameless at Big Red Welcome. Highlighters, drink bottles, key chains, all free, all mine! Mine, mine, mine ...

Not only was free stuff involved, there was also that teaser. It's a boy thing. A boy thing?

Needless to say, I succumbed to temptation and walked out of the bookstore with a bottle of artificial flavors and two magazines.

Little did I know that I also carried with me the secrets of manhood.

I didn't even have to probe deeper than the cover to answer my age-old question, nay, no further than the title: dirt — fuel for young men.

I've always suspected that dirt fuels young men, but before last night I had no proof.

Now I can settle that debate I've been having with my friend who insists young men are fueled by greasy, grimy gopher guts.

I'm still not sure how dirt fuels young men. They probably eat it, but I don't know. They might snort it or

just roll around in it real good.

For a pregnant moment, I lingered over the magazine. Should I venture deeper? After all, it was a boy thing, and I'm not a boy. There might be some Boy Patrol that monitors all magazine readers.

"Put that back, you lousy girl. Why don't you just read Sassy like the rest of your kind?"

I read on.

Apparently, young men are also fueled by articles about penile enhancement, video game technology and whatever happened to Mr. T. He's a cartoon superhero now, duh!

After tasting the forbidden fruit, I'm here to tell you that dirt — fuel for young men isn't much different from Sassy.

They both have that "we're not your parents' teen 'zine" attitude and an alarming tendency to abandon capital letters.

They both use the word dork a lot. Both magazines refer to their writers and editors by their first names and include inside jokes that the reader might not get.

However, dirt — fuel for young men has a habit of just not making sense sometimes and printing odd facts out of context — like the name of the American Banjo Fraternity's quarterly newsletter: Five Stringer.

Confusing, but charming. Must be a boy thing.

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

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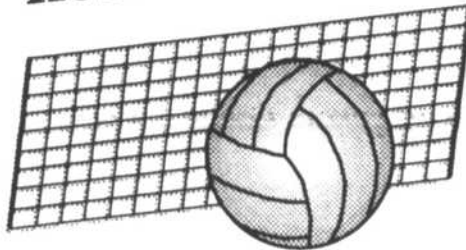
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