

PAULA LAVIGNE

# Execution-mania nothing new

**P** rime time television — 2013. 6:30 p.m. "The Executioner's Special."

7:30 p.m. "Cooking with the Executioner."

8:30 p.m. "Sweatin' to the Executioner's Song."

9:30 p.m. "What a Great Way to Die — part II."

It's been the inescapable topic in the news over the past few years. John Joubert, "Wili" Otey and possibly, Roger Bjorkland will face having their lifetimes made a little shorter.

Yes, welcome to the happy world of (ominous voice) Death Row — where scores of men and women watch cable, sleep in comfy beds, eat three square meals a day, and exercise to make sure their useless lives are spent in good health.

So, while their lives are being entertained by the free, tax-paying public, why shouldn't they be entertaining us for a change?

Ah yes, "Witness to the Execution" rears its ugly beheadedness. Move over Simpson's, Homer's going to the big house.

Why not be able to enjoy a good execution now and then? Think of the excitement as thousands of volts charge through a human body chained to a wooden chair. The person's head, wrapped in a Hefty bag, wobbles around for a few minutes and drops to the chest.

Bodily fluids ooze all over the floor and the smell of charred flesh is so powerful, the executioner keels over. The last remaining jolts go through the prisoner's body as Tom Brokaw comes on to tell us the fiber concentration of the deceased's last meal.

It's a lot like "Faces of Death," the popular movie saga of strange and unusual deaths, mutilations, tortures and bizarre mishaps. However, a real execution has a lot less fake blood, strange camera shots and singing psycho-narrators.

Aside from the pure entertainment factor, think of how good we'll all feel seeing justice carried out before our very eyes on CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox,



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CNN and MTV.

Countless victims across the nation will huddle in front of their television sets with their popcorn, Coke and animal crackers and chant the words "Death," "Death," "Death!!!"

But wait, there's a booming voice out there saying, "Hey this is morbid. This is too horrible. This is the perfect picture of how our society is disintegrating with modern desensitization."

Well, I agree with the first two counts but strike three — you're out.

No, this is not a sign of our society's decay. We haven't gotten worse from day one. It's not the "changing times."

It's history.

Take a trip back to your Western Civ class or your Ancient European Literature lectures and remember the great French Revolution.

While Marie Antoinette was eating her last cake, people were gathering outside to make a picnic out of the beheading. This happened every day and they brought their children with them.

"Well, my darling, where shall we go on this lovely day?"

"I have the perfect idea, my sweet. Let's take a picnic lunch on the hill."

"Oh thou est perfect. I hear there's another king of something being beheaded today. If we get there early, we'll have a perfect view, well within sight of the rolling head."

"Ah yes, and the children would love to see all the pageantry of the moment. Maybe they'll get to see his eyes pop out!"

"And such a beautiful day. I'll make the sandwiches."

And so it was. However, that's far from the only time in history when society was so hurting for a good Monty Python movie that they took to public executions.

Toil, toil, bubble and boil, I smell a witch cooking on the soil. From Scotland to Salem, alleged "witches" were barbecued at the stake for all to see. And again, picnics were on the rise.

More recently, we have our own cases of morbid fascination — the Revolutionary War and the Civil War — when people unpacked their picnic baskets and blankets and went to watch a good musket fight or a bloody battle on a nearby hill.

And I'll bet people in Singapore love to pack a lunch for a good caning now and then.

So we're not going downhill with our attraction for death, we're going high-tech. "Live, via satellite, it's 'Walkin' Wili' Otey Takes His Last Steps' from the heart of the Heartland, Lincoln, Nebraska!"

Although some inmates on death row even want their executions televised as a beacon to other would-be criminals — I'm not sure it's right. I might watch it for the shock value, but it wouldn't discourage me from running a few too many red lights.

Whether it's right or wrong and whether it will happen or not, we've obviously not learned from the past. However, we might have a chance now to learn for the future.

"Tune in next week for more 'hair-raising' episodes of 'Volts in My Brain' at 6 p.m. on CBS."

Paula Lavigne is a freshman news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Reverse Discrimination

My name is Chad James. I am currently a senior at Texas A&M University, and a visiting student here at UNL. I have lived in Nebraska all my life, and have never been confronted with the situation I was put in a few days ago.

I gave an informative speech last week for my public speaking class on homosexuals in the military, the former and current government policy and factors that influenced the new compromise. This week I had to give a persuasive speech. Because I had done so much research, I chose to do the same topic. However, my instructor required me to defend the opposition to gays in the military, despite my true feelings. I believe gays should be allowed in the military, and I took this defense in my informative speech. As I was in Selleck Hall, typing my persuasive speech outline, I was approached by the lab assistant with an anonymous note from someone who had left the lab. This is what it said:

Dear Bigot,

As you sit there writing a paper on gays in the military, how do you feel knowing that a gay airman was just sitting next to you?

Love, The fag who's left the room

Frankly, I was appalled. I have never been accused of bigotry, or racism for that matter, in my entire life, and I can't believe it happened here. Talk about bigotry. How about being stereotyped by someone who knows absolutely nothing about me reading over my shoulder? I want to address the person who wrote that note to me. How do you feel knowing I have nothing against gays in the military? I have no problem with them serving in the armed forces as long as they do not ask to be treated differently on the basis of homosexuality, and that they strictly adhere to the military's code of conduct.

By the way, I am a senior in the Corps of Cadets ROTC program at A&M, and plan on graduating in the

spring of 1996, at which time I will receive a commission in the U.S. Army as a second lieutenant. I also know three people in my unit who are homosexuals. I have nothing against them because they've been my best friends for three years.

I sincerely hope I have not offended anyone, and hope you don't feel that I think less of this university. I don't. I encourage anyone with questions or inquiries on this subject to contact me. You can do so through the offices of the Daily Nebraskan. I will leave addresses where I can be reached, and I hope you do write to me about your feelings. And to the "fag airman," you have done nothing but to lower my opinion of you and your ability to serve in the military. If you don't have the courage to stand up for your rights, and defend them face to face with me, then maybe you ought to keep your opinions to yourself. After all, I didn't ask you, so why did you bother telling me?

Charles R. James III  
visiting UNL student

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## Attention!!!

### College of Arts and Sciences Students

The College of Arts and Sciences is looking for qualified undergraduate Arts and Sciences students who are interested in becoming a student Advising Assistant. Application forms are available in the Dean's Office, 1223 Oldfather Hall and are due back in the Dean's Office by **September 2**. Any applications received early will be considered for an early interview.

## WHO IS GOD?



**He is revealed in the pages of the Bible through the person of Jesus Christ!**

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Sunday Worship Experience:  
Summer -- 10:00am  
Beginning August 21st --  
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Many other spiritual growth opportunities are offered throughout the week.