

CINDY LANGE-KUBICK

# Root canal ruins prize column

I was going to spend all day yesterday writing this column. My plans were to go to the library, do some research and put out a really first-rate, well-thought-out essay on world peace — or something equally profound.



*Bet you can guess who did have all the dental decay in the family — and glasses to boot (thick ones); yep, that's right, it was me.*

Instead, I had a root canal. So ... along with a numb mouth and an empty pocketbook, I also have no cognitive power left in my brain. (Not only do dentists put you through intense, toe-curling physical pain, the psychic agony of hearing the receptionist say, "That will be \$415; can you pay that now?" is truly stupefying.) So my treatise on peace, my explication of the election or my profundity about gender role confusion will have to wait until next week.

Today, I plan a simple, "stream of consciousness" column. In case you're not familiar with the term, it's a literary device defined as "the presentation of thoughts and sense impressions in a lifelike fashion — not in a sequence arranged by logic, but mingled randomly."

You know, the way I usually write. But this column was going to be different. This was going to be a prize winner.

Oh, well. Life always gets in the way of my best intentions. If it hadn't been for my achy, breaky tooth, I probably would have been side-tracked from my quest for the Pulitzer Prize by hunger pains or sleepiness.

Anyway, no more excuses. Except ... my mouth is still a bit numb from the Novocaine, so I may drool as I write. And my consciousness may not be streaming like it should because of the Tylenol-codeine mix, but bear with me.

That reminds me of a joke. (I'm drifting.)

"When is the best time to go to the dentist?"

"2:30."

Tooth-hurt-y, get it?

When I was a kid, I ate lots of candy (just an aside).

My brother (who just popped into my consciousness in a "lifelike fashion") ate lots of candy, too. And once he pushed me against a hot stove burner, and I had coil marks on my arm for weeks (rambling).

Do you see how this stream-of-consciousness thing works? You just think and write, think and write. You freely express yourself — attempting to fill up the page.

So anyway, back to my brother. He's a lawyer now — same guy that pushed me against a red-hot burner — but that's beside the point. As a child, he very rarely brushed his teeth. (And now he's a professional person, works with the public and all.) Anyway, he never brushed; he actually had a layer of stuff growing on his teeth. And did he have cavities? Heck no.

Bet you can guess who did have all the dental decay in the family — and glasses to boot (thick ones); yep, that's right, it was me.

I also was a middle child — the firstborn girl — prone to chubbiness and pimples.

Oh, the angst — tooth pain, childhood pain, pocketbook pain all flowing freely through my consciousness.

My point — loosely — is that lawyers can afford root canals; thirtysomething-aged college students cannot.

Was that really my point? I'm not sure.

At any rate, not only can they afford root canals, but to stretch the point — and the column — even further, perhaps they (at least my brother: older, smarter, slimmer) deserve them.

When I was a child, I brushed. I brushed a lot. And what did it get me? I'll tell you what it got me: a mouthful of heavy metal fillings and costly crowns. When I die, my children can each have a piece of fine jewelry made from all the tinsel in my mouth. (A pair of mercury-plated hoop earrings for Anna and matching watchbands for the boys.)

On the other hand, — what other hand, you may or may not be asking; she didn't have a first hand. (picky-picky!) This is stream of consciousness, remember: "not in a sequence arranged by logic, but mingled randomly."

But if there were another hand, what about lawyers who didn't brush their teeth as children? And what about dentists who charge \$415 an hour to torture innocent people? And what about candy and children and Halloween and red-hot burners on stoves?

And what about world peace, partisan politics and gender roles? I didn't mention dental floss. I use it religiously.

What about dental floss? What about it? What?

Enough said; I'm starting to drool.

Lange-Kubick is a senior news-editorial and sociology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

YOUSUF BASHIR

# Death penalty good but flawed

Murder is considered one of the worst crimes a human being can commit.

Throughout the ages, murderers were shunned, and most of the time they were put to death. Even the Bible mentions a punishment for murder: "Who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," or "He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword."

The capital punishment system the United States is using isn't fulfilling its purpose. We need to make some changes and enforce them in order to improve the capital punishment system. Whatever happened to the old saying: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth?" Why can't we include "a life for a life?"

Capital punishment is a controversial subject. Many people believe the death penalty should be abolished. One of the many arguments against it is that it doesn't fulfill its purpose as a deterrent to murder.

Another argument against capital punishment is the sentiment that it is used in a racist way. This cannot really be proven, but there is some evidence that points that way.

Since 1976, when the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty, there have been 145 executions. Of these, not one white person has been put to death for the killing of a black person.

Of the people who have been executed since 1976, 86 percent of their victims have been white. This is a high percentage, considering that almost half of the murder victims in the United States are black.

There is even more evidence supporting the theory of racism. Of the estimated 16,000 executions in U.S. history, only 30 of those executed were white people put to



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death for the killing of black people.

Another problem with the death penalty is that we cannot be sure how many innocent people have been executed. There have been cases of people who were eventually found innocent, but the news didn't reach the executioner until it was too late.

When people think of capital punishment, they think of using it for murderers. The death penalty might do some good as a consequence for other crimes — maybe for rape, for political crimes or for drugs.

I think death for drug dealers is very realistic. After all, look at the people who suffer. Look at the number of murders committed in which drugs are involved.

The death penalty could work as a deterrent against drug users and dealers. If we used capital punishment on convicted drug dealers, the risk of dealing would be much greater.

This, in turn, probably would raise the price of doing drugs because of the increased risk. The cost probably would be so high that many people would not be able to purchase drugs. This might help solve the drug problem in the United States.

Is the entire world becoming soft? I don't think so. Some say the

death penalty is inhumane and cruel. It's kind of funny how our society feels sorry for the criminal and forgets about the victims. If these people had someone close to them murdered, it would be interesting to see how many of them would still take a stand of opposition to capital punishment.

The death penalty has been around since ancient times. In the past, the use of capital punishment was not questioned. It was one of those things that society just accepted. Today, in some parts of the world, crime is controlled by strict laws and punishments — hence, there is almost no crime in those countries.

The issue of capital punishment has become a question of whether it is right or wrong — whether or not society should be able to decide to take the life of another human being as a punishment for murder. The use of capital punishment probably always will be questioned.

There are a few problems with the current system, but we can try to change that. There probably never will be a perfect system of capital punishment, but at least we can try to improve the current system.

Bashir is a senior food science major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



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