

LORELYN ARTHUR

Legal suicide raises questions



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The last bit of confetti has no doubt been swept from the floors. The bands have gone home. Tears of joy and sorrow have been shed. Election '94 is over. The Republicans now control the House, the Senate and a majority of the governorships. Oliver North lost. Carol McShane will have to remember that her title is Mrs., not senator. And Mario Cuomo, the man who could have been president, may become the commissioner of baseball after losing to a one-time mayor of Peekskill. Peekskill? Isn't that where Blair, Jo, Tootie and Natalie lived with Mrs. Garrett? Nebraska will continue to commit premeditated, first-degree murder and call it execution. And terminally ill persons with less than six months to live can, in the state of Oregon, legally choose medically assisted suicide beginning Dec. 8, 1994. I have thought a lot about this practice for a long time. When I was 20 years old, we had to put my Pekingese, Mitzi, to sleep. She was very old and could barely walk. She cried all the time because she was in so much pain. But I cried a lot when she died. The vet said it was the humane thing to do. I believe that. But we aren't talking about pets here. We're talking about our loved ones — not that people can't love pets. My mom died of cancer seven years ago. It started as breast cancer and spread to her spine.

She was fortunate in one way: She didn't have to suffer for a long period of time. She died eight months after the cancer was found. But she was in a great deal of pain and mentally out of it, thanks to the drugs. Is this humane? I read an article written by the wife of the youngest person to have received help from Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Her story was poignant. She wrote of the love and respect she had for her husband who was dying of Lou Gehrig's disease. As I read that, I thought of my mom. If she had been able to make the choice, would she have wanted to die sooner? Hindsight isn't always 20/20. I don't have an answer to that. I just know I don't like the memories of her suffering. Many physicians in Oregon have said that they would not aid in suicides. Many feel this is playing God. I agree, but doctors play God all the time. Today physicians are often left with the choice of who will receive a transplant and who will die. The concern I have is with the wording "with less than six months to live."

This is ambiguous. If I want to die now, I can just search until I find a doctor who will tell me I have less than six months to live. That shouldn't be hard. What if the doctor is wrong? What if a cure is found the day after one has chosen to die? Then is it considered murder? Will the doctor be sent to jail? My father and I had a conversation on this the other night. He questioned the ability to be pro-choice, anti-death penalty and pro-physician-assisted suicide. At the time, I argued that he was comparing apples and oranges and grapefruits. As I sit here now, I'm not so sure he's completely wrong. One problem I have with the death penalty is there are a lot of innocent people in prison and guilty people on the streets laughing. What if the man we murder today is found to be innocent tomorrow? What if the person who chooses to die today is found to have been misdiagnosed tomorrow? How many opinions should a person get before choosing to die? Arthur is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

SHANE TUCKER

NU policy persecutes religion




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Halloween is over, but Chancellor Spamster and his administrative cronies are still hunting for witches. It appears that assistant professor Raymond Massey might be just what the administration is looking for, one of those evil Christian boys. Massey, a self-described evangelical Protestant, was recently punished for his religious beliefs when he was removed from a search committee. It was the search committee's duty to find a director for the Southeast Research and Extension Center, but evidently Massey's religious beliefs disqualify him from such a position (read: Christians need not apply). All of this hubbub centers on a vote taken last month to change the constitution of an association that oversees a 4-H camp in Gretna. Massey, along with 19 other members of the association, voted to leave sexual orientation out of the association's nondiscrimination policy. The association's constitution should give them, not Spam-a-Gram, the right to change the policy. This makes sense because the association oversees a 4-H camp, not a university classroom. When Dr. Ken Bolen, dean of UNL's Cooperative Extension, contacted Massey about the association's actions, Massey told the dean he had problems with the university's nondiscrimination policy. Because of his religious convictions, he had concerns about inclusion of homosexuals in UNL's nondiscrimination statement. The next thing you know, Massey is removed from an unrelated search committee by Bolen, and Chancellor Cracker is telling the Academic Senate that the man is a bigot. According to Cocker Spanier, Massey "clearly stated to his superiors his unwillingness to


follow the university's policy of nondiscrimination." But according to Massey, no such statement was ever made. He said he told his superiors he disagreed with the policy, not that he was unwilling to follow it. Why then was he removed from an unrelated search committee? Why didn't Can o' Spam give Massey a call to find out what occurred at a meeting with his superiors? I'll tell you why: Massey is a Christian and in PC speak, that means second-class citizen. In reading UNL's nondiscrimination policy, you would assume that religion and sexual orientation would be treated equally, but obviously that is not the case. Maybe the university's nondiscrimination policy should be rewritten with a number behind the various groups indicating their relative weight on the list. Sexual orientation could get a 10, gender and race could get a nine, non-Christian religions could get a six and Christians could get a fat zero. Grammy-gram shouldn't be judged too harshly, however; the administration is placed in the impossible situation of upholding a policy that is necessarily inconsistent. This is the crux of America's Culture War. A policy devised to shield homosexuals from intellectual discourse about their lifestyle cannot be consistent with a policy that seeks to uphold the religious

freedom of individuals with objections to homosexual activity. The only outcome such a policy can have is censorship. On one hand you have enraged homosexuals, frustrated and unhappy that their lifestyle is viewed as morally bankrupt by their political opponents. On the other hand, you have people of various religions trying to uphold moral lifestyles for themselves and their children in a society that is becoming increasingly anti-religious and spiritually defunct. Both sides cannot win. What middle ground can there be for two fundamentally opposing world views? According to the university, there can be none. For men like Raymond Massey, there is no room at the inn. Bolen and Green-Eggs-&-Spam have sided with the secular (which means anti-religious in PC speak) minority against the religious freedom of American citizens. Thomas Jefferson is rolling over in his grave. It's time for the Gramster to read a copy of the U.S. Constitution. Massey has every right to his opinion, and the university's actions are nothing more than cleverly disguised religious persecution. Keep the faith Ray; the Constitution's on your side. Tucker is a senior biology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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