

## Spontaneity adds spice to life

A friend of mine said something to me the other day that set the gears turning and got me to thinking. She told me, with great sincerity in her voice, that spontaneity is like a dying art form — the longer it goes unused, the more obsolete it becomes.

I tried to think back to the last spontaneous act I committed and came up empty. I hated to think that what she had said had the remotest possibility of being true. My gut wrenched at the thought that society had become so ordered and routine that anything slightly off from the norm could be seen as a mortal sin.

What has happened to the American road trip? Road trips have always been, at least in my mind, the epitome of spontaneous acts. I've seen "Thelma and Louise" and "Boys on the Side," but there has to be another reason for hitting the wild open road than to escape an abusive husband or a terminal disease. Why is it no longer possible just to pick up and go? Even family outings seem to follow some kind of secret schedule or outline. It's not that order isn't a good thing, but some chaos now and then can't be all that bad.

Last weekend, my friends and I attempted to be spontaneous and take off for Kansas City, Mo., on a Saturday afternoon, not to return until the following day. As usual, logic, reason and order took precedence over being spontaneous and Omaha was as far as we got. The phrase "if we had planned it earlier" popped up quite a few times that weekend.



**Beth Finsten**

Call me crazy, but I couldn't help thinking that if it was planned, that would have defeated the purpose of committing a spontaneous act. I don't quite know why human beings need to have a reason for everything that occurs in the universe and for every act they commit. Why can't I be generous without reason or get in the car and drive with no place to go? It could just be a generation thing, but lately institutions, order and schedules to follow are slowly getting on my nerves.

I long for the day when I can hit the road with the top rolled down and the radio turned up. I won't have any destination in mind, and the wind in my hair will be more important than the money in my pocket. Being spontaneous has a certain type of stimulating freedom and feeling of complete abandonment from a world of schedules and routines.

I've often been told that spontaneity is reserved for the young. If that's true, then we have done a poor job with the gift we have been given. Today's generation has become too serious for its own good.

I realize that these are serious

and somewhat intense times in which we live, but we can't afford to lose what little sense of humor and wild reckless abandon we have left. To be spontaneous and unpredictable is to be young in years and young at heart. God made different-colored people to add variety to the world; spontaneity was created to add variety to life.

The same thing day in and day out is enough to drive anyone to an early grave. I wouldn't be surprised if I already have one foot in mine.

Spontaneity has yet to become obsolete. You can still find a small glimmer of it from time to time in a child's laugh or a romantic candlelight dinner for two. The beauty of spontaneity is that it creeps up on you when you least expect it. As long as the young never forget the power of youth, and the old never forget to be young at heart, then the dying art form of spontaneity may have a chance.

With my 20th birthday right around the corner and not very many spontaneous acts in my name, I have a lot of catching up to do. I find myself leaving the reckless teen-age years behind and heading ever forward into the world of responsible adulthood — a world of schedules, routines and never-ending monotony, unless I choose to spice it up a bit.

Basically, life is what you make it. It can be an exciting roller coaster of thrills and surprises, or it can be as dull and boring as a chemistry review on a Sunday afternoon.

*Finsten is a sophomore pre-pharmacy major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.*

## PC police arbitrarily enforce their rules

Remember when the thought-and-speech police declared that remarks made by House Majority Leader Dick Armey were offensive, bigoted and inappropriate? That was Armey's "Barney Fag" slip of the tongue, in reference to Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.).

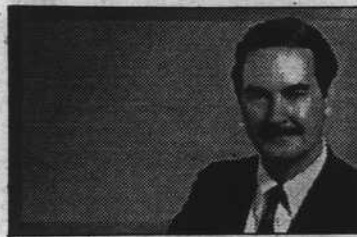
Now we have the case of Charles Barkley, a professional basketball player for the Phoenix Suns. Before last Sunday's NBA All-Star Game, Barkley made a "joking" remark to a white reporter friend. "That's why I hate white people," said Barkley, who is black. Reporters who heard about the remark invaded the locker room and surrounded Barkley, seeking elaboration. Barkley later held a news conference and hurled some expletives at those present, and journalists in general, telling them to leave town.

Reaction to Barkley's comments is a study in political correctness. NBA President David Stern was asked whether the same standard should be applied to Barkley as some did to Armey. Said Stern: "It depends. I think in this case Charles was doing his routine, and that's part comedian — the same as Billy Crystal or Bill Cosby." So, in addition to being an outstanding basketball player, Barkley's "joking" remarks can be excused because he is an amateur comedian, is that it?

Barkley also said to a Japanese journalist, "By the way, did I tell you I hate Asians?" The reporter laughed. But Barkley wasn't through. He managed to convey his "hatred" to a reporter of Polish descent and even lambasted a black reporter whose skin was lighter than his: "You know, I hate light-skinned black people, too."

Is Barkley an equal-opportunity bigot? Of course not. He was having fun and tweaking reporters he knows. But why did he largely get a free pass — not only from the NBA commissioner, but from much of the media when they learned they couldn't fan the small flame into a bonfire?

There seems to be a double standard in speech, as there is for most everything these days, from capital punishment to Capitol ethics. It isn't the content of a



**Cal Thomas**

racial slur that offends, nor is it always the intent. Rather, the judgment is leveled at the person saying it, based on his or her political worldview. Imagine the response had these same words come not from the mouth of Charles Barkley but from Rush Limbaugh. Because there are those who believe Limbaugh to be a racist-sexist-homophobe, the cries of outrage would break the decibel meter.

As for Barkley's uncouth slur of the media, it might be difficult to find a critic — because many share his feelings about reporters who constantly search for the next flap to sensationalize to get their faces on camera or their bylines on the front page.

That words play differently when they come from different mouths is evident when one recalls the "Nightline" remarks of Al Campanis, late of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Campanis responded to a question as to why there were not more black managers by citing their alleged genetic shortcomings. Never mind that the Dodgers led the way in the integration of baseball. For Campanis, it was one strike and he was out.

Or how about similar remarks about genes and blacks by Jimmy the Greek? Same thing. Jimmy was pulled from his CBS broadcast job.

Yes, Campanis and Jimmy were serious, while, we're assured, Barkley is auditioning for a post-basketball career on The Comedy Channel.

And so Charles Barkley plays on. And so he should. We have finally found one person who stands up to the thought police and Maces them. Maybe he should run for governor of Alabama, as he's said he might do. Wouldn't that keep the press and the selective enforcers of the First Amendment busy?

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## Ladies, men have it bad, too

"You've come a long way, baby!" rings the old Virginia Slims advertisements.

Those cigarette ads, documenting various highlights in the women's liberation movement, were supposed to appeal to females by celebrating America's progress in the fight for women's rights.

But apparently some women believe we have a lot further to go. As a result, fighting has resumed on the front lines of that time-old battle we call the gender war.

Here at home, the shots rang out with a report, released last week by the Chancellor's Commission on the Status of Women, that ranked the University of Nebraska-Lincoln ninth out of 11 peer institutions in its percentage of faculty comprised by women. According to the report, only 18 percent of UNL's faculty members are women, as compared to the 21.2 percent average of the 10 other peer institutions.

The report sparked talk within the feminist circles.

"That report just goes to show," said a feminist classmate of mine, "men don't treat women any better now than our grandfathers treated the women of my grandmother's generation. Hell, we're lucky we aren't chained to the kitchen stove — and kept barefoot and pregnant."

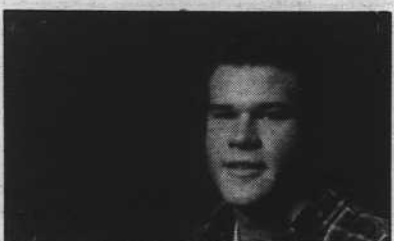
Good luck on finding any shoulders to cry on. The fact is that women in America have it good today. And in most instances, they are better off than men.

Last spring, Forbes magazine ran an article entitled "Gender politics," which talked about "The Myth of Male Power," a book by Warren Farrell. Some of Farrell's findings:

- Men are less likely than women to attend college (46 percent vs. 54 percent) and graduate from college (45 percent vs. 55 percent).

- Men work (inside and outside the home) an average of 61 hours a week; women, 56 hours.

- Men make up more than 95 percent of the work force in



**Jamie Karl**

hazardous occupations like construction and trucking. Thus, men account for 94 percent of occupational fatalities each year.

- In 1920 (back in our grandmothers' era), men lived, on average, one year less than women. Today, men live seven years less.

- Men are more likely to die sooner from every one of the 15 leading causes of death.

- Men and their health are the subject of just one medical journal article for every 23 written about women.

- Men and women are equally likely to initiate domestic violence, at every level of severity, according to 14 separate studies.

- Men are twice as likely as women to be the victims of violent crime and three times as likely to be victims of murder.

- Men are the victims of only 9 percent of reported rapes outside prison annually. But inside the American prison system, men are the object of up to 1 million rapes a year. (Rape in female prisons is virtually non-existent.)

- Men convicted of murder are 20 times more likely to receive the death penalty than women convicted of murder.

Now, if men are this much worse off than women, why are men still getting blamed and tabbed as chauvinist pigs?

Perhaps the interesting thing about the book's findings is that author Farrell is a longtime feminist fellow-traveler and former male board member of the National Organization for Women in New York City.

Farrell says the key to better

relations between the sexes is finding a language that both can understand; that is, a language that allows both sexes to realize the difficulty the other faces in its social roles.

Such a language already exists. But the feminists complaining about how bad women have it nowadays are not bilingual.

It is easy to point out one study, such as this most recent report from the chancellor's office, and say women are at a disadvantage. Men could say the same if there were a Commission on the Status of Male Elementary School Teachers or a Commission on the Status of Male Nurses. Men could cry victimization just using the figures above.

But the human race, centuries ago, came to understand, respect and accommodate the inherent biological differences between the sexes. Thus, it is wrong to expect men and women to compete on the same level at every matter.

A recent example: The issue of women in combat.

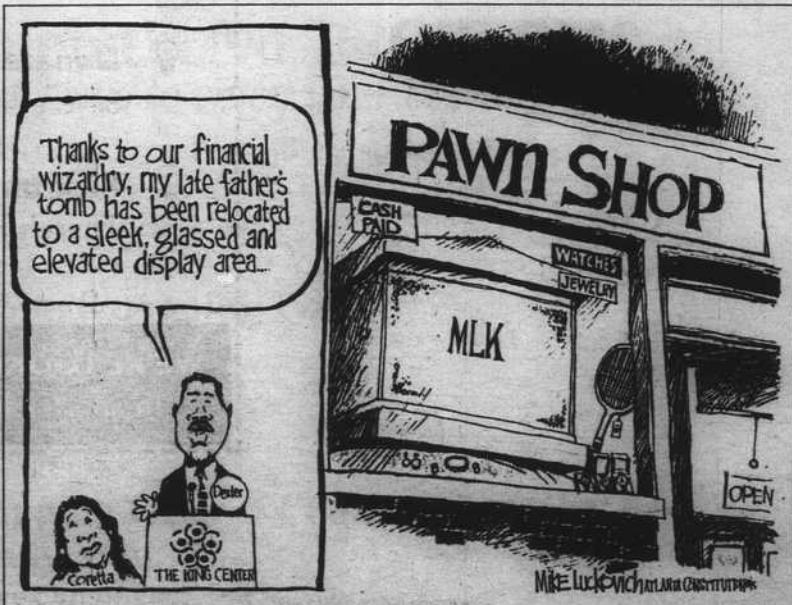
There are reasons why women are not on the battlefield, just as there are reasons why women have never engaged in contact sports with men. Nor do they compete in contact sports.

And just as most people learn and accept the fact that, just as war is a man's business, we learn that the nurturing of infant children is the work of women, mainly. Perhaps this reasoning — that one sex can do a particular job better than another — is, to some extent, the reasoning for the number of males in university classrooms.

Regardless of what is being done about placing women in previously male-dominated roles, you cannot alter human nature with either a university administrative order or an act of Congress.

Indeed, baby, you have come a long way. But now it's time you take a rest.

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**Mike Luckovich**