

Suing enriches life and wallet

It's high time I joined the club. No, not the Hair Club for Men. I'm talking about the club that virtually everyone in America belongs to.

The Professional Victims Club, where everyone is a victim of something and should thereby be compensated for their trouble and inconvenience.

The only admission requirement is that you have a deficiency in your life and need someone to blame. Even if you don't have a problem you could pull a Roseanne and conjure up something from fantasyland to use against somebody.

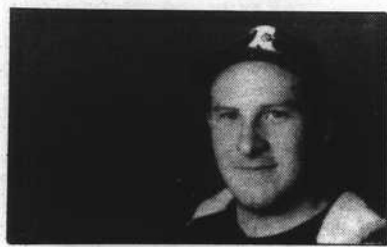
The first person to blame is your mother. Rule number one in the PVC handbook: It's always your mother's fault, regardless of the dilemma. She didn't offer you enough good advice in the handling of women or men. Or maybe she didn't give you the best or proper amount of love necessary to make you capable of maintaining a relationship.

My theory is that my mother is the center of all my suffering, the catalyst for all that has failed in my life, the engineer driving this runaway train I claim as my existence. It works for me.

The great thing about blame is that it can be recklessly distributed to everyone and everything in equal portions. There's nothing like spreading around a bad mood.

Perhaps your father didn't buy you enough toys when you were little, didn't read you enough bedtime stories or didn't play ball whenever you wanted to. Shame! Sue him.

Maybe your friends didn't reinforce your frail ego to the point where it couldn't be shattered with a



Michael Justice

mere insult regarding your attire. How dare they be so insensitive.

And what about those clothes? How could a clothing company be so irresponsible and sell you something that could potentially bring scathing insults upon you?

Don't they know that you weren't loved enough by your mother and mistreated by your father? Sue them and the store!

Some woman sued McDonald's because they didn't tell her that her coffee was hot and therefore potentially dangerous. The NERVE! How could she possibly know that the coffee was hot and that if she spilled it on herself it could burn her skin?

McDonald's should be well aware of the fact that her mother mistreated her as a child by not letting her touch the stove when it was hot, thereby robbing her of a valuable life experience that could have prevented the scalding tragedy. Good for her! (I hear she's been promoted in the club.)

I've been contemplating who to blame, besides my mother, for the sudden evacuation of my hair. I could always sue every single shampoo company, settle out of court and make a killing, but why stop there? What about comb and brush manufacturers? They should have warned me about the overuse of their products and how it could

have caused my hair follicles to abandon me.

Maybe I shouldn't have worn a hat so much when I was younger. The lack of sunlight may have stunted the continued growth of my hair. Those hat companies never bothered to tell anyone, especially me.

The lack of sunlight also means that all that time spent riding in a car could have damaged me permanently. I could nail all the hat and car companies. And then there's the school district. They had me inside so much, I could shut them down for good. (I don't think anyone would notice, though.)

I could sue all those bars for letting too many people stand too close to me, invading my personal space and awakening hidden memories of claustrophobia.

All those employers who didn't hire me should pay for my humiliation and shattered self-esteem. All those athletes should cover my losses when they failed to win every game. How dare they victimize me?

I have attention deficit disorder: I'll sue everyone ever involved with television. I've gotten fat: I'll sue all the snack companies for not putting warning labels (like those on cigarettes) on their packages. Typing makes my fingers uncomfortable beyond desired levels: IBM and Apple are mine.

I grew up thinking I could achieve the American dream, but now I just hope I get a job at Target. I guess I'll sue the government for misleading me all these years. Why not?

After all, I'm a victim.

Justice is a junior broadcasting and news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Regrets forgotten in failed Cubs deal

This is the true story of how I almost became part-owner of the Chicago Cubs and why I am so happy I didn't.

It was 14 years ago and I was sitting at a corner table in Billy Goat's Tavern with Charlie Finley.

Finley was the former owner of the great Oakland A's team that won three World Series in the 1970s. We occasionally had a few beers and talked baseball.

That night we chatted about rumors that the Wrigley family might have to sell the team because P.K. Wrigley had died and left a whopping inheritance-tax bill.

Finley said he thought the chronically mismanaged franchise could be had for about \$21 million. If he was right, it would be a bargain, especially if the team fell into the hands of owners brilliant enough to develop a winner.

We agreed that we possessed the necessary brilliance. But we lacked \$21 million.

Ah, but I knew someone who had enough money to buy the team, fix up the ballpark and sign good players.

He was my boss, Marshall Field, who owned the Sun-Times, where I worked.

With his distinguished Chicago name, the owners couldn't possibly object.

Finley and I hatched our plan. I would persuade Field to buy the team because it made good business sense. And he would bring Finley in as a 5 percent owner and general manager. I would mortgage and borrow and buy a small sliver, which would permit me to be on the board of directors and cadge free beer.

By chance, I was going on a fishing trip with Field soon after that evening. So he and I and two of his executives would be in a North Woods cabin or a boat for three days. Unless he jammed his fingers in his ears, he'd have to listen to my pitch.

He did, but at first he wasn't enthusiastic.

"I don't like baseball," he said. I told him that he didn't have to like baseball. Finley and I liked baseball enough for all of us. He liked money and he would make money.

The two executives snickered and said it would be a foolish deal. But I persisted.

First, I said, we would yank the Cubs off Channel 9, which was owned by the rival Tribune Company. We'd see if they had enough old Charlie Chan films to fill those empty afternoons.

And we'd put the Cubs on Channel 32, which Field owned.



Mike Royko

Meanwhile, the shrewd Finley would build a winner. The sappy but loyal Cubs fans would flock to the ballpark.

Fans would be so grateful to Field for giving them a good team, they would buy more of our newspapers.

Finally, I said, we could rename the ballpark after the new owner. We would call it Field Field. Catchy and easy to remember.

By the time the fishing trip ended and we were back in Chicago, Field had agreed.

He met with Finley and said he would buy 51 percent of the franchise if Finley would put together a group of investors to buy the rest.

That would be easy, Finley said, and he set about doing it.

Then the tarpon began running off the coast of Florida. What have tarpon to do with it? Field is an avid world-class fisherman, so when the tarpon run, he runs.

Finley kept phoning and asking me when Field would return so we could make the offer.

Soon, I said. The tarpon would tire of running and Field had to get tired of running after them.

On June 16, 1981, a sports reporter loped over to my desk and said: "Hear 'bout the Cubs?"

What about them? "They were just sold to the Trib."

I kicked the wall so hard that I limped for a month.

Every spring since I have thought about what might have been. I would be a part-owner at the training camp, saying: "Shawon, lay off the outside pitches this year. And Sammy, no law says you can't let the pitcher walk you, kid."

But now the regrets are gone. What might have been would be that today I would be a baseball owner. I'd have to growl about how stupid the players are, which they are, without admitting how stupid I am, which I would be by default.

Instead, I can yawn at baseball while watching Michael soar.

If I ever catch a tarpon, I'll give it a kiss.

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Skip the plasma; tease MCI

As I traveled through 10-plus semesters of higher learning, I found myself gaining a lot.

But there was one thing I was always short on — money (and friends, but if I had money, I could buy those).

I tried everything I knew of, but I couldn't find a way to make money without trading something for it, or — perish the thought — having to WORK.

I thought the plasma center was going to be my bottomless pit of wealth, but they only let you go twice a week and that needle is BIG!

They need to have a toenail center or a saliva center. I would have no problem filling up an 800-milliliter jug with my spit for \$15 bucks.

I tried myriad jobs, but they always sucked. You have to go in when they tell you, do what they want you to and they get way too upset about little mistakes like backhanding the manager or taking extra stuff home.

This job is about the best I've found. They let you can whine about your petty problems or complain about local high schools, and they pay you for it.

But employment at the Daily Nebraskan doesn't pay enough. Sure, it's enough for rent and bills, but it doesn't cover other minor expenses like five pitchers of beer a night, new kilts and Galapagos-turtle food.

I have an expensive lifestyle, and I was getting to the point where I might have had to give up the maid or the chauffeur just to make ends meet. But then I found the legendary "Goose That Lays the Golden Eggs."

Not literally, of course. If I had



Joel Strauch

some big gander that was popping out 24-carat offspring, why would I bother talking to you about it?

But I've discovered something almost as good, and I'm willing to share it with anyone who made it this far into the column.

You know those big long-distance telephone companies? The ones that drop pins and have Magnum P.I. talk about products that are really never going to exist (Come on, a fax on the beach sounds like some cheap drink).

These are the companies you have to pay money to when you call home or dial those 1-900 numbers.

But not too many people know that these companies are willing to pay you. That's right, I said pay YOU. And you don't have to do anything.

Let me clarify. Last spring, I received a check in the mail from one of these companies.

It was for 75 bucks, so I figured it had to be some kind of scam. I examined the small print closely (what the hell, for 75 bucks, I can do some examin'n') and it said all I had to do was change long-distance companies.

That's it.

But then I realized that Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph, being the benevolent monopoly that it is, will make you grab your ankles at every opportunity.

I knew they'd charge through the

receiver for a switch-over fee.

So, I called 'em up and asked. It's only \$4.63.

That's it.

I added it up, and I figured that after I paid \$4.63 and then cashed my check for \$75, I'd still pull in way over \$50.

So I switched.

I thought that my usual long-distance company would call and complain about my back-stabbing betrayal.

But they didn't. They called and told me that they would give me \$50 if I would come back. They would even pay the \$4.63 switching fee.

Well, I couldn't pass up an opportunity to rejoin my former comrades (plus, I was still waiting to renew my driver's licence at an ATM, just like Magnum said I could).

And wouldn't you know it? The company that gave me \$75 called then and said they'd be willing to pay me another \$35 and give me \$25 worth of coupons for my long-distance calls.

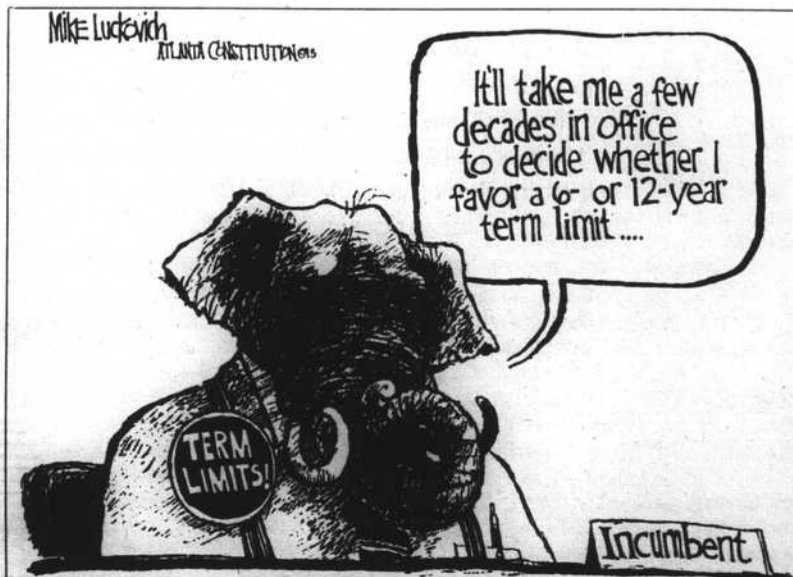
That sounded good to me, and besides, the other company still hadn't shown me how to tuck in my child while I was on vacation. They don't help me, I don't help them.

But all of this switching was making my head spin. So I was glad when the company that I'm currently with told me that they would match or beat any offer that their enemies make.

It's a good thing that they don't check up on any of the false offers that I've been telling them about.

I'm not dumb enough to cut open this goose.

Strauch is a senior secondary education major and a Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.



Mike Luckovich