

Sun's stories provide laughter

My topic for today is the environment. The latest reports from the area of ecology say that termites account for 20 percent of the world's methane, a greenhouse gas that causes global warming. I know this fact because of two very important reasons: I care deeply for the environment and try to keep current on issues affecting this area; and secondly, the story appeared in the latest issue of the Sun. I never miss an issue.

The Sun story, which, by the way, has a journalistically helpful pencil sketch of a termite releasing gas, (the sketch is useful in case you didn't understand where termite gas comes from. Answer: termite butt), claims that termites "run a third to cows and sheep in the flatulence race."

I didn't even know that there was a flatulence race, which tells me that I need to make a greater effort to keep up on environmental issues, and also that I need to find an entry blank for next year. I know I can give termites a run for their money. Sheep may still be out of my league, but with proper training, who knows? By the way, does anyone know how Congress finished this year? Fourth? Fifth?

Also in this issue of the Sun, the story of a man who has become his grandmother appears. You did not misread, the man has become his grandmother. In fact, the headline reads: Man becomes his grandma.

It's the story of a man who, and here it is again, becomes his grandma. He was raised by his grandma, and now in his old age, he has, well, become his grandma as a tribute her life. I have nothing against crossdressing old men, but to actually become your grandma is a little bit loopy, in my opinion. He could at least act a lot like his grandma, or even imitate his grandma, but becoming his grandma is a sure sign of some sort of odd



Todd Elwood

transmorphic, which I believe is illegal in most states.

Here's something else: "You're pregnant, docs tell great-grandad." This is not a new Broadway musical, but another headline from the Sun. At first, I thought it was another story of an odd transmorphic old man who becomes a pregnant woman, but unfortunately it was not. Doctors at Rosie Hospital in Cambridge, England, mixed up the results of an ultra-sound given to an authentic pregnant person (I assume it was a woman), with an ultra-sound of his prostate. I bet the woman thinks she's going to have a really odd-looking child.

Also, turning your dog into an alcoholic is illegal. This comes from another story in the Sun of a woman who was trying to show her husband how foolish he acted when he drank too much. She gave the dog a lot of beer, and was arrested. "Neighbors kept telling me they'd seen Otis (the dog) walking into things, and picking fights with every dog in the neighborhood," the husband reported to police.

This story reminded me of a joke: A dog, with bandages wrapped around his foot, limps into an Old West-type saloon. Belying up to the bar, he says to the bartender, "I'm looking for the man who shot my paw." I guess the moral here would be to not turn your dog into an alcoholic, and don't tell animal jokes.

Beer also has the capacity to

give a person gas. I'm not sure if it has the same effect on dogs, but since dogs weren't even given an honorable mention in the flatulence race, I'm assuming that it's not a factor.

Which brings me to the real issue today: Old men that become their grandmothers. Or was it the environment?

Earth Day was observed last Saturday. I celebrated by dropping off bags of dirt on friends' doorsteps, ringing the doorbell and running away very quickly.

I assume that the dirt was put to good use, because I haven't had any complaints.

I didn't plant anything, though. Planting things on Earth Day has kind of become the thing to do, but for me, it's pointless.

Once I was given a small pot with three cacti (cactuses). They were very small and all were wearing small sombreros (hats) and had eyes glued to them. The instructions said to water "The Three Cact-Amigos" every six months. They didn't last that long. All three of them were eaten from the inside out by small bugs, which were probably gas-filled termites. I thought this actually was neater than having a small pot of three cacti, even if they were wearing sombreros. I might have been able to save them, but day after day they drooped a little more as their insides were gnawed away, and their unblinking eyes stared ahead.

I guess the lessons that we learn about our environment today are that next year I will beat out termites in the flatulence race, don't give dogs beer and if you see someone coming to your door next Earth Day carrying a bag of dirt, become your grandma and don't answer.

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For liberals, 'right' often means crazy

So it's come to this. Speech causes violence.

After Bill Clinton distinguished himself with appropriate and compelling remarks at last Sunday's memorial service for the Oklahoma City bombing victims, the politically wounded president emerged the following day in the presidential primary state of Iowa, slickly suggesting that unnamed (but we all know to whom he is referring, don't we?) conservative talk show hosts were partly to blame.

The script is already being written for the resuscitation of big government. Monday's Wall Street Journal provided the rough draft. The headline read: "Some Citizens Disavow Extreme Right-Wing Views in Wake of Bombing. Have Angry White Men Gone Too Far?"

The story said: "At a minimum, the horrific pictures of destruction in America's heartland seem likely to reduce public tolerance for advocates of anti-government philosophies.

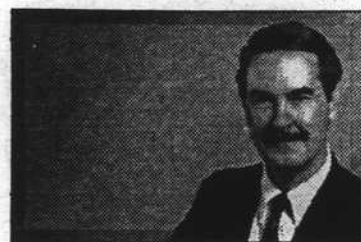
Heartbreaking news reports present vivid images of government employees, not as faceless bureaucrats, but as sympathetic human victims with children."

Equating opposition to big government with opposition to people who are in it is a nice tactic if you've lost the ideological debate. But the contention that words and images, even the harsh variety, cause violent behavior is something many liberals have always denied.

Remember Ted Bundy? He said he became a serial killer because of pornography. "Experts" were interviewed who denied there was a connection.

The networks frequently defend themselves against contentions by some groups that gratuitous sex, violence and profanity on television cause some people to copy the behavior they see depicted there. Why should we believe that one form of expression has no effect (ever mindful that commercials cause people to buy products) while another type of expression — which is critical of government — leads to terrorism?

And why are lunatics and anarchists consistently labeled as "far right"? Why was the man who stabbed a cultist in Japan a "right-winger"? What, then, was the cultist — a far right-winger. It seems that much of the press and like-minded liberals label everything they don't like "right-wing" in order to denigrate it. When was the last time you saw the "left-wing" label applied to people or events?



Cal Thomas

Look for a full-court press on this. The left sees discrediting the right as its last best hope of clinging to power. The rhetorical firepower is going to increase.

Liberal politicians and their friends in the big media have had some nasty things to say about conservatives. Columnist Carl Rowan said, "The harsher rhetoric of the Gingriches and Doles ... creates a climate of violence in America."

If harsh rhetoric creates violence, consider this. Bob Herbert of The New York Times wrote of a "Republican jihad against the poor, the young and the helpless." Herbert said that the majority is "stomping on the last dying embers of idealism and compassion in government." Or how about this from NBC's Bryant Gumbel in a question to House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt: "You called Gingrich and his ilk, your words, 'trickle-down terrorists who base their agenda on division, exclusion and fear.' Do you think middle-class Americans are in need of protection from that group?"

Critic John Leonard, on "CBS Sunday Morning" Jan. 8, compared the new Congress to the Khmer Rouge. And let's not forget the "moderate" words of The Washington Post's Tom Shales, who wrote on Jan. 25 about "crackpots in Congress" who "want to exterminate" public broadcasting.

One person's extremist language is another person's free speech, whether it comes from the "right wing" or the "left wing." It will be interesting to see how many of the First Amendment purists come to the defense of talk radio in response to President Clinton's verbal assaults. Initial comments from the ACLU and

people like the writer Nat Hentoff, who believe free speech ought to remain free, are encouraging.

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Kids: Where are the rules?

Mere seconds ago, I realized that last Sunday was my turn to bring the pop to my second-grade son's soccer game. Woe is me; I forgot. (For those of you not in the know, this was a major parenting faux pas.)

For some odd reason, Joseph didn't want a cola Sunday, so we left the park without a backward glance, not seeing the weeping faces of his teammates, as they tripped over themselves running for the nonexistent cooler full of ice cold Coca-Cola. (There are few items more important in the life of an eight-year-old than a soda.)

Oh, the guilt and shame of it all. I don't know how I'm going to face the eyes of the accusing parents at this Sunday's game.

"Here comes Lange-Kubick. Can you BELIEVE she didn't remember the pop last week?"

"What a loser."

"Cheap, too."

I'll probably be pelted with shin guards as I approach, and Joseph will be ostracized by his peers and benched for unsportsmanlike conduct.

Forgetting the soccer pop isn't my first failing as a parent. The list of my transgressions is extensive and growing daily.

But let us not dwell any longer on my failings as a mother. Pop isn't good for kids anyway, is it? (Isn't writing cathartic? In a few short paragraphs I've cleansed myself of the guilt.)

Occasionally, I fantasize about bringing apple juice and string cheese to the sweaty little horde after the game, in lieu of sugary, caffeine-spiked colas. (What a fantasy — kind of shows you just how exciting my life is, eh?) In this G-rated scenario, the parents all ooh and ahhh because I'm so



Cindy Lange-Kubick

nutritionally correct, and the sweaty horde grudgingly drinks the juice boxes while smashing the string cheese into the turf with their cleats.

Which brings me back to my original topic: parenting. Today I want to share with you some words of warning, some sage advice, some precautions that you must take as you contemplate children.

Parenting is not a job for those with a weak heart or a weak stomach.

That adorable squalling infant you birthed in great pain — and I do mean great, as in hours and hours of unbelievably large owies, the kind of agony equivalent to having all of your fingernails removed without the benefit of having your hand cut off first — will betray you.

That same child with whom you sat up nights rocking, crooning, feeding; the kid who has thrown up chunks of hot dog on your bedspread, spit up sour milk on your hair and voided on every part of your anatomy, while you patiently held back your own retching to say, "It's going to be all right, honey. Mommy's here. Mommy won't leave you."

This exact child will one day look you right in the eye and blurt out:

"Your legs are fat."

"Your hands look old."

"I hate you."

And maybe worse.

Geez. And for this kid, I worry about bringing pop to a soccer game?

This former angel, the baby who grabbed your finger to chew on while he was teething and clutched a lock of your hair while nursing, will some day bring home little diseases like ringworm, head lice and, if you have extremely bad karma, a case of intestinal parasites. (The four words a parent of a grade-schooler most dread hearing are, "Mommy, my butt itches.")

What I'm trying to say here, in my own delicate way, is to take prayerful consideration of your own intestinal fortitude before embarking on the journey of parenthood.

Fun isn't the adjective I'd use to describe the trip. However, even on a bad day — a red Kool-Aid thrown up on the carpet day — I'd do it again.

So if you decide to take the parenting plunge, take these few words of advice to heart.

If you have a son, never, ever, pull down your pants and sit on the toilet seat in a darkened bathroom. (Boys under the age of consent are mentally incapable of lifting the "ladies lid.")

Don't set yourself up for grief; you'll get enough of it in the natural course of events. This means don't ask your pre-pubescent daughter, the Kate Moss look-alike, if you look good in shorts.

And whatever you do, do not, I repeat do not, forget to bring the pop to your kids soccer game.

You'll never recover from the shame.

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Mike Luckovich