

Naked truth

Internet adventurer faces on-line perversion

Believe it or not, I'm as normal as any other student here at this university. I enjoy objectivism and the philosophy of Ayn Rand. And like you, I hate reading columns in the DN about the problems writers have with computers and the Internet.

I swore to myself that I wouldn't write a computer article if I were offered all the mayonnaise in the world. That was, of course, until I received a letter from the Daily Nebraskan.

I am including the actual letter: "Mr. Willey, the Daily Nebraskan's policy is such that every columnist is required, at some time, to compose an article concerning their problems with computers. If you fail to do so, the DN will insert its finger into your belly button in a manner that will cause internal bleeding."

Upon receiving the letter, I did what I thought every red-blooded student would have done in that situation. I crouched nude behind my drapes.

Unfortunately, that solution was of no help, and I knew it was time to write my scheduled article.

I'll admit that I am what professors call a "computer idgit." Attending a high school whose only computer consisted of an Atari in the principal's office wasn't advantageous, I'm sure.

I've had my share of problems in college as well. Not so much from my misunderstanding of computers, but from my vulnerability to fall prey to Internet perverts.

Here is an excerpt from a typical e-mail conversation between me and my mother.

ME: "c-mail.mom.mizzou.edu.achoo."

PERVERT: "Are you naked?"

ME: "Hi mom, I miss you."

PERVERT: "What are you wearing?"



Steve Willey

"I've also come across some interesting photos on the Internet. Pictures of Winston Churchill jet-skiing in the nude are not uncommon and can be slightly arousing when held at the proper angle."

MOM: "I'm wearing a strapless silk ..."

Perverts aren't the only reason the Internet can seem daunting at first. Try not to worry. You must remember that MAN created computers and we're probably smarter.

(Editor's Note: Man also created Billy Ray Cyrus and "fake snot." Steve is also very fat.)

The opportunities available on the Internet are amazing. You can speak with people from all over the world. Just last week I was having a conversation with a man from Australia.

He told me that he was organizing a massive assault on America because he just found out that Mark Twain and Samuel Clemens are the

same person.

I've also come across some interesting photos on the Internet. Pictures of Winston Churchill jet-skiing in the nude are not uncommon and can be slightly arousing when held at the proper angle.

The biggest reason now for getting on-line is not the opportunities, but because everyone else is doing it.

I am completely convinced that in a year or so, if you have yet to obtain an Internet account, the government will beat your family senseless with an empty box of "Windows '95."

Americans have already gotten that message. You should have seen my professors' looks when I told them that, in my 21 years, I had never used the Internet.

(From their expressions, you would have thought that it was toilet paper and not the Internet I'd been avoiding.)

"Oh God," they whimpered, placing their hands over their mouths in an attempt to hold down some vomit.

Even my dad in Mississippi is on-line. This is truly an amazing feat, considering that he thinks a "computer" is what you and I would call a "pickle." He claims he can access the Internet by riding a wiener dog "really, really fast" down a hill.

Like it or not, the Internet and the use of computers are here for good. We are living in the most exciting time of American history, and those times will only explode in vigor.

Isn't it amazing that all the answers to our wildest questions are only as far away as the nearest computer? I wonder if Ayn Rand has any thoughts on that.

Willey is a junior ag-journalism major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

In reform matters, taxes hit home most

Whenever Republicans in Washington become dejected about their poor poll ratings, they take heart from the case of Gov. John Engler (R-Mich.), who pushed through equally controversial reforms in Michigan and who suffered even more grievous poll numbers at the start of his first term. In time, however, the wisdom of his course recommended itself to the voters, and he was resoundingly re-elected four years later.

Can national Republicans hope for the same fate? Maybe. Part of the reason Engler and other trend-setting state-level Republicans have done so well is that it is easier to make changes that the voters actually feel at the local level.

Take crime. New York City's new Republican mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, can take pride in a quite unexpected phenomenon in the Big Apple: Serious crime is down substantially.

The overall murder rate is lower than at any time since the early 1970s. Robbery and burglary have declined to levels unseen since the 1960s. In fact, all major felonies have shown double-digit declines since Giuliani took office, a decrease New York has not seen since World War II.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of falling crime rates in a city like New York. Many sociologists have become convinced that crime, rather than resulting from poverty, actually causes it. Businesses are afraid to set up in inner cities and hire residents because the fear of robbery or murder keeps them away.

Crime also drives out the taxpaying middle class — contributing to the polarization of cities. If the middle class is frightened away, the only people who remain in large cities are the very poor, who have no other choice, and the very wealthy, who can afford to insulate themselves from crime behind security gates and armed guards.

How did New York do it? Even The New York Times is grudgingly acknowledging that the dropping crime rate in New York is probably not due to long-term population trends — though we are, temporarily, in a demographic dip with smaller numbers of teen-agers and young adults, the prime crime perpetrators. But demographic changes take years to show up in crime statistics, and when they do, their effects are gradual. The drop in New York's crime rate has been abrupt and dramatic enough to beg for other explanations.

They are not hard to find. Under the leadership of Police Commissioner William J. Bratton, New York's police force — and in a sense, New York itself — has changed its approach to all forms of deviancy. As Bratton told The New York Times, "We are showing that police can change behavior. We were probably the most permis-



Mona Charen

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sive and tolerant city in America for social deviancy. Now we're one of the least tolerant cities when it comes to the abuse of public space."

For the past two years, police in New York have been dealing aggressively with so-called "quality of life" crimes like drunkenness, public urination and turnstile jumping in the subway. James Q. Wilson wrote at least a decade ago about the "broken window" phenomenon. If a broken window remains unrepaired in a building, the rest of the windows will soon be broken as well. The one unrepaired window showed that no one cared. Now that has changed.

The police also have arrested and pursued many more petty criminals and confiscated a great many illegal handguns. For this, they have been excoriated by self-described "civil libertarians," but the handgun murder rate is down 40 percent.

Some of this good news may be vitiated by the coming wave of 40 million teen-agers in the next decade who are, in criminologist John Dilulio's phrase, "fatherless, Godless and jobless." But it does demonstrate just how readily the application of common sense — more aggressive police, tougher prison sentences, zero tolerance for petty lawlessness — can yield results.

What does all of this mean for national Republicans? It means: Remember where the rubber meets the road. Most people's lives are untouched by changes in Washington — except in one area: taxes. If government makes changes that people can actually feel, the governors will be rewarded.

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Salad bowl

America thrives on all of its diverse people

Let me tell you a Finnish fairy tale. Once upon a time there was a tiny little country with a population of only 5 million people. One of them was a boy called Reijo Harjola. He was a good boy, but he watched too many American movies. Every day he dreamed about America, where life would be just like in movies.

In the beginning of the 1980s, Reijo started to direct his own movies. American filmmakers had taught him that every good movie needed a bad guy and that every great movie needed a Russian bad guy. The first movie Reijo made had such an anti-Soviet attitude that it wasn't shown in Finland until several years later, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. There were, however, some people who said that the major problem was not the movie's attitudes but its overall lousiness. Reijo was very angry and went to Hollywood, where people would be smart enough to appreciate his art. He also changed his name to Renny Harlin, which, he supposed, would help him build his career.

And look what happened! Renny got work; he directed Nightmare on Elm Street 4 and Die Hard 2, as well as Cliffhanger. Finns were proud of their great son, and his mother often was interviewed in Finnish magazines. A couple of times a year, Renny himself visited Finland with all the American glory glimmering around his handsome figure. He had scandalous and well-published affairs with several Miss Finlands and Finnish Claudia Schiffers-to-be.

But there was more news to come: Renny left them all and started dating Laura Dern. Even better: He announced his engagement to Geena Davis! This was almost too good to be true. Finns read eagerly about the wedding

Veera Supinen

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plans and were properly impressed by the names of all the celebrities — Renny's pals — who were invited. During the honeymoon, Renny took Geena to see his fatherland, and newspapers called the beautiful bride "Finland's daughter-in-law." The nation was confused and became divided. Half of the people considered Renny the best thing that had happened to Finland since the introduction of Coca-Cola in 1952, but the other half insisted he was nothing but a below-average director with an oversized ego.

Now comes the sad part of the story. Renny and Geena decided to make a movie together. The result was "Cutthroat Island," a movie predicted to be the biggest failure in the history of the whole industry. With its more than \$100 million costs, the Cutthroat Island has so far made less than \$10 million. The Village Voice compared the movie to the couple's sex-life, which they thought would also be much ado about nothing.

The rest is still unknown, but one

could speculate that Hollywood producers are not going to give Renny a new chance very soon. Geena is probably already getting a divorce.

The United States is a strange and fascinating nation. Except for Native Americans, all of its inhabitants came from another country, or are descendants of those who came from somewhere else. Renny's mistake was that he — as many Europeans — believed in the good old melting pot and ignored the fact that American society is actually a complex multicultural and multiethnic construction, a salad bowl, as most scholars describe it today.

Renny's main goal was to Americanize himself and do it as quickly as possible. He believed the best way to become American was to reject his Finnish cultural background. It is essential to assimilate to a certain extent, but real success depends on how one can contribute, what new ideas and perspectives one can bring to American culture. In fact, these new elements, brought by immigrants of past and present, are the heart and strength of American culture.

When Renny came to the United States, he already was more "American" than most Americans. He played Sibelius at the end of Die Hard 2, and he made his wife pose in Finnish folk costumes, but his awareness of and interest in the Finnish heritage was limited to these superficial advertising tricks. Every Hollywood star and director has more personality than Renny nowadays. He has nothing original to offer America, and that's why Americans don't want to see his movies anymore.

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