

Tied ... not!

Marriage licenses don't count, but love does

The question of marriage is complicated and raises emotions everywhere. Homosexuals fight for the right to get married to those they love. Last year, half of the population of Ireland failed to achieve the right to get divorced from those they don't love anymore.

At the individual level, there are various tensions connected to the issue of marriage. Some people feel inferior because they aren't married yet. Some people have to explain to their relatives why they aren't married yet. Some people wonder whether they married the right person.

A practical solution to all these and many other problems would be that nobody gets married. Why bother? Weddings are expensive; everyday life together doesn't change after the honeymoon, and more than 50 percent of American marriages in the 1990s end in divorce anyway.

Every culture knows the concept of marriage — it's one of the easiest words to translate from one language to another. In native societies, the primary function of marriage was to strengthen political ties between different tribes or kins. Since then, marriage has continuously lost its importance. One hundred years ago, getting married was still a big issue because you were more or less stuck with the person you chose for the rest of your life. In a post-war world, divorces have become common and socially acceptable. In Ireland, couples that could get divorced if they lived in another country live separated instead. Modern people don't consider marriage as a lifelong commitment, despite whatever the church or older generations may say. Of course there are exceptions.



Veera Supinen

"Some people feel inferior because they aren't married yet. Some people have to explain to their relatives why they aren't married yet. Some people wonder whether they married the right person."

Although the divorce rate in the United States is extremely high and tends to make one cynical, many people still take the matter of finding the right spouse seriously. And although the world becomes more secularized, religious aspects of marriage mean a lot to many. There is, however, an increasing number of people who get married just for the custom. For some people, getting married is psychologically important because the fuss around weddings helps them to prove to themselves and show to the rest of the world that they have a steady relationship. This way of thinking has no basis because getting divorced is getting easier and

easier to obtain — and today it is viewed as an acceptable way to get out of a commitment. A strong and lasting relationship shouldn't depend on a status the society puts on you when you have written your name on a piece of paper or repeated certain words.

Concrete things that matter in two people's day-to-day life and their economy are things such as whether they live together, share the same kitchen and have children. Many couples do this without getting married. The couples who wish to have a supernatural blessing to their relationship should, of course, get married according to their religious beliefs. Many people don't care about religion but like beautiful dresses, cakes and flowers. These people could still invite their friends to parties similar to weddings. The only thing about marriage that is outdated and should be removed is its status as a legalized and institutionalized relationship.

Marriage, in most countries, is impossible for two people of the same sex, and can't indicate a true affection anymore anyway. Any man and woman, no matter how little love and mutual respect they have for each other, can officially tie the knot anytime and by doing so have certain advantages. Social stigmas categorizing people as single, married and divorced are unnecessary, but giving and receiving love remains the best part of human life.

Lover's day is always worth celebrating.
Happy Valentine's Day to everybody.

Supinen is a junior history and American studies major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Cupid's onion

81-year-old inspiration earns Valentine kudos

Every February 14th, it is the tradition of many to give out a Valentine to special people.

In my opinion, no one is more special or deserving of a Valentine than Izzie Rotterman, an 81-year-old man from Popano, Florida.

You're probably wondering how Mr. Rotterman is different from other 81-year-old men. You see, Izzie is a crime-fighter; a beacon of justice, if you will.

Also, Izzie hits people on the head with onions.

According to the Associated Press last Wednesday, Rotterman and his 55-year-old business partner, Gloria Lepcio, were about to get a bite to eat when a man leapt from a car and grabbed Lepcio's purse.

Unlike most victims (and much to the mugger's surprise), Izzie produced an onion and began "pummeling" the mugger until the attacker fled to a nearby getaway car.

If that story doesn't justify Izzie getting a Valentine, then certainly the fact that he has a business partner almost 30 years his junior does.

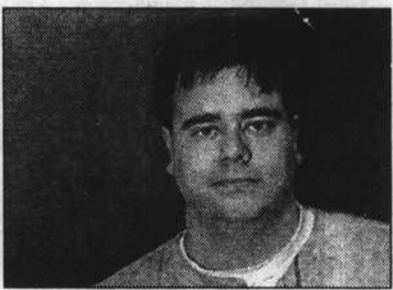
Now it's no front-page news that America has its problems with illegal activities. To combat some of these problems, many states have implemented new methods to control rising crime.

For example, earlier this year, Texas made it legal to carry concealed weapons. (Editor's note: Texas law defines "weapons" as guns, knives or pictures of Phil Gramm playing the flute with his nose.)

Perhaps as a direct result of that law, crime in Texas has dropped by more than 30 percent.

Other states have tried building more jails, and some have even gone as far as to sell inmates to Australia for peach juice.

(I should point out that the only



Steve Willey

"... other than Athletic Director Bill Byrne, who would take money from a man who dangled string from his nose and chanted 'I am the Panda Woman'?"

state that takes this stance is Mississippi. They are only doing it to appease my father, who has somehow obtained five nude pictures of the Governor and Ann Landers — Steve.)

I'm more inclined, however, to side with Izzie Rotterman and his approach to crime control.

Think about it. If you were a mugger and beaten by an 81-year-old man with an onion, would you continue your acts of thievery? I doubt it.

Chances are you'd move to Botswana, change your name, and never mention the incident again. You would live a chastened life.

The only personal contact you would get would be phone calls from other giggling muggers shouting "Look out! He's got an onion!" and the like.

To me, it's the bizarre nature of this tale that makes it so Valentine-deserving.

81-year-olds are not SUPPOSED to produce onions and strike people; but 94-year-olds are famous for mailing turnips to people of Russian descent.

I think Izzie epitomizes America and its stance on tolerating crime. You do the crime, you get whapped with an onion, or any vegetable for that matter.

What Izzie has figured out is something we all would be wise to learn. Izzie knows that attackers are odd by nature and prey upon people of normalcy.

If we were to act a little strange before or after the attack, as Izzie did, it would destroy crime as we know it.

For example, other than Athletic Director Bill Byrne, who would take money from a man who dangled string from his nose and chanted "I am the Panda Woman"?

I tried to call Izzie, but his number was no longer listed. I can only assume he was getting many harassing calls from other muggers telling him that the "onion thang" was uncalled for.

I wanted to thank him. I wanted to get his side of the story and find out what in the hell he was doing with an onion.

(Actually, I later learned that Izzie carries sweet onions because they are easier on his stomach but are well known for their ability to crush skulls.)

I'm really looking forward to the next time someone steals my purse. (It happens every week or so.) Unlike before, I'm now packing onions.

I no longer walk in fear, and I have only an 81-year-old Valentine to thank for it.

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

Illiteracy on-the-job a common problem

Because I was out of the office and needed the phone number for the Chicago Tribune's Washington bureau, I called long-distance information.

"In D.C.," I told the operator who answered, "what's the number of the Chicago Tribune?" There was a long pause.

Finally, she came back on and said:

"How do you spell that?"

"Spell what?"

"Uh, is that S-H-I?"

"Are you talking about Chicago?"

"Uh-huh."

As gently as I could, I said: "Are you telling me that you don't know how to spell the name of the third largest city in the United States?"

She responded by mumbling. So I said: "I can't believe this. You really don't know how to spell Chicago? What would happen if I asked for something with Philadelphia in its name?"

Another mumble. Then there was a click. She cut me off.

A minor incident? No, it's a significant incident. It shows how illiteracy is oozing into all sorts of cracks in our society.

You have to ask: How did that person get a job with the phone company?

Didn't she have to fill out an application? Assuming that she did, how many words did she goof up if she couldn't get the first syllable of Chicago right?

In my case, it was not a big deal. I could call back, get someone else, who will provide the number.

But what if that first operator answered when someone called and said: "Someone here is having a heart attack. I need an emergency number."

"Uh, how do you spell that?"

"Spell what?"

"Is that M-E-R?"

"You mean emergency?"

"Uh-huh."

Don't laugh. If she reached something approaching adulthood, went through a school system, and got herself hired by a huge corporation without being able to spell Chicago, why should we assume that she can spell anything? Even her name.

But it isn't only at the 202 area code. Any time you call information, you are taking a gamble.

I once asked a Chicago information operator for the number of Chicago Magazine.

"How do you spell that word?" she asked.

"Chicago?"

"No, that other word."

"Magazine?"

"Yeah."

"You don't know how to spell magazine?"

"Yeah."

"OK. M as in mother ..."

The other day, I called an information operator in Chicago and asked for the number to CRIS Radio. I spelled it slowly: "C-R-I-S."

She clicked me to an automatic response. I dialed it, someone



Mike Royko

answered, and I began talking.

The person on the other end said: "Uh, this is Crystal Radio, not CRIS."

We're in trouble. Schools give diplomas to borderline illiterates, corporations hire them for "service" jobs that should require at least an eighth grade grasp of fundamental English. And they are turned loose on the public.

Not long ago, I was in a big drugstore checkout line when the scanner system crashed.

The woman behind the counter faced the task of manually punching in the price of the items.

It was beyond her. She started yelling at the manager. He yelled at her. The checkout line got longer, so I dropped my basket of products on the nearest table and left.

So who is at fault? The school system for shoving diplomas in the hands of people who can't spell "Chicago" or "magazine" or do basic math?

No, I doubt that many teachers go to their gut-rumbling jobs in the morning and tell themselves, "I want these kids to leave here stupid."

Nor are educational opportunities lacking. Forty or 50 years ago, Chicago had two or three junior colleges. The only in-town state facility was a two-year University of Illinois branch at Navy Pier.

Now we have a city-wide chain of junior colleges. They ain't Harvard, but you can't beat the price. We have a full-service University of Illinois campus downtown and state colleges all over Chicago and the suburbs.

The growth of educational opportunity has been quietly amazing, as is the availability of scholarships at private institutions.

So maybe the problem is the parents. We might be getting warm. When parents don't care if their offspring learn to read and write, whose fault is that?

We now have ignorance being passed from generation to generation. At the same time, we tax the heck out of those who study, work hard, save, invest and build businesses and a net worth. Then we use their money to prop up those who can't spell "Chicago."

But maybe we should look at the bright side.

If people who can't spell words like Chicago or magazine can still wind up with decent jobs and regular paychecks, this is still a land of remarkable opportunity.

That's spelled o-p-p ...
(C) Tribune Media Services, Inc.

