

OPINION

Thursday, March 14, 1996

Page 4

Daily Nebraskan

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Bret Gottschall/DN

Unjust reward

Sperm shouldn't gain survivor's benefits

The Social Security Administration is now recognizing vials of sperm as legitimate heirs.

Judith Hart, who is now 4 1/2 years old, was born almost a year after her father died, but Monday she was awarded Social Security survivor benefits.

The problem is she's no survivor.

Judith's mother, Nancy Hart of Slidell, La., was artificially inseminated using sperm left behind when her husband, Edward Hart, died.

Before conceiving Judith, Mrs. Hart was already widowed. She knew the financial situation she was in without her husband and made a conscious decision to have a child. That's a fine decision if you have the means to support a child.

Mrs. Hart either did not have the means or is trying to get extra money from the government. The young girl who is the result of this scientific conception will receive \$700 a month from Social Security.

With our country facing historic cutbacks in entitlement programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and welfare, it is hard to believe that an unworthy recipient has been added.

The Social Security administration had fought Mrs. Hart's claim, but this week it reversed its course to avoid a court battle.

Mrs. Hart's lawyers argued that Judith was denied benefits solely because of the circumstances of her birth, and they noted that the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled such benefits could not be denied to illegitimate children.

But the circumstances of Judith's birth are important in determining her status as a survivor. Can Mrs. Hart have another child 10 years from now using more of Mr. Hart's sperm and still claim survivor benefits for that child?

She shouldn't.

Awarding benefits to this girl completely disregards the intent of survivor benefits. Survivor benefits should be for families where one of the wage earners dies, leaving the rest of the family unable to support themselves.

Squiggly little sperm, even with the potential for life, should not be considered a family.

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MONEY CAN'T BUY YOU LOVE (VOTERS).



MEHSLIN/DN
DAILY NEBRASKAN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bad faith

I applaud Sen. Chambers' efforts to pass a same-sex marriage bill. Apparently I am of the small minority who favor human dignity for subsets of our culture who happen to commit sin in the eyes of the church. Being that our government is essentially a secular one by charter I fail to see the bearing of religious argument on this matter. The Nebraska Christian Coalition and the Nebraska Family Council have faith to act as their conscience. Bertrand Russell had this to say about faith:

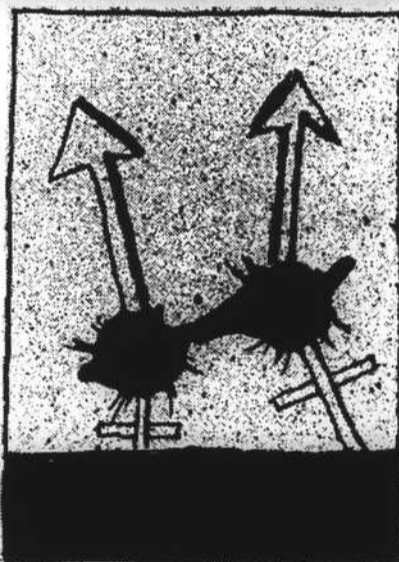
"It is believed virtuous to have Faith — that is to say, to have a conviction which cannot be shaken by contrary evidence. Or, if contrary evidence might induce doubt, it is held that contrary evidence must be suppressed."

Within this quote the obscurantism, suppression of scientific knowledge and tacit contribution to human suffering of the church is evident. The faithful would have us believe that only through subservience to God can we truly be happy. Maybe that is the case. By accepting Christian dogma we could escape persecution of their ilk and be free to practice our cruelty on sinners with the impunity that goes with faith.

Anthony Wells
senior
computer engineering

Lessons not learned

Did anyone else find it ironic that the front page of the March 13 Daily Nebraskan showed an interracial couple protesting same-gender marriage? Has this couple forgotten that all the same arguments trotted out this year against gay marriage were used in the 1950s and '60s against interracial marriage? Back then, as now, the religious extremists



Bret Gottschall/DN

swore the Bible backed them up. Don't we ever learn from history? Then again, the Bible has been used to defend slavery, deny women basic civil rights, and prove that the sun goes around the earth. I wonder who the next targets will be ...

Scott Miller
St. Louis, Mo.

Suicide

I have never had a desire to write to the DN until I read Steve Willey's column on March 13. Very few things affect me the way that article did, and I just had to write.

I applaud Mr. Willey for speaking so frankly about something so personal. I, too, had a family member commit suicide, when I was 18 years old. It was the hardest time of my life, and my feelings were much the same as those Mr. Willey talked about.

Yet, all too often, friends and family are discouraged to talk about their anger and hurt towards the suicide. Thank you, Mr. Willey, for

putting on paper what so many of us are/were feeling.

Natalie Wilson
freshman
environmental chemistry

Lies

Nebraska must be careful in the current movement to ban same-sex marriage.

Yes, South Dakota degraded non-traditional families by passing a bill, HB 1143, which states marriage is for a man and a woman.

To pass HB 1143 in South Dakota, supporters had to lie to citizens of the state by telling wild stories of HIV infection rates and incidence of syphilis in South Dakota with "fact" sheets distributed by pro-family groups, anti-abortion forces and other religious political extremists. Their "facts" were not supported by the state's health department, which tells a quite different story of lower numbers in sexually transmitted disease and the nation's second lowest rate of HIV infection.

To pass HB 1143 in South Dakota, supporters demonized gay and lesbian persons based upon stereotypes using video of small portions of New York and San Francisco gay parades to show what life would be like in South Dakota if there were "gay marriages." False witness anyone?

To keep the traditional family alive they had to lie. Ask yourself: Is your family so weak that you are willing to break a commandment to keep your special, civil contract privileges from people who tell the truth about themselves?

What lies have been told in Nebraska in the name of God's Truth?

Barry Wick
executive director,
Free Americans Creating Equal
Status of South Dakota, Inc.
(FACES of South Dakota)

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...to the

Daily Nebraskan

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