

# Old Yeller

## Tartar build-up torments dentist-fearing men

The other week, I decided I could no longer avoid seeing a dentist. I haven't been to one since I came to Nebraska four years ago, yet the unmistakable clue that I was due for a checkup was not a pain in my tooth, but rather, the remark from the daughter of a co-worker of mine.

She was sitting on my lap playing "horsey," which is a game where I bounce her on my knee while she becomes insouciously happy, and I shred all available ligaments.

Her beautiful brown hair, flecked with sparkles of gold, danced around her face as I flung her higher into the air. Suddenly, she pushed herself away and shot a piercing glare at me with her once angelic blue eyes. Softly, in a shy, tender voice she said, "Eecccyecccccwww, YOUR TEEF ARE YELLER."

Now in my defense, my teeth are not yellow, but more of an opaque off-white, sort of the hue of a manilla envelope if it were not that color. (And to add to my defense, my checkup by the dentist came back spotless.)

Still, the dear child's blunt insight was enough to send me to a place I dread going to.

\* Actually, there really is nothing I enjoy more than visiting the dentist, (aside from spending the rest of my life underneath a slobbering St. Bernard with a "methane problem.")

The truth is, I have never been comfortable in those dentist chairs, and I have yet to meet a man who is. I suppose it is because all men have an inherent fear of all doctors. We tend to think that everything medically wrong with our bodies can be solved by "Walking it Off."

Men also like to spend their money on things that they can actually hold later, such as a muffler or stripper. We'll be damned if we're paying \$60 just for some loon to rummage around in our mouths.



**Steve Willey**

*"Men also like to spend their money on things that they can actually hold later, such as a muffler or stripper. We'll be damned if we're paying \$60 just for some loon to rummage around in our mouths."*

For me, the worst part about dentists is the way they tell you to relax while they explain what their tools will accomplish while probing inside your mouth.

\* "The Gouging Chiseler 400 you see here will temporarily remove your gums so that we can better reach and clean the tartar and ant farms that have accumulated."

TRANSLATION: "I'm only using this miniature weed-whacker because my co-workers and I have a serious bet going on the number of times I can get you to bolt upright and yell 'JESUS CHRIST!'"

Another reason guys hate dentists is that all dentists are belittling to their patrons. They always ask questions that NECESSITATE a lie as a response.

"Do you floss regularly, because

you seem to be missing some spots?"

"Yessir, twice a day, just like that poster on the wall says I should."

The doctor could tell I was lying, however, because, when asked to demonstrate my flossing technique, I instinctively began to floss the underside of my nose — a dead giveaway that you don't know what the hell to do with the floss.

Men throughout history have shown this inherent fear of dentists. Mahatma Gandhi was said to have gone the entirety of his adult life without ever visiting one.

Of course, he also wasn't eating much during his adult life, so tartar buildup was probably at a minimum.

Another historical hater of dentists was Adolf Hitler. "Hitler's passion for hating the Jewish was pale when compared to those dentists," said one historian. "He was known to have had terrible Gingivitis (Pronounced: HEIL ACH GINJUVITUS), which pained him so greatly at times that he could not pronounce the phrase 'This war thing is starting to suck' without getting huge laughs from his troops."

My father, also being a guy, has gone 40 years without ever visiting a dentist. I swear I'm not lying. He is under some sick delusion that — imagine this — he can clean his OWN teeth! He does a good job too, although neighbors find it extremely "dishaunting to watch a man of his age" sit on his porch and pick his tooth with a nutcracker.

The receptionist at the office scolded me as if I were a mangy dog, or at the very least, the human equivalent. She was trying to get me to sign up for a return visit, but I wouldn't. At least not until some child decides it's time.

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

# Condoms not solution to teen sex, AIDS

Mona Charen is on maternity leave. The following column originally was published in April 1992.



**Mona Charen**

*"Anyone who thinks that the dominant social message to teenagers during the past decade has been the virtue of virginity is living in a time warp."*

Are we becoming a nation of condom worshippers? Is the humble latex that was scorned for its failure rate when I was in high school now the answer to our woes? If you listen to Phil Donahue and the House Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, you might think so. In 1992, the committee issued a respectfully received report called "A Decade of Denial: Teens and AIDS in America."

The title so suits the liberal agenda — begin the condom propaganda with a satisfying slam at the 1980s. The "decade of greed" now gets a new sobriquet. The "chair" of the committee is Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.), condom-hawker-in-chief. Schroeder agrees that abstinence is the best protection against AIDS, but she wants to be "realistic." Kids are going to have sex no matter what we say. After all, Schroeder insists, "We've been talking abstinence and 'just say no' for more than a decade, and the teen pregnancy rate is going up and so is the sexually transmitted disease rate."

Now be serious. Anyone who thinks that the dominant social message to teen-agers during the past decade has been the virtue of virginity is living in a time warp. The last time the culture transmitted that message, John F. Kennedy was in the White House, and "The Dick Van Dyke Show" was in the top 10. Today, we live in the world of "Married With Children" and 2 Live Crew. Virgins are considered rare enough creatures to get their own hour on the "Geraldo" show, just after transvestite accountants and men who sleep with their mothers-in-law.

Nevertheless, the Democratic majority of the House committee sees a scandal in our collective approach to the issue of teen-agers and AIDS and recommends — surprise! — more federal dollars for AIDS education and school-based health clinics (read: condom dispensaries).

Liberals are not honest about sex. They claim to believe that abstinence is best for teens, but they don't mean it. In their hearts, they think people who promote abstinence are fundamentalist freaks. If they truly believed that sex was bad for teen-agers, they wouldn't be pushing condoms at them. The comparison with drug use is apt. Imagine school-based clinics to distribute clean needles. "Well, we think abstinence from drugs is best, of course. But let's be realistic; they're going to do it anyway, so they might as well protect themselves." It would never happen. Why? Because not even liberals believe that drug use is acceptable. And the answer to unacceptable behavior is prohibi-

tion, not facilitation.

In their eagerness to believe that condoms provide the magic solution to the problems of sexual promiscuity in the age of AIDS, liberals ignore some basic facts of teen-agerhood. One is this: Disbelief in one's own mortality is endemic to teen-agers. That's why so many die in accidents. Another is this: Teen-agers are, more than other people, acutely sensitive to shame. If the culture makes virginity shameful, as ours now does, not even the fear of AIDS will make teens chaste. Promiscuity is motivated far, far more by conformity than by hormones.

But the entire House committee report, with its emphasis on governmental action, was misconceived. The minority report, issued by the Republicans, got to the heart of the matter. "Cultural problems demand cultural solutions," said the minority, quoting William Bennett.

"It appears," the report goes on, "that teens are seeking love, and we are giving them biology classes. Teens are seeking guidance about whether to engage in sexual experimentation, and we are merely listing options for them. Teens are seeking to belong, to be given a sense of community with shared values, and we are giving them a hall pass to see the school nurse."

Positive cultural change is possible. The recent turnaround in attitudes toward drunk driving is illustrative. Groups like Mothers Against Drunk Driving helped make it shameful to get behind a wheel tipsy. Handing out condoms with a wink and a nod in every junior high in America is guaranteed to make the problem worse.

(C) 1996 Creators Syndicate, Inc.

# Water fight

## World must find solution to depleting supply

In my early teens, when I watched old westerns, I couldn't understand those scenes where a guy lets his cows drink from another man's stream, and the owner comes and shoots the guy. It always confused me. Why was it such a big deal if the cows drank some water? Was the owner afraid of cow germs, or something?

Later, somebody told me what it was all about. I heard that water is a rarity in American West. I learned this truth by heart but couldn't adopt it at once. After all, I was born in a country that promotes itself in tourist guides as "a land of tens of thousands of lakes" and where everyone I knew either owned a summer cottage or lived permanently by the lake.

Last year, I took a course in general environmental history. One of the most interesting lectures dealt with the global use of water. The instructor had pictures of the former Soviet Union and told us about the huge dams and the unbelievably impractical attempts to turn the flow of big Siberian rivers north to provide water for the fields. He also showed us some pictures from Arizona. First in its state of nature, as arid, treeless and extremely hot semi-desert. Then Arizona as it is today after human interference, with golf courses, orange trees and swimming pools. And the water obviously taken from somewhere else. The scenario seemed just as surrealistic to us as the landscape after the rather pathetic Soviet efforts.

This year, I've tried to study and follow the discussion on water use and policy in Nebraska. The question of water appears to be insuperably complex. Agriculture, industry, recreation and domestic and municipal use all need their share of water, and there simply



**Veera Supinen**

*"No matter how carefully the remaining water is distributed, it is impossible to balance between the needs of various interest groups. If people won't suffer, wet meadows and whooping cranes surely will."*

isn't enough for everyone. Thanks to abundant ground water supplies and the Platte River and its tributaries, Nebraska is in better position than most of the Great Plains. At the same time, however, the location and the state of the Platte, one of the most endangered rivers in the nation, makes the water issue even more delicate and difficult for both the state and federal governments.

In a way, the situation is hopeless. No matter how carefully the remaining water is distributed, it is impossible to balance between the needs of various interest groups. If people won't suffer, wet meadows and whooping cranes surely will.

According to some environmen-

tal philosophies, the well-being of a crane is no less important than that of a human. Whatever their concepts on this one specific issue, most conservationists believe that the main goal of a state's water policy should be the preserving of wildlife and pure nature for coming generations.

On the other hand, there are certain other philosophical trends whose supporters argue that the law of the fittest is the only significant law of nature, and that it could and should be extended to the relationships between humans and whooping cranes. Unfortunately, after the urbanization of recent decades, human beings need to relax by canoeing in Nebraskan streams and watching migratory waterfowl now more than ever.

There are some people who believe that water — like any commodity — should be completely privatized. Personally, I find the idea terrifying, but I must admit it makes a lot of sense. In a country like the United States, where nearly everything from education to health can be bought, it would be logical to give water to those who can pay the highest price for it. It's too bad the hydrologic cycle can't be separated from other processes of ecosystems. Otherwise some millionaires could transport the remaining water from here to Arizona, and Nebraskans could move to the Southwest to work at water parks and other brand-new tourist traps.

While we wait for this or some other solution, there is much we can do. Most important, let's try to keep conversation alive. The situation in Nebraska is illustrative of enormous water use problems worldwide.

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

