

# OPINION PACKAGES

## OUR VIEW

### Tragedy

#### Shooting at Penn State raises safety concerns

Penn State student Melanie Spalla died Tuesday.

The 19-year-old was with a crowd of her peers outside the university's student union when 19-year-old Jillian Robbins pulled out a rifle and opened fire — leaving Spalla dead and another student injured.

A similar incident could happen here. Indeed, one almost did.

On Oct. 12, 1992, Arthur McElroy attempted to open fire with a .30-caliber semi-automatic rifle in a full University of Nebraska-Lincoln classroom.

By some strange twist of fortune, the gun jammed, sparing the lives of 20 students.

They were lucky. And so were we. What happened at Penn State could have happened on any college campus; it shouldn't happen anywhere.

Worrying about tuition, parking and pop quizzes is natural for university students, but worrying about someone gunning students down on the way to morning classes is not.

A university is an institute of higher learning. It represents opportunity and free expression of ideas — but with that freedom comes vulnerability.

Just as a university environment fosters communication and learning, it also can foster anger, frustration and despair — both for those directly involved with campus life and those who feel they are outsiders in an elitist world.

It's an easy target for the unstable. Jillian Robbins, the woman who gunned down the Penn State students, was called "Crazy Jill." She had a history of mental problems. Just last month she attempted suicide.

In the Nebraska incident, McElroy was pronounced not guilty by reason of insanity.

Neither has offered an explanation. Regardless of the reason for Wednesday's outburst, an innocent student died and another was injured. There is no justifying that in the eyes of victims' friends and family.

Paranoia will not bring Spalla back, but neither will a false security prevent such things from happening in the future.

Safety at UNL and on all campuses must be approached with realism and responsibility.

That's the price of freedom.

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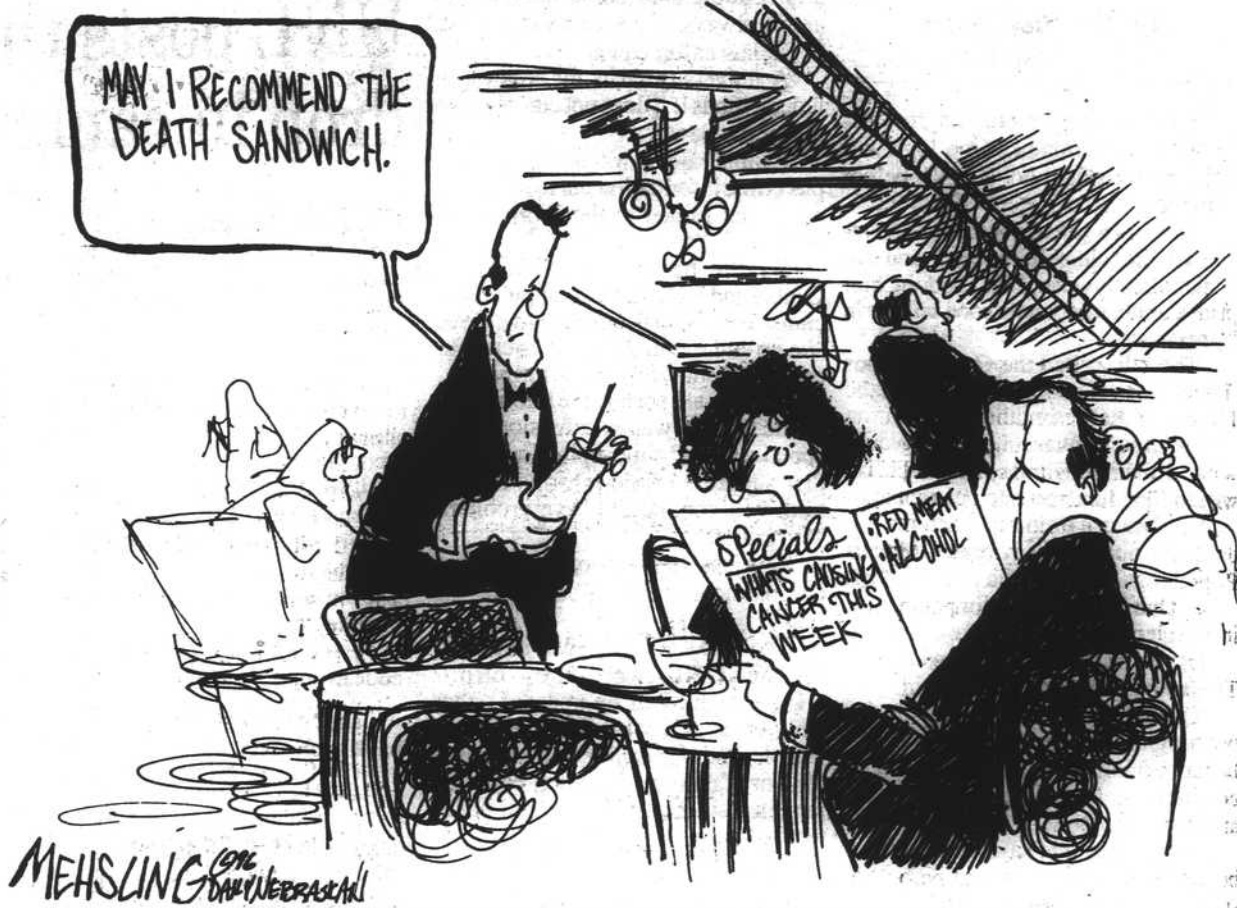
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## MEHSLING'S VIEW



Heather  
LAMPE

### Old enough to know better, still too young to not care

People amaze me more and more everyday.

Yesterday I pulled up behind a car at a stoplight and thought I was going to have to give the driver CPR. His head was bobbing back and forth and he was flailing his arms in a rhythmic sort of way. I was sure he was having an epileptic seizure.

But what I saw next made me think I was the one who was going to have to have mouth-to-mouth. When the man turned his head, I saw his lips moving and, from what I could make out, he was mouthing the words to a Village People song.

That's right folks, he was singing and dancing in his car, in front of other drivers, in front of pedestrians, for all the world to see.

I wanted to walk up and shake the man's hand. What a brave soul! There have been a million times when a really snappy tune has come on the radio and I've wanted to belt it out. But society has trained me that I must not act out or act silly in public, and most of all I must not reenact music videos in the car. I mean, my God, someone might see me!

By the time we're 18, our parents have trained us to be totally inhibited. We can't do anything that would make us appear unusual. There is something truly sad about the time spent between childhood and old age. Small children and the elderly could teach us all something about how to enjoy life, because for the most part they just don't care what other people think.

Until their parents ruin them, children are totally uninhibited. Just take a 3-year-old to a restaurant and you'll know what I mean. Mashed potatoes were really meant to be sculpted, not eaten. There is certain joy in blowing bubbles in your milk. And if you have to belch or perform any other bodily function, why not have an audience? It makes the experience all the more pleasurable.

Children are completely comfortable with themselves and completely honest. "Mommy, why doesn't that



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man have any hair? Mommy, why is that dog licking his butt? Mommy, I think I have to go. Mommy, what is that big, ugly spot on your nose?” Now imagine being able to walk up to complete strangers and ask their names and ages. They would look at you funny and ask which hospital you escaped from. If you're 5, you can get away with it.

Little kids will break out into a Barney song when in the car, in the department store, at church. And the more you try to quiet them, the louder they will sing. Now admit it, haven't we all wanted to sing along with the Neil Diamond tunes at the grocery store?

We could also take a lesson from the elderly people of this world. They've also spent most of their adult lives worrying about what other people think of them. Now in the

twilight of their lives, they want to be free.

I don't want any mail bombs from nursing homes, so I'll use my grandparents as examples. My grandmother has lost the will to be fashionable. Grandpa has lost the drive to be color-coordinated. He wears black trouser socks with white tennis shoes. They just doesn't care!

And why should they? Their motives have gone from planning careers to planting carrots. Grandma has traded in her business suits for sweatshirts adorned with fuzzy bunnies. She also is donning terry cloth pants. She doesn't care what shoes are in fashion, she's only concerned with what will cushion her corns and bunions.

I feel jealous. Imagine the freedom of getting up every day and wearing whatever you happen to pick up first, whether it matches or not. Grandma puts her clothes on frontwards. But if you're a 2-year old, no one will look twice if your shirt is on backwards. When my brother was little, his favorite look was a Kool-Aid-stained T-shirt, a diaper and red cowboy boots.

I feel the pressures of society everywhere I go. I was in a parking garage elevator recently and had an itch on my upper thigh. But when the security camera peered down at me, I couldn't scratch for fear the operator might think I'm scratching my butt. Oh, to have been a small child at the time! I could have scratched, picked and waved at the camera without thinking twice.

The only person I guess you can ever feel truly comfortable and uninhibited with is your spouse. And even then you take the risk that you might someday become filthy rich and your husband will leave you and write a tell-all book about how you liked wearing men's underwear. Go figure.

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P.S. Write Back

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