

Civil libertarian fights for others' rights with humor

By ERIN GIBSON
Staff Reporter

Molly Ivins, political commentator, urged civil libertarians Friday night to continue their fight for freedom but to remember to have fun doing it.

"I try to cheer y'all up," she said in a powerful southern drawl to 300 Nebraskans at a dinner sponsored by the Nebraska American Civil Liberties Union.

Civil libertarians are the world's greatest people, Ivins said, but they are always severe in attitude, worried about rights being oppressed.

"You need to be in good cheer," she said. "It could be worse. You could be trying to do this in Texas."

Ivins currently writes a column for Texas' Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Roars of laughter swelled from the banquet hall as Ivins told stories of battles fought for civil liberties against "quirky" Texas politicians.

When the state Legislature met years ago to reform the state penal code, one conservative legislator moved to reinstate the law against homosexual sodomy, she said.

"All the guys in the House were afraid that everybody would think they were queer if they didn't vote for this, so they did," she said.

Later, the legislator moved to reinstate the law against heterosexual sodomy so no one could accuse him of being a "pervert," she said.

After both sodomy laws had passed the Texas House, Ivins said, the legislator and another proponent of the laws were slapping each other's hands and butts, celebrating their victory.

A friend who watched the men celebrate told Ivins, "Somebody ought to tell them it is now illegal for a prick to touch an asshole in this state."

No matter what Ivins thinks of someone, she said, it was her responsibility as a civil libertarian to stand up for their rights.

"We civil libertarians, we're always having to do things we don't like," she said.

For example, when the Ku Klux Klan decided to hold a rally in Austin, Texas, Ivins said she supported their right to protest.

"Civil libertarians defend the rights of bluebellied nincompoops to spew whatever nonsense they want to," she said.



LANE HICKENBOTTOM/DN

ANDREA COLLINS, (left) assistant director of the ACLU of Nebraska, talks to Molly Ivins (right) as Ivins takes a short break from signing autographs Friday night at an ACLU banquet at the Cornhusker Hotel. Ivins was the banquet's keynote speaker and entertained guests with humorous stories of Texas politics.

When the KKK started a march down Austin streets, more than 1,000 Austin residents lined the street and mooned them as they marched.

"It was kind of like a wave," she said. Ivins told the story as proof that, while protecting the rights of all people, "a little exercise of humor never hurts," she said.

Ivins told another story about two boys who hurt themselves trying to escape a chicken snake in a hen house.

When their mother told them that a little chicken snake wouldn't hurt them, one boy replied, "Yes ma'am, but there are some things that'll scare you so bad you'll hurt yourself."

Ivins said this exemplified a problem in

America today. Americans get scared of crime and enact legislation that oppresses their own rights, she said.

"We think we can save ourselves by making ourselves less free," Ivins said. "It doesn't make any sense at all, but it is a consistent theme in America."

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