

OPINION PACKETS

Our VIEW

Half-told tale

Attitudes determined extent of coverage

Last Friday, one of the most significant documents in recent U.S. history was unleashed on a suspecting public.

Kenneth Starr's report on President Clinton's not-so-alleged affair with Monica Lewinsky was released for America's consumption. The voluminous report detailed not only the legal and political maneuvers of Clinton but also graphic and intimate details of his and Lewinsky's numerous sexual encounters.

And within hours of the report's release, news agencies across the country began to debate more than the political ramifications of the report. They began to debate their own coverage of it.

The question was not whether they should cover the issue — all three major networks willingly devoted hours of time to the report, the rebuttals and the possibility of impeachment. Newspapers splashed the story on their front pages.

The question most journalists were faced with was one of self-censorship. Namely, how much of Starr's report should they quote, how much should they paraphrase and how much should they omit in their accounts?

Several of them spent this past weekend pontificating on their responsibility to withhold "lurid details" from the report in order to protect the younger members of their audience. And in most cases, they did just that.

The same news agencies that have no qualms about displaying images of mutilated bodies following natural disasters or violent attacks in many cases became queasy at the mention of Clinton and Lewinsky's sexual encounters.

But this isn't entirely the fault of the media. In America, human sexuality historically has been relegated to the darkest corners of public discourse. Meanwhile, physical violence has achieved a reverential status, played out in films, television and print as an eventuality at worst and as a heroic act at best.

We can see a small child scorched in the aftermath of a bombing. We can see a man with his head being pierced by a bullet. And for some strange reason, we're not supposed to hear or say the word "vagina."

The effects of these puritanical attitudes have been researched, listed and critiqued a thousand times over. And there is no need to repeat them here.

But this past weekend, we were able to witness firsthand the consequences of our own social attitudes.

As journalists, we were forced to tell half the story. As citizens, we were deprived of information that is, in all likelihood, of major historical significance. And as adults, we were all treated like children.

And the worst part of it all is that, as a country, we asked for it.

Mook's VIEW



Parking wars

UNL's situation could turn 'Mad Max'



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I live off campus. Not to sound like I'm bragging, but it's a pretty swinging bachelor pad. It's great. I can get away with anything I want.

I enjoy the freedom. I can play with the torch in the fireplace or fly-fish in the aquarium (you should see the look on their little goldfish faces when they strike a Woolly Bugger).

We won't even get into the laundry-day activities. It's not a pretty sight, and the police are frequently involved.

However, I must pay a heavy price for my freedom — besides the rent, utilities and indecent exposure citations.

I have to park on campus every day. You say, "So what? Lots of people do."

Exactly my point. Lots of people do. And they all are looking for a spot when I am.

Someone pointed out the other day that the majority of students live off campus. But that explains a lot.

As my fellow commuters know, you take your life into your own hands when you try to park. And it's getting uglier everyday.

If you're unfortunate enough to have class between 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., then you know what it's like on the front line.

The majority of us know the little groan we make when we see two cars at each end of the parking row facing each other like two gunfighters on Main Street Laredo at high noon.

They sit there waiting for an unsuspecting student to walk back to his or her car. Then they follow them slowly, like a child-abducting student driver.

I like to screw with 'em. I slow down at certain cars and pretend that it's my car. I take my keys out when I get near a car, then keep on going. I keep it up until the stalker gets pissed and drives off.

Then I flag down the poor driver that was behind the stalker and give him my parking spot.

It's just my way of giving back to the university.

I think things have gotten worse over the last five years. As dorm rooms have become harder and harder to come by, more students have gone off campus.

That means more students that drive back to campus every day.

I'm just waiting for fistfights to erupt over a parking space. It's going to happen, even if I have to slug someone.

Of course, all violence escalates. Soon, people will be trading shots (bullets, not Wild Turkey) over a spot.

Heck, I'm all for it.

I'd be a real-life version of the movie "Death Race 2000." We'd all have these modified cars designed for human carnage.

Personally, I've been looking for an excuse to mount twin .50 caliber machine guns on the hood of my car.

It would benefit our everyday lives, too.

Think about it. Wouldn't a steel battering ram have been useful when the bicyclists were taking over downtown?

Mad Max meets Herbie Husker. That's just for the paid lots.

We haven't even begun to talk about meters yet.

I used meters before I bought a tag, and I'm never going back. I'm sick of the two-hour trip to feed the beast again and again.

I was turning into a Pavlovian experiment gone bad. I was getting up every two hours in the middle of the night to walk downstairs and look at my car.

But all of us parking lot users are wimps. Lately I've been introduced to a group of true adventurers.

I had borrowed (honest, officer) a car from my roommate, and I'd forgotten to grab my parking tag. I had no money, as usual, to park at a

meter. And I couldn't afford a ticket because of 32 unpaid indecent exposure citations.

I had to venture out to the nether regions. I parked at 14th and Claremont streets.

I was amazed at what I found out there. If shanty towns had parking lots they would look like this.

In between Claremont and Iowa streets, cars were parked so close they were sharing genetic material.

Packs of wild dogs were eating garbage out of pick-up beds.

A gypsy was reading palms from the tailgate of a '72 Vega station wagon.

Oops, my bad. She wasn't a gypsy; she was an art major. It's so hard to tell with all of the earrings.

I saw people sleeping in empty spots, trying to save them for the next day. I'm not sure of the logic about that, but I digress.

At one campsite was a Lincoln Southeast High School sophomore. She was holding the spot until she graduated.

"Do you know what parking will be like when I get here? Trying to park will be like trying to get intimate with a camel," she said.

The students who park out there are beginning to show signs of the strain.

I saw one guy driving railroad spikes through some shoulder pads.

Another was sharpening a machete.

Yet another was actually reading her textbook.

It's even beginning to hit close to home.

One of our Daily Nebraskan employees parks out there. He's taken to wearing leather motorcycle boots and carrying a shotgun.

While that's not all that strange, he also was gluing hair to a mannequin's head. "I'll show them. They'll only think there's someone in the car. While they're sneaking up on me, I'll be lurking in the bushes. Silent death," he said before letting loose with a demonic cackle.

However, out there I also saw the most chilling sign of the upcoming parking apocalypse...

They were building a cardboard Thunderdome — two cars enter, one car parks.

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