

The bottom line

Columnist spells out his values, beliefs and philosophies on life



AARON COOPER is a senior English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

I believe in the home run.
I believe in the perfectly made hamburger.
I believe America has been smothered in ignorance and misdirection for too long.
I believe Americans can't make tacos worth a lick. Gimme a four-alarm fire-breathing hot sauce special from Paco's Tacos any day of the week and twice on Sunday.
I believe George Carlin knows more about America than a lot of politicians.
I believe God created the world we live in, and we have the power to strengthen or destroy it.
I believe history is a great thing, and we don't understand it as well as we think.
I still don't know why the caged bird sings.
I have never seen a shooting star whip out a gun or fast food enter a marathon.
A "universe" implies part of a short song to me.
Daylight Savings sounds like a place I might go to ask for a loan.
I believe America needs an extra light between yellow and red.
I believe in free verse poetry.
When I'm plunging through "Moby Dick" at 2:34 in the morning, I want some Pepsi 1000, not glorified water.
As long as it is round, I believe the world will never end.
I believe ignorant people in positions of power are as hazardous to your health as 10-year-old broccoli.
I believe we should insert an extra Saturday in the middle of the week.
I believe in books. I see an 800-

page novel and think "Now there goes somebody who saved a lot of money in therapy."

I believe too much order is a bad thing. People should be able to hop around naked on one leg pouring syrup all over themselves while they recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Why? Because they just might feel the need to.

I believe in taking the road less traveled.

I believe in doing nothing every now and then.

I believe there should be a huge pit in the middle of every city where you can go to dump out excess material from your head when your brain gets too full.

I believe in hip hop, rap and the rights of the artists America loves to hate. I believe in free speech, but also that it will never truly exist.

I believe the speed limit is the fastest a car will go.

I think police are misguided when they arrest someone for being "legally drunk." Should you get a ticket for being "legally parked?"

Is it lawful to play football on a highway in the No Passing Zone?

I believe if someone collected all the pennies left on America's floors and sidewalks, he would be a millionaire.

I believe in tropical beaches and blue oceans.

I believe in sleep, though I never get enough.

I believe a hot dog is a German Shepherd standing outside and wagging its tail in 120-degree heat.

I once watched a movie called "The Neverending Story." After it was over, I felt betrayed and misled.

I believe in old-fashioned hard work.

I believe there are few things as beautiful as a soft, pastel sunset, a perfectly hit fastball or a group of children playing tag.

I believe in art and subjective truths.

I believe in people, not in prestige.

I believe in making deals with a handshake and in keeping promises.

I believe in true causes that exist solely for the betterment of society.

I believe in nobility, simple logic

and pepperoni-pizza.

I believe in America. I believe in the Declaration of Independence.

I believe in doing things for no reason.

I believe fortune cookies taste good, but the paper in the middle sure eats up the lining in my throat.

I believe Americans overstate a lot of things, and news is dramatized to no end.

I believe *anything* is the greatest thing since sliced bread.

I wonder if Juan Valdez is a coffee drinker.

I wonder why they call it "Wall" Street. Is it a wall or a street? Make up your mind.

I wonder what they call you when you turn 21. If you're not a minor anymore, does that make you a major?

I believe self-help books are generally meant to help the author more than anyone else.

I believe in thick, perfectly fried buttermilk pancakes that fill you up so much you can barely walk.

I believe my birthday should be a national holiday, but only in the interest of providing an extra day off work.

for my fellow Americans.

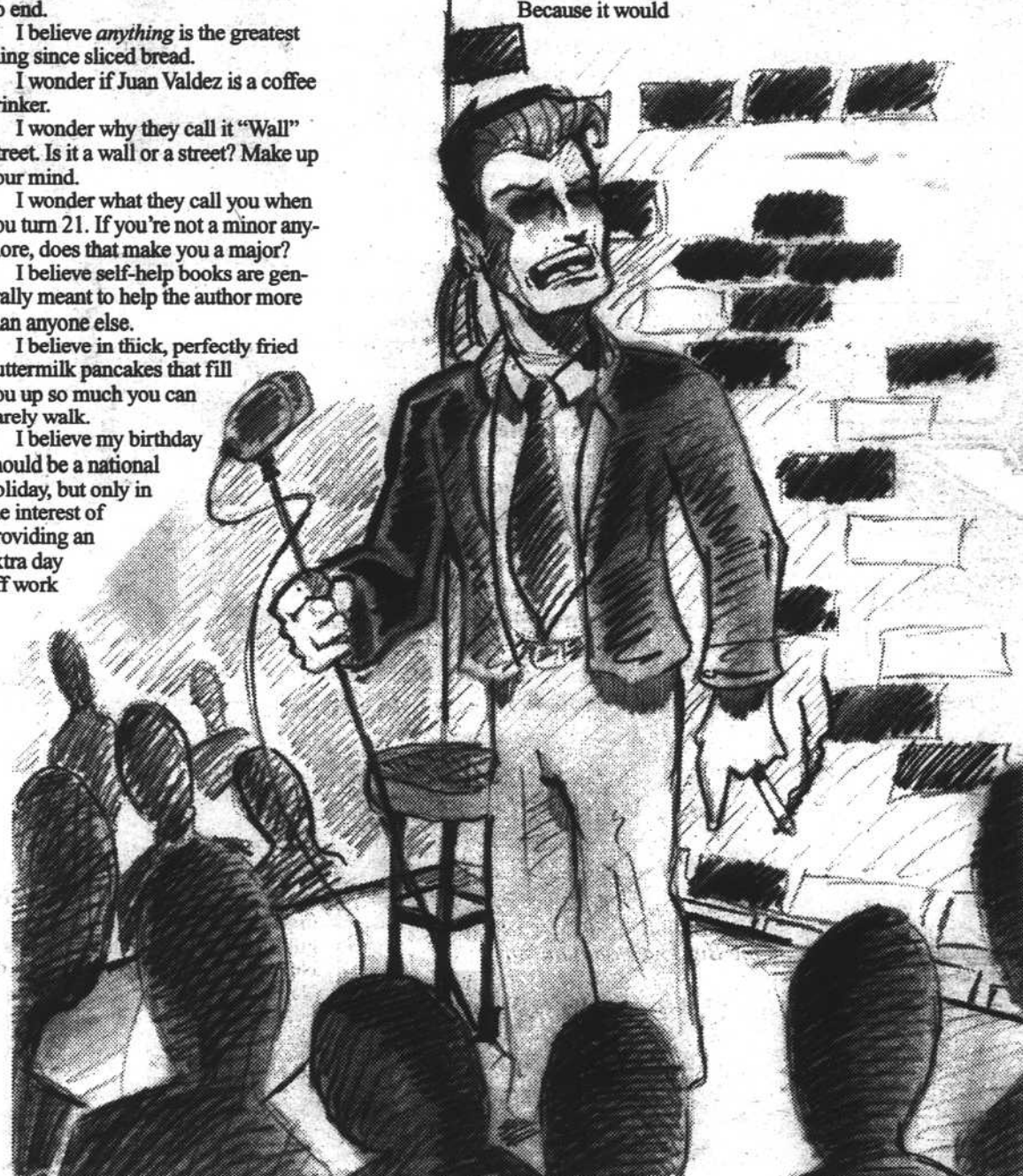
I believe there should be a constitutional amendment excusing all 6-foot tall, brown-haired English majors in Lincoln, from ever having to participate in final examinations.

I believe there should be a textbook entitled "Running Through a Dark Forest with a Tuna Sandwich Stuck to My Ear." Why? Because it would

be a much needed break from the daily grind of "Physics 101" and "Math for Dummies."

I believe in finely-tuned pianos, long, hot showers and that American politics are quickly becoming a cure for insomnia.

Cooper's Law: The power to believe fuels the fire of success. And that's the bottom line.



ROBB BLUM/DN

Till death do us part

Deshler murder was an act of love, not a malicious one



TIM SULLIVAN is a third-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

"Good morning, Mr. Ohlrich," he said, barely concealing the contempt he felt in his heart for the man in the witness chair.

"Good morning, Mr. Sullivan," he replied, his eyes still watery from the tears he had shed as he told his story in response to the defense attorney's questions.

"You were married to your wife, Phyllis, for 56 years, right?"

"Yes," the 76-year-old, balding, bespectacled man replied.

"You and your wife of 56 years resided in Deshler, right?"

"Yes," he said, his lip quivering now.

"The two of you were married in 1942, shortly after Phyllis graduated from Deshler High School, isn't that true?"

"Yes, that's correct."

Sullivan paused a moment, then asked, "Phyllis suffered from colon

cancer for about a year, didn't she?"

"Yes," the sobbing, stoop-shouldered man replied.

"And her pain from the colon cancer grew worse for her since her surgery in May of this year, right?"

"Yes, and she told me. ..."

"Objection, your honor! Move to strike the witness' answer beyond the word 'yes' as non-responsive, your honor, and to instruct the jury to disregard."

"Sustained," the judge said, "The record shall be so stricken, and the jury is instructed to disregard the answer of the witness with the exception of the word 'yes.'"

Happy with the judge's ruling, Sullivan continued.

"Mr. Ohlrich, listen to my questions carefully, and answer only the questions you are asked. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Now, Mr. Ohlrich, on Tuesday, Oct. 27, Phyllis was a patient at Thayer County Hospital, correct?"

"Yes."

"And on that date, you went to visit her, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did," Bob said, visibly trying to stifle tears.

His voice rising now, Sullivan asked, "And when you went to visit her, you were carrying a small-caliber handgun with you, right?"

Sobbing now, Bob mumbled his answer "... Yes, yes, I was."

Sullivan looked at the jury. All of

the women were weeping, and it was clear the men on the jury were fighting back tears, except for one, who was shedding tears faster than any of the women.

Sullivan looked back at the witness stand. Ohlrich had removed a handkerchief from his pocket and was now wiping tears from his cheeks.

"Mr. Ohlrich, you walked into your wife Phyllis' room at Thayer County Hospital on Tuesday, Oct. 27, pulled the small-caliber handgun from your pocket and shot your wife in the head, didn't you?"

One of the members of the jury began coughing and wheezing uncontrollably. Bob looked at the juror, and seeing Bob look toward the jury, Sullivan did too. They were all in tears now.

"Mr. Ohlrich, did you hear my question?" Sullivan asked, turning his attention back to the accused murderer on the witness stand.

"Yes, yes I did," Bob said, still sobbing.

His voice taking on a softer tone now, Sullivan pressed on. "Mr. Ohlrich, you shot your wife in the head, didn't you?"

Tears pouring from his eyes, his head bowed and his hands covering his face, Vernal "Bob" Ohlrich said "Yes! My God, man, she was in pain!"

Sullivan stood there, his jaw sagging, wondering where to go from there. What to do next.

He'd already lost the jury. He knew

this case was a loser. He knew that.

It didn't take him long to decide what to do about it, though.

"Your honor, may I approach the witness?"

The judge looked at Sullivan for a moment, as if he were wondering what Sullivan would do next more than Sullivan had wondered himself. "You may," he said.

Sullivan picked up a box of Kleenex from the counsel table. Not an exhibit, not the gun. A box of Kleenex.

He walked to the witness stand, looking each member of the jury in the eye as he crossed the well of the courtroom.

Placing the Kleenex in front of Mr. Ohlrich, he asked, "Phyllis sang in a quartet called 'The Four Bells,' didn't she?"

Bob took a tissue from in front of him and blew his nose, then looked at Sullivan with a look of apprehension, wondering what Sullivan could possibly be thinking.

"Yes, yes she did," he said, with trepidation in his voice.

"And she taught Sunday school, right?"

Still hesitant, Bob answered, "Yes."

"She also attended St. Peter Lutheran Church with you, just a block west of your home, right?"

"Yes," Bob said, starting to weep again.

"You have known your neighbors

Harvey and Marlene Weideman for a long time, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Your wife once took flowers over to the Weideman's for their son when he broke his leg?"

"Yes. Yes, I remember that. That's right."

"You and Phyllis spent a lot of time together at the American Legion Club in Deshler, didn't you?"

In dismay now, wondering where Sullivan could possibly be going with this, Bob said, "Yes."

"Your wife was in a lot of pain before this happened, wasn't she?"

Perturbed now, almost angrily, Bob said, "Yes. Yes, Mr. Sullivan, she was!"

Sullivan paused for what seemed like a lifetime to Bob, to the judge, to the jury and to the people watching from the gallery.

Then he closed the notebook containing all of his carefully crafted questions, looked at Bob and asked him one last question.

"You loved Phyllis very much, didn't you?"

"Yes," Bob said, and broke down, sobbing uncontrollably now.

Sullivan looked at the jury, then at the judge, then at the spectators in the courtroom. The judge was waiting. Impatiently.

"Your honor, the State moves to dismiss. This man has suffered enough."

Then he sat down.