

Dear A.L.

Columnist dispenses advice to the masses



A.L. FORKNER is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

It never fails. Every week it's the same old thing.

I write my 25 inches where I pretend to be wise and all-knowing. I fool Cliff, the opinion editor, into paying me for it. Then I get bags and bags of letters from the readers asking me for more advice.

Why do they turn to me in their darkest hour? I like to think it's my street-wise intellect and my straightforward approach to the topics.

In truth, I'm cheaper than therapy. Heck, I'm cheaper than the Wendy's value menu. (But no, I'm still not available with a side order of fries.)

So, as a service to my readers, I've decided to answer a few of the more pressing issues.

Dear Smart Guy: You claim to be so bright. So tell me this. What is the meaning of life?

Signed, Annoyed in Harper.

Dear Annoyed: The property of plants and animals which makes it possible for them to take in food and get energy from it, grow etc. That's the meaning of life according to Webster's New World Dictionary.

Oh, I get it. You were talking about the spiritual meaning of life.

I can't exactly tell you, but I can give you a hint. The meaning of life can be found in the movie "The Crow: City of Angels."

Have a nice day.

(Oh, I can be mean when scorned.)

Dear A.L.:

You seem to be a pretty smart fellow. Perhaps you can help me with

this exam. What is the answer to number 12?

Signed: Stressed in Class

Dear Stressed:

The answer is Woodrow Wilson. Or antisestablishmentarianism.

Either one should work. Trust me. Take care.

Dear Mr. Forkner:

My friends convinced me that you could help me with a little problem I'm having. It's kind of embarrassing and those guys on "Loveline" didn't really help much.

Anyway, my roommate and I met this guy at a Butter Churning Festival last month and ... Well, c'mere, I don't want anyone to hear this. (Whisper, whisper.)

Can you help?

Signed: Itchy and Scratchy.

Dear I & S:

That is a troubling problem. The way I see it, you have two options. First, you can call a locksmith and grab a sheet. Second, you can simply call the guy and ask him which one he would rather be: Everclear or Redman.

Keep it real.

Dear Fork:

The ASUN election is tomorrow. Who should I vote for?

Signed: Deeply Concerned Student.

Dear Deeply:

It's ASUN. Who cares?

Thanks for reading.

Dear A.L.:

How do you come up with such original and witty material each week? Turn card over. It always brings sunshine to my week.

Signed: An Adoring Fan.

Dear Adoring:

Well, it's a long and arduous process that actually begins on Tuesday. After carefully looking over my column for the week to see what the hell I wrote, I begin thinking about the next week.

This continues until Thursday night. After drinks with friends, I hit upon the mother of all column ideas. The quintessential column topic.

Friday, however, I wake up hung-

over and can't remember my great idea.

Saturday, the real writing process begins. Around 7 p.m. I take my usual seat at the bar and drink until I feel like Ernest Hemingway.

Then I stumble back home and decide to wait until the a.m. to write.

After turning my alarm clock off three times and oversleeping until 3 p.m., I frantically hack and delete over and over for an hour.

Then, I give up and copy something out of a P.J. O'Rourke book so I can get it to Cliff by 5 p.m. and keep him happy.

That's what goes into making this tasty, yet nutritious, 25-inch column each week.

Oh, and another thing. The "turn the card over" was one of the instructions, Nitro. You weren't supposed to write that. Sheesh.

Thanks for the letter.

Time for one last letter.

Dear Brainiac:

I gotta know. Are you for real? Do you honestly expect us to believe anything you say? At the very least, tell me what you believe in.

Signed: Raised Hackles.

Dear Hackles:

I believe many things. I believe baseball is more of a religion than a game.

I believe I hate cold weather.

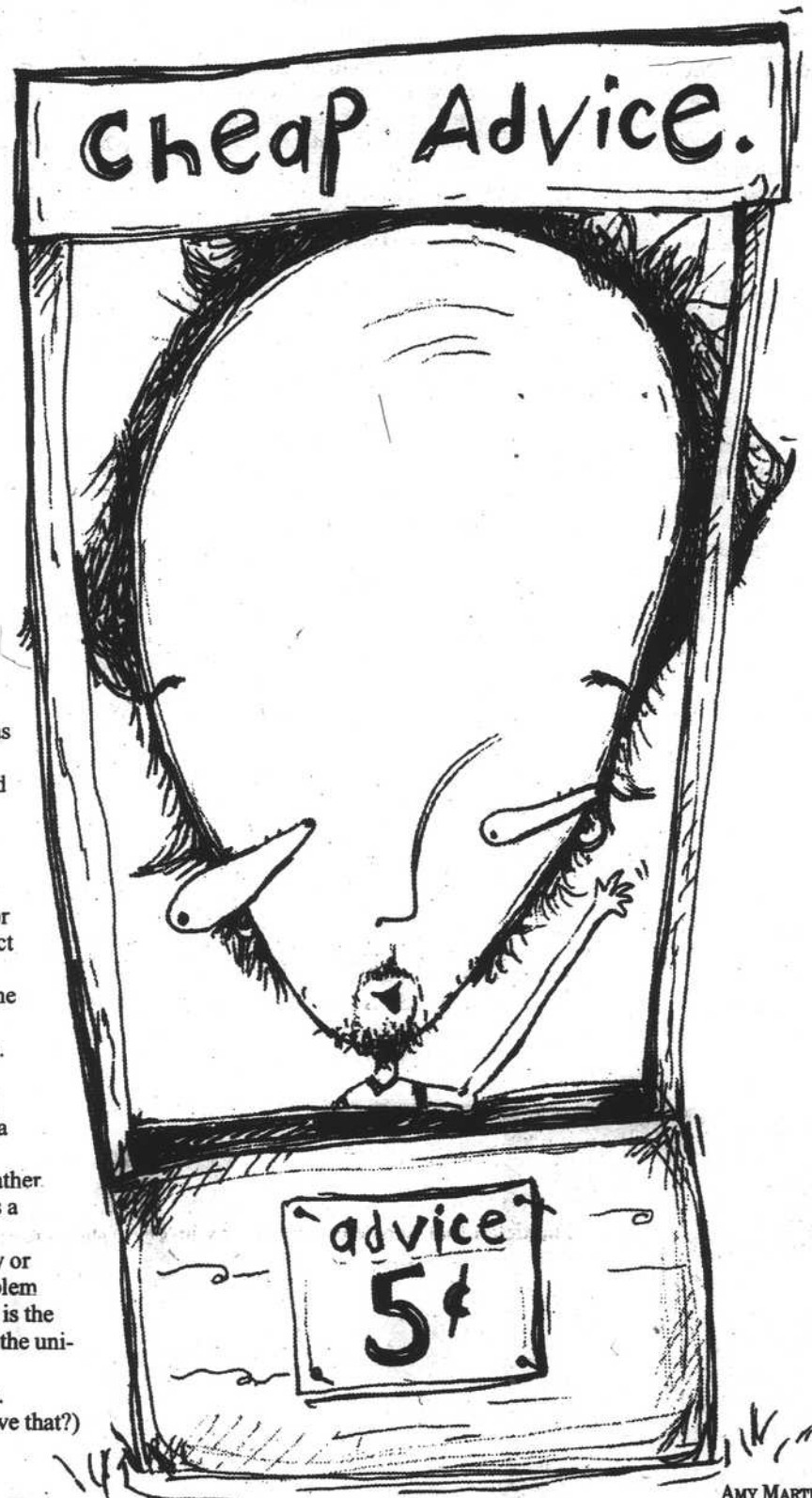
I believe Sheryl Crow is a goddess.

I believe indecision may or may not be my biggest problem.

I believe Jimmy Buffett is the key to all the knowledge in the universe.

And, I believe I'm done.

(But do you really believe that?)



AMY MARTIN/DN

The rise and fall of Microsoft

Results of court case could bring trouble for Bill Gates, his gang of bullies



CLIFF HICKS is a senior news-editorial and English major and the Daily Nebraskan opinion editor.

See Bill.
See Bill burn and crash.
Burn, Bill, burn.
Crash, Bill, crash.

See Microsoft.
See Microsoft lose.
Lose, Microsoft, lose!

You probably can't hear the shrieks and cackles of my laughter from there, but I'm hoping Bill Gates can hear it wherever he's at, because I'm laughing at him.

Six weeks from now, the trial between Microsoft and the Department of Justice will reconvene, and not long after that, Judge Jackson will hand down his decision, one that will impact every person in the nation who lays a finger on a computer, any computer.

And let me tell ya, folks, the future isn't going to require sunglasses

for Microsoft.

With the majority of the trial over (only rebuttals are left), no one thinks things look good for Microsoft, except the Microsoft lawyers, natch.

On the steps after each day of the trial, the Microsoft lawyers claimed the same thing: "We're not losing this trial!"

Well, I don't know what they're doing, then, 'cause it sure doesn't look like winning from this end.

See, the head attorney for the Department of Justice, David Boies, has just shredded Microsoft's credibility every chance he could get.

Part of the blame falls on Microsoft's shoulders, though. Over the course of the trial, one of the company's "expert" witnesses cited a rigged poll, several of them recanted their own testimony and Microsoft also entered a couple of very crooked videos into evidence.

The first tape in question was supposed to demonstrate how easy it was to download and install Netscape Navigator. Boies picked this apart like a vulture over dead meat.

It doesn't hold a candle to the other video, though. This video was said to show the benefits of having an Internet browser integrated into the operating system.

The problem? Well, Microsoft changed computers in the video at least twice, and the computers were not comparable. Not only were the

modem speeds different, but the programs were, too. Microsoft compared Windows 3.1 (not 95) to Windows98.

In layman's terms, Microsoft changed back and forth between a Porsche and a Lamborghini, compared them to a Volvo and called it fair.

And Microsoft got caught. Little icons appeared and disappeared on the screen, and Boies noticed, then asked, and asked again.

A few days later, Microsoft was claiming the videotape they had admitted as evidence was, in fact, an illustration.

Microsoft still expects to have some credibility after this? Their own witnesses also contradicted their own statements on regular occasions, as well as their written statements.

As far as I can tell (and from most of the other commentary that's been written on the Microsoft trial), Microsoft IS going to lose this case.

Most people are banking on the end result going to the Supreme Court. I'm banking on Microsoft losing there, too.

Why?

The time has come to redefine how the computer industry works, and the monopoly way of life isn't going to last.

We are ready for something new.

I want the days of free competition back, where company struggled against fellow company in a dire

effort to try and achieve a modicum of success.

I want the company with the best product to win, not the one that plays the dirtiest. When Microsoft makes its underhanded deals to cut other companies out of the market, using its operating system as a lever, that's illegal and it's killing innovation.

The Microsoft liars, er, lawyers, have claimed, like Chicken Little, that the sky is falling. The computer industry could crash at any given moment - any of Microsoft's competitors could overtake them in a heartbeat.

No one should question Microsoft, they say, because Microsoft is doing what's best for us, the ignorant little computer user who doesn't know any better.

You know, I'm starting to feel like the capitalist in Cold War Russia. I do know better, and I do know that when one person controls everything, everything goes to crap.

Welcome to the modern age, where paranoia is a weapon that serves us, the cynical educated masses of America, well.

Microsoft says it's doing what's best for "us." If you swallow this line of BS, you're doing yourself a disservice.

Like any other business, Microsoft is doing what's best for it, and that's fine, but there are rules and there are laws. And the laws change

once you get a monopoly.

It's not illegal to do so; it's just illegal to abuse it.

It is illegal to use a monopoly to drive your competitors out of business. It is illegal to use a monopoly to sell another product. It is illegal to use that monopoly for any real force.

Microsoft's broken all these laws and more. There's memos, testimony and lots, lots, lots, lots, lots more.

If you want to believe Microsoft, then the entire computer industry has united in the most massive conspiracy the world has ever known to bring down a corporation for no adequately explained reason.

If you want to believe the DOJ, everyone in the computer industry has grown tired of Microsoft's brutal strong arm tactics, its abusive and intrusive business policies, its lack of respect for its competition and its general "We ARE computers" attitude.

When the mighty gavel falls in Judge Jackson's hand, the mighty Microsoft should tremble at the sound. When the Supreme Court stands by that decision, the mighty Microsoft should cringe.

And lo, how the mighty have fallen.

When Jackson hands down his decision, he might just save the future of technology as we know it.

See Bill go bye-bye.