

# OPINION PAGES

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## Our VIEW

### Just say stop

*War on drugs needs to come to an end*

Through decades including the "Reefer Madness" scare, the government loudly claimed marijuana had no medical benefit. Politicos leading the nation's drug war claimed it was a "gateway drug" that lead to using harder drugs such as heroin and cocaine. Crushing marijuana use was essential to winning the war on drugs.

Then, last week, the Independent Institute of Medicine released a study that found marijuana has legitimate medical uses, and it's one of the best treatments for some symptoms of people suffering from cancer, AIDS and other debilitating diseases. It relieves pain, prevents nausea and increases appetite, which can prevent or slow wasting in terminally ill patients.

Then, the claim that marijuana was a gateway drug drifted away. The study rejected that claim and didn't find the drug to be particularly addictive. Even in smoked form, the study found the drug's medical benefits for terminally ill patients can outweigh the side effects of inhaling toxins.

The sounds of chins dropping in Washington echoed. This study wasn't carried out by the Jerry Garcia society; the IOM is a respected medical group, and its findings couldn't be summarily dismissed.

IOM also suggested developing an inhalant containing THC, the active chemical in marijuana. It's an idea that could allow us to sidestep the base issue: Should smoking marijuana be nationally legalized for medical treatment?

We think so. But marijuana's social stigma prevents the nation from seriously evaluating this question. As politicians hit us again and again with the necessity of The War On Drugs, we hear that marijuana is a bad drug for everyone—even people in pain.

Their message still sticks, even now that their entire war on drugs seems to be a losing one. Studies show crime rises after major drug busts, because addicts have to steal more to support their habit when prices spike because of low supply. Last week, allegations arose that the U.S. government pulled out of drug investigations in Mexico when it appeared a Mexican government officer could be leading the drug ring. And don't forget the millions of minority men and women dumped into prisons, rotting with taxpayer dollars under mandatory sentencing laws for drug possession.

The IOM study, coupled with the current state of the drug war, points to one fact: America must take a long, hard look at its war on drugs and reevaluate its purpose, leadership and effectiveness. Federal legalization of prescription marijuana should be a first step in any overhaul.

Instead, we have federal drug gurus, in typical form, sitting on their hands, saying, "Interesting study. We'll look into it," while their agents keep fighting a losing war on the streets and dying people wait in pain.

## Horsey's VIEW



## Flight lesson

*Columnist learns much from game of tic-tac-toe*



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

I hadn't planned on writing about Spring Break. Heck, I figured, everyone else will and besides, who cares? Then I got to Las Vegas.

Bear in mind, I'm a gambler at heart, but I could spend a year in that city without ever gambling a cent.

No, I'd eat, shop and show myself into the poor house.

So, I decided I could write a column about the trip after all.

How Las Vegas Changed My Life, by A.L. Forkner, was the headline in my mind.

How could I pass on this opportunity? Think about the material.

First, there was the airport. Never before have I seen such a collection of people. Somewhere, a trailer park was dark.

Then, there were Marlin and Carol.

This lovely couple (he's a fired cabbie, she recently moved to Las Vegas) were ironing out their marital problems at the booth next to ours at the Peppermill.

Apparently she suffers from migraines and thinks he talks about people behind others' backs.

He says she should go to a "Head Doctor" and that his therapist charges too much.

Of course Las Vegas would make a great column. It's a city built on hopes and dreams.

It's also a city built on having those hopes and dreams snatched away because that third Wild Cherry wouldn't drop one more spot.

I really could've used that BMW too.

Let's look at everything I learned. I realized a small expensive meal can be more satisfying than a cheap buffet.

I discovered I really do like to shop.

Finally, I learned trams and moving sidewalks are just what this university needs. I'm lazy.

However, the most important lesson I learned was on the flight home.

I was mad because the only flight I could get left at 7 a.m.

I was tired because the only flight I could get was at 7 a.m.

I was also alone, because the ... Well, you get the idea.

After dealing with the sheep-herding methods used by a certain shuttle service to Denver, I was in my seat. I was looking forward to spending the entire flight with my complimentary beverage and my live, acoustic Barenaked Ladies CD.

'Twas not to be. Instead, the flight attendants decided to put a little kid that was flying alone next to me.

Poor little guy looked terrified. He was clutching a blue, tattered Doodle Bear and was scrunched down in his seat like he was trying to hide.

I knew I had a decision to make. I could continue to stare out the window from behind my sunglasses and tune out the flight with music.

Or, I could make a friend. What the heck, I've heard that CD lots of times.

Dalton is 6 years old and this was his first flight. At least that he could remember, he was just a baby the first time.

He lived in Denver and was on his way back after visiting his dad in Las Vegas.

Because of scheduling problems, he had to fly alone.

Maybe it's because my first flight ever was also to Denver when I was his age. I remember being a bit overwhelmed (but too "grown-up" to say it) and I was with my mom, dad and grandma.

Maybe it was his Winnie the Pooh carry-on.

No matter, I stowed my CD player and leaned over to reassure the little dude that he'd have fun on take-off.

Dalton's eyes opened wide when the pilot fire-walled the throttles.

I pointed out the strip to him as we climbed out. From his center seat he could see the buildings that used to loom over him, now tiny little boxes on the ground.

The quiet, scared little guy soon

became quite the talker.

First, he wanted to get some stuff out of his carry-on. When he couldn't quite get to it, I helped him with the bag and the zipper.

He had to get his Cartoon Network NASCAR hat and a notebook out.

Seeing the notebook gave me an idea. At this point I wasn't quite sure if I wanted to spend my whole flight as a baby-sitter or not. Before I could decide, he had put his notebook away.

That made up my mind. If I didn't do something, I'd spend the whole flight helping him with his bag.

So I reached into my briefcase and took out my ever-present reporter's notebook. I never go anywhere without a notepad. (I hope you're reading this, Professor Tuck.)

(And his camera, Tuck. I never see the Fork without his camera. — Cliff, helping out any way he can)

I then challenged Dalton to a battle of wits.

Tic-tac-toe.

Oh, it was a grand battle. The wizened veteran against the gritty youth.

Final score: 18-4 in favor of Dalton.

Hey, it was a lot closer than the score indicates.

I was really having fun, and so was Dalton. He was so busy concentrating on the game he barely noticed his 7-Up or his cookie.

Naturally, I paid close attention to mine.

After tic-tac-toe, we tried a made-up version of Connect Four.

I'm not telling you that score.

When we landed at Denver (which he enjoyed) he had to stay in his seat until the flight attendants helped him off the plane.

When I stood up to leave, he tugged on my briefcase and gave me my greatest lesson.

"You're pretty good, but let me tell you my trick. First, you put your circle in the top middle box, then you go down. If that doesn't work, try another trick. That's how I win."

If that doesn't work, try another trick. How can you argue with that advice?

Dalton Terry, wherever you are in Denver, thank you. Thank you for sharing your lesson with me.

If only you had shared your cookie. ...

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