

editorial opinion

Pressure tactics lethal to rights of free speech

It's better to make a mistake on the side of free speech than endanger the First Amendment by caving in to the pressures of persons offended by media presentations.

The recent flap over the appearance of so-called Nazis on WTVS Channel 56's ((Detroit Black News)) is an example of how close a society can come to injuring this very precious Constitutional right.

While all Jewish organization officials interviewed by the Observer & Eccentric deny endorsing a boycott of this year's auction, we feel there is a danger in their attitude which says "we, as a group, won't take a stand one way or the other."

Rather, these groups should support the station's right to air what it wishes. If the advantage of public television is that it is free of advertisers' pressure, those same stations should be free of political pressure from persons objecting to programming.

After all, the Jewish population, more than most, should realize the importance of free speech. Millions of their brethren were exterminated while a well-greased Nazi public relations team covered up the gruesome crime.

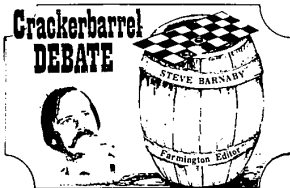
JEWIS, under the tyrannical grip of Adolf Hitler, lost their free speech and lost their lives.

It is better to let society continually be reminded of the idiocy which is Nazism. There is no better way to do this than let those who espouse that philosophy get on television and air their views. A sane population only can see the fallacy of Nazism if those who propagandize it can be seen.

The Jewish community, by reacting so vehemently, only gratifies the ego of this aberrant group. The danger exists of making martyrs out of a group which should be scorned.

Frankly, the Jewish community is too intelligent to fall to such a ploy.

Shut off from the air waves, the alleged Nazis



will have free rein to skulk about in the playgrounds of the national conscience, spreading their sick philosophy, without any chance of a counter view being given.

Fifty-six Station Manager Jim Christianson is correct when he says "we can't program what will be offensive and what will not. Obviously, we must deal with all sides of a controversial issue."

Those who advocate Christianson's resignation or apology are misguided. He hasn't any reason to resign or feel remorse. If he made any mistake at all, it was caving in to those who called for the deletion of the "It's Your Turn" program.

One Jewish spokesperson interviewed said, "if we withdraw support one year, maybe they (56) won't do it next year."

Such withdrawal of support only would serve to destroy a good television station.

Channel 56 has been a credit to the community. Even though it finds itself continually struggling for funds, it has consistently presented a wide-range of programs interesting to all.

If anything, the Jewish community should make an extra effort to support this year's auction.

STEVE BARNABY



The "good old days" were not necessarily always that good. (Staff photo)



"Between the lines"

by Carl Stoddard

The not-so-good old days

On a blustery February morning in 1897, a child called Ira was born in upstate New York. While still an infant, his parents packed him in a wagon and moved to Michigan.

They settled in a wilderness area near Lansing and there the pioneers made a new life for themselves. It wasn't easy. Ira's mother died while working the desolate farmland.

Ira survived and even managed to get enough schooling to become a teacher. But the pioneer spirit instilled by his father finally got the better of him, and at 25 he headed west to establish a farm on the rolling plains of the Dakotas.

He bought a quarter section of government land and tried turning the tough prairie sod into a farm. When he was 30, a prairie fire swept across the land. He lost everything.

So Ira returned to Michigan and began a farm several miles north of his father's farm. He married a woman named Carrie and together they raised three sons. The oldest son was my grandfather.

Ira continued to work the farm until his death at the age of 57. Like any small businessman, he kept a record

of his profits and losses in a ledger. He also used the ledger as a sort of journal that today provides a glimpse of hard times in early Michigan.

JAN. 13, 1904. "John Dallavo's house burned," the ledger begins. It goes on to list other events in the small farming community.

Jan. 16, James Harkness died. April 23, Erik Hansen died. April 27, Mrs. Nina Sagendorf died. Two days later, Mrs. Waring died.

May 13, five cases of small pox were reported in town. But there were good times, too. There are notes of friends visiting, ice cream socials attended and trips to see relatives. And there were signs of progress: "Aug. 4, Mrs. Hansen raised her barn."

Yet always, the grim side of life dominates the ledger. Jan. 15, 1905, part of the town is burned to the ground. Feb. 8, another death. July 18, another death. Sept. 3, a friend is buried. Dec. 15, another funeral. Feb. 23, 1906, "Herman Dean shot himself."

According to the ledger, a farm hand earned about \$1 a day. A suit of clothes cost \$7.50. Four dozen eggs sold for 48 cents.

Tucked in between the pages of the ledger are several old newspaper clippings. And among those was a clipping

my great-grandfather must have found especially interesting.

The clipping detailed a series of predictions by Mother Shipley. The seer predicted that men would walk beneath the surface of the sea, fly in the air and send messages around the world in the twinkling of an eye.

"And in 1897," she concluded, "the world shall come to an end."

Mother Shipley obviously had some shortcomings as a prognosticator. And in 1898, she obviously gave Ira and his family reason for some laughter.

My roots are not as colorful as those of Alex Haley. Nor have my wife and I managed to trace our ancestors back much further than the early 1800s. But we've been given a personal glimpse into those early times.

And what I've seen hardly makes me yearn for those good old days so often glamorized in fiction and on film. Life for the early pioneers was rough.

So they can keep their smallops and prairie fires and limestone tributes to people who died before their time. And I'll settle for traffic jams, computer snafus, televised trupe, occasional power blackouts and the rigors of foraging for food at the local supermarket.



"Around the edge"

by Jackie Klein

Not smoking is not so easy

I'd really love to give up smoking, but coughing is the only exercise I get.

Lord knows I have tried to quit the nicotine nasties at least 47 times. The first attempt was when I got the flu, and smoking made me feel sicker. Unfortunately, it was only a 24-hour virus. I was a turkey who couldn't kick my addiction cold turkey, and after 25 hours I was puffing away again.

The other 46 times I decided inhaling cigarettes was a matter of breath or death, and I could be a candidate for the latter. I cut out the toxic tobacco torment. But then a trauma would occur in my life, and I was back to a pack a day, not counting the nights.

I must admit, however, I didn't always start smoking again because of nerves. Once or twice, my nicotine fits were triggered by playing black jack in Las Vegas gambling casinos where cigars were on the house. One smoke led to another and another, and I'm still going strong.

Besides being labeled a health hazard, I just read that cigars may have to carry a new warning—"Caution, smoking may make you dumb."

THAT COULD explain why I dropped \$50 gambling in Las Vegas and why other big smokers are piled with cigarettes so the odds are against them.

California researchers, I read, have found that the nicotine in cigar smoke can cause a significant reduction in a person's ability to learn and remember. That's a relief, because I thought my reduced abilities were caused by middle-age, the period between Estrogen and the last rites.

I must show the article to my non-smoking, well-educated friend who maintains nicotine inflates the arteries in your brain and heightens creativity. I'm not sure where she learned that little gem, but it gives me one more stupid excuse to keep smoking.

According to the item I read, short-term memory for verbal materials is significantly hindered by smoking cigarettes containing nicotine. The lapse in memory lasts for two days after smoking, the researcher said. He may have been blowing hot.

Asked to recall as many words as they could from a 75-word list, the nicotine subjects recalled significantly fewer words than did nicotine-free subjects, the article said. The superiority of the non-nicotine groups persisted over two days.

SO NOW I've got another problem. Two days ago, my friend loaned me "The Smoke Watchers: How-To-Quit Book." I have to return it today, and if nicotine causes memory lapses, how can I remember what I read? If I can only recall 30 words out of 75, less than half, I might cut down to half a pack of cigarettes a day.

It's sad in a way. The smoke watchers' book quotes a reformed nicotine junkie as jumping up and down screaming, "I feel alive again. I feel like a whole woman." Since I must only remember half the book, I must go through life feeling like half a woman, the half that smokes.

I really envy that woman who is a tobacco slave no longer. Her complexion lost its yellowish pallor. Her day's-end fatigue was gone. Her chronic cough disappeared. Her teeth were white. Her sex life was an experience worth having, which is enough reason to spend \$5.95 on the break-the-cigarette-habit book.

"She blushed," the book goes on. "She abruptly came out into the sunshine like a big, beautiful butterfly who had spent two decades wrapped in a dingy cocoon of smoke."

"I'm living," she kept saying in tones of wonder. "I'm living."

I smoked four cigarettes reading that. I always smoke when I get emotional. But being a nicotine fiend, I'm supposed to be too dumb to remember what I read and too dumb to kick the habit.

Tinkering Around

by LOUISE OKRUTSKY

On the lone economic trail

All right, Uncle Sam, Aunt Michigan and Sister Detroit. My check's in the mail to each of you and I can call off tax madness for another year.

I just want you to know that each year when I hear from you, I want to go out and look for a service that specializes in renting out mates for tax purposes. I know each of you is single. I certainly have never heard of a Mrs. Uncle Sam. (I don't believe those rumors about Betsy Ross.) And for single persons you three are really unaware. How could you do this to a poor single person?

Do you realize that single persons end up paying more taxes than their married neighbors?

What deductions can a single person make, except for himself or herself? (Not much, Sam.)

If it were only during tax time that I felt economically stigmatized for being single, I could shrug it off as a mere bureaucratic aberration.

BUT TAX time only serves to point out to me that this subtle financial discrimination against singles is pervasive throughout the entire year.

There have been movements in favor of everything from gay rights to the rights of the adopted child. This isn't to slight any of those movements. I just want to add another one to the American melting pot of causes.

It's about time single persons started thinking of themselves as a bloc. I realize that they are probably one of the more transient blocs in the country. Not all of them will be single for their entire lives, but some will return to singleness through death or divorce.

Therefore, even the most scoffing must admit that there is a sufficient number of singles in the country.

In spite of a superficial glorification of being single that emerged in the '60s, the trend is still to condoning nice families with 2.5 kids, a two-car garage and a pet. I have no problem with anyone who believes that is the only way to live. But I want to point out that through choice or unfavorable circumstances, some persons don't indulge in that lifestyle.

Yet, the business world is slow to realize this.

LAST year, a manufacturer came out with single portion sized cans of soup. The commercials for the product emphasized that these nice small cans were for persons who must cook for one.

While I applaud their effort, I feel compelled to make a few small criticisms. The per unit price on any small can of food will show shoppers that singles who don't want to waste food or money are paying more for their groceries.

If you buy small cans of vegetables, which keep longer than the preferred fresh food, inevitably, you discover that persons with larger households are being wooed by the manufacturers. Giant economy size cans do help save a few pennies. Small means more expensive in the canned food section of the grocery store.

Next time you're down at the supermarket, cruise through the meat counter. If you buy packaged meat, you will find the size is geared toward persons with households larger than one. Yes, I know, you can improvise and fix the same food differently each night. But if you buy a meat like pork that spoils easily, than you better be a fast eater. And, if you're anything like me in your eating habits, (that's probably unlikely) you'll notice that it's difficult to gobble down all that food in a couple of days.

I LIKE ICE cream but I rarely buy it because the pints, which suit me just fine, are more expensive than the larger sizes, per unit.

If it were just a matter of being hit in the pocket book once a year, I could probably grin and bear it. But singles get hit by the social expectation that they are living in a limbo awaiting to be rescued by some future mate.

Married persons are supposedly steadier and more reliable than single persons. That gives them an edge in the job market and in promotions. After all, singles are notorious for leaving at the drop of a hat. (If employers believe that garbage, I question whether I'd want to work for them.)

The result: once again the single lose out economically.

Then, there's the kind solicitation of friends. We've heard the story that Henry David Thoreau spent about \$11 during the year he was living near Walden Pond. That's because he had lots of solicitous friends who insisted he wasn't eating right and invited him to dinner a lot.

Besides, people are usually terribly sure that you're not happy living alone and need some company. That's really a plus for singles who hate to cook.

But I would hate to think that's as far as any single person will ever get when it comes to economic benefits.

AT LEAST now I know what's meant by the phrase, two can live as cheaply as one.

What I'd like to hear is that one can live as cheaply as two.

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