

# Institutionalizing violence

Thursday, June 12, 1986 O&E

(D7B)

THERE IS a part of me that is prone to violent thoughts when I see violence done to another. The murder of an innocent senior citizen in her home is one such example.

When that kind of news story is told, something in me calls for at least equal violence to the murderer.

I do not particularly like this darker side of myself but I also know that I am not alone in such thoughts. This penchant for evening the score is alive and well in the human condition. One need look no further than the popularity of Rambo for evidence of such feeling.

Very few will argue against doing something to lessen the violence that threatens, frightens and reviles any decent person. The question, however, is whether or not we are able to step aside from our fear long enough to look at the issue with something other than the eyes of fear.

THE ONLY thing we can say with certainty about the "deterrence value" of the death penalty is that the executed criminal will not commit another crime. To pretend that it goes further than that or that capital punishment would make Michigan a safer place to live is whistling in the dark.

Our neighboring states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois are only three cases in point. All three have death penalty statutes, but murders per capita in those states remain on a par with our own. Just a cursory look at violent crime in the state of Florida where execution is on the books would cause one to at least wonder as to the effectiveness of such punishment in diminishing violence.

Florida is, however, an example of at least one "problem" with this ultimate punishment. Seven years ago, this state put John Spink to death for murder. This conviction was due in part to his partner in the crime, Frank Brum, "turning state's evidence."

FOR THAT, Frank went free, hardly adding to the

## County asks volunteers as mounties

The Mounted Division of Oakland County Public Safety needs more volunteers to help patrol county parks, control strike details, ride in parades and assist local law enforcement officers.

To be a member of the Mounted Division, one must be 21, have a well-trained horse, trailer, gun and saddle. The Mounted Division, a volunteer organization, will supply uniforms, badges, raincoats and horse blankets. County Executive Daniel T. Murphy said.

Riders must be willing to attend meetings the second Monday evening of every month at the Oakland County Service Complex, 1200 N. Telegraph, in Pontiac. Meetings will include training of horses.

New members will learn how to use a gun at the sheriff's department range. Those interested should call Chief Medward Tessier at 858-0931.

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credibility of his testimony. So instead of two alleged murders in prison, one is dead and the other is on the streets.

Add to this process the fact that most, if not all, of those receiving the death penalty are of the poorer class and the even-handedness with which this punishment is applied also falls into question.

However, there is another dimension which we cannot afford to ignore. How do we teach non-violence to children when we are willing to institutionalize violence as a way to deal with a social problem?

On the one hand, such a double message confuses children. On the other hand, the louder message of violence as a solution is the one that takes hold.

IT WOULD SEEM that the real issue is not so much the death penalty as it is the fear which has understandably taken hold of people like you and me who are sick of crime.

If all we are willing to bring to the problem is our fear and perhaps a penchant for vengeance we may end up in a more dangerous position than we are now in. Having our societal gut temporarily satisfied when the switch is pulled or an injection given will not in the long run give us safer neighborhoods.

While the news commentator echoes our sentiments in declaring that enough is enough, his many previous arguments against capital punishment do not just go away unless we are willing to let our fears or our penchant for vengeance determine our course.

# Medicine can affect sex life

Dear Jo:  
Could the medication I'm taking for high blood pressure have an effect on my sex life?  
Mr. A.R.,  
(Anonymous Reader)

Dear Mr. A.R.:  
It always amazes me when I receive letters related to a person's sex life — they will never sign their names. Anyhow, your question is a good one.

Certain drugs used in the treatment of high blood pressure most definitely have a negative effect on a person's sex life.

Please discuss this problem with your doctor. He may want to stop your medication, decrease the dosage, or change it to one that will not have this effect on you.

On the subject of drugs that effect sexual function — some drugs that are used to treat depression and other mental health problems also can have an inhibitory effect on sexual function.

Dear Jo:  
My husband and I travelled through Britain years ago and had always planned to go back. Our plans had to change though because for the last two years he has been confined to a

gerontology  
**A. Jolayne Farrell**

wheelchair.  
We read and enjoyed your column on the conveniences offered to older people when travelling abroad. Now, we think a trip of this nature may not be out of the question.  
My husband is able to take care of himself — I just push the wheelchair.

Do you think a trip of this sort might be more trouble than it's worth? If not, where do you suggest we start? Thank you.  
Mrs. Lee

Dear Mrs. Lee:  
If you and your husband are in reasonably good health, I see no reason why his confinement to a wheelchair should stop you from returning to Britain.

The best place to start is for the two of you to plan in detail where you want to go and exactly what your needs will be. For example the type of ground transportation that you will require, the kinds of hotel

There are travel agents who specialize in making arrangements for disabled travellers.

rooms (wheelchair accessible) you want etc.

When making your reservations be very specific and honest with your travel agent. Obtain written confirmation and the names of all the people with whom you make your arrangements. Also, it is important that you are aware of any cancellation penalties.

There are travel agents who specialize in making arrangements for disabled travellers. You can write to them at ASSIST, The Association for Specialized Services Involving Special Travellers, c/o 3080 Yonge Street, Suite 1020, Toronto, Ontario M4N 3N1.

Planning is probably the key to your having a pleasant, uncomplicated trip. Good luck.

Readers can write to Jolayne Farrell at P.O. Box 68, Postal Station G, 1075 Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

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