

points of view

Hostage's plight a lesson for all

THE ANNIVERSARY passed without much comment. March 16 wasn't a happy date, but a grim reminder of when Associated Press reporter Terry Anderson was taken hostage in Lebanon. On March 16 Anderson began his fifth year in what must seem an endless captivity for the 41-year-old journalist.



Casey Hans

Since that day in 1985, our lives have gone on. We have discovered yet another government cover-up labeled the "Iran/Contra scandal," elected a new president and watched the global implications of the Greenhouse Effect.

Sitting day after day in his cell, Anderson must surely wonder about what he has missed since his captivity began: the deaths of his father and a brother — of which he apparently knows nothing — and the birth and subsequent infancy years of a new daughter.

Anderson is one of eight American men and a total of 15 foreigners held hostage in Lebanon; he has been held the longest.

Some of us remember the hostages regularly. One Detroit radio talk show host reminds listeners daily to remember both Anderson and Thomas Sutherland, a dean at the American University of Beirut who has been held since June of 1985. Some church pastors toll their bells for the captives. Anderson's sister, Peggy Day, has been visible and vocal during the past four years, as have groups in the hostages' hometowns.

BUT IN general, we have forgotten. "Terry Anderson has been forgotten by his country and abandoned by his profession," wrote Don Mell, an AP photo editor and founder of a group pushing for Anderson's release in a recent New York Times opinion piece. "His frustration has driven him to beat his head against the wall of his cell

until blood pours down his face." One of the theories is that Anderson was captured because he is a journalist, and the terrorist group holding him believed others in the profession would rally around, giving their group press and attention.

With the exception of groups like Mell's, it hasn't happened.

Perhaps it is because these men are so far removed, chained to another part of the world, that we can so easily put them out of our minds. With the fragile balance between war and peace in the Middle East, perhaps we just don't want to think about problems there. No doubt many people here have their own concerns and no time to consider others.

Sadly, the hostage situation is now considered commonplace.

But Anderson's plight, including the others held with him, should be a global concern. What is happening to Anderson and his colleagues, all held against their will, should be a warning to all of us. It reminds us how small our world is, and how quickly our freedoms can be eroded or completely taken away.

By not pushing harder for the release of our fellow Americans and others, we are showing our lack of concern and compassion.

This situation invites further erosion of freedom worldwide, as we choose to become captive to a violent world and build a prison of our own choosing. Casey Hans is a staff writer with the Farmington Observer

Hateful actions

Bigotry alive and well in our suburbs

SOME JERK spray painted racial slurs on the home of a black woman who lives in Beverly Hills. A highly visible employee of another suburb has called us frequently to complain that one of our newspapers prints entirely too many pictures of black people.

Which person do you think contributes more to racial divisiveness in suburban Detroit? Which person do you think got the publicity?

The news stories, of course, centered on the Beverly Hills incident. Neighbors, to their credit, rallied to the woman's defense. They are angry, appalled and protective.

VILLAGE OFFICIALS have been downright feisty in heaping scorn on the vandal. That, too, is an improvement.

It wasn't that long ago that some communities, such as Lathrup Village, openly boasted that only whites and Christians were welcome. Times change. A year ago a black woman



Rich Perlberg

ran for Lathrup Village Council. She lost, but that is the fate of many newcomers in Lathrup elections.

You can hope that the spray painting is no more than the work of a troubled soul. A white family also had a home sprayed with paint. Ditto for a car that someone thought was speeding through the neighborhood. Perhaps it is all the work of a single, paint-happy vigilante.

Lord knows, there are a lot of troubled souls out there. Several columnists at our newspapers infrequently receive work back in the mail with critical reviews inked around the margins.

These comments are never signed and rarely laudatory. They generally start out by suggesting the writer is terribly naive, a stupid liberal (a phrasing they believe to be redundant), or hell-bent for destroying their way of life.

Then they take off on two or three favorite themes, usually blaming blacks for crime and drugs or else claiming that Jews are the only people to profit at Christmas or other such gibberish.

YOU GET those letters, you sigh, you show them around and then you generally forget about them.

And then some jerk starts painting the word "nigger" on a home in a community that reveres its property rights. And you wonder what it must be like to be singled out for scorn by someone who knows you only by the color of your skin.

You hope that this person is part of a small, demented minority. But then you remember the phone calls

from that city official who worried that pictures showing too many black faces might distort the true "balance" of his community.

That person, by the way, has never called to say there were too many pictures of white people in the paper.

The spray painter in Beverly Hills probably feels that the neighborhood will deteriorate if blacks start moving into the community. It is a belief that is fueled and nurtured by many until it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

But it is not just the spray painters who cover our communities with a coat of racial hatred.

The community canvas is also smeared by the picture-counters at city hall.

Rich Perlberg is the assistant managing editor in charge of Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

Mass punishment won't work in school

My son is in the eighth grade. In his class there are few boys and girls who are disruptive. The teacher has a lot of trouble with the class and when these few students become too unruly she takes it out on the entire class. For instance, last week they were noisy and disruptive so the teacher assigned an extra 10-page paper to all of the students. Not all of the students are acting out just for or five and I do not think this is fair.

A: What you have here is mass punishment as it is called in basic educational psychology. It occurs more frequently with new teachers who are struggling to develop classroom management skills, or said simply, class control. What we have here is a teacher who is most likely being intimidated by a few students. Instead of isolating the acting-out



Doc Doyle

children and dealing with each one individually the teacher is doing out discipline to the whole group in hope that peer group pressure by those who are there to learn will result in a classroom behavior modification. Frankly, it doesn't work.

Indeed, what occurs is not only do the students who are acting out know they are in control of the environment but the other students who are being punished for something they are not part of become very angry. Although the "innocent" students may suppress their feelings in class they will do a real verbal number on

the teacher after the class is over to peers and parents.

The teacher obviously has to be more assertive and have a reasonable, fair classroom procedure to follow. Too many teachers of this nature get into what I call a "verbal tug-of-war" with students in which the conversation goes something like this.

"OK class, quiet down." Said over and over again that statement means nothing. The statement is (if Johnny is acting out) "Johnny you do not interrupt when Mary is talking." Unless the teacher specifies and pinpoints the acting-out students, a broad statement means nothing to young adults. Many school districts are aware of a program developed by a Dr. Lee Cantor called Assertive Discipline which can be of value for a teacher in this predicament.

In any case, until that teacher confronts specifically those who are act-

ing out and until there is an understanding of some simple classroom procedures, a situation of this nature can snowball resulting in learning time being lost for all the students.

Therefore, mass punishment does not work and is a very weak substitute for sound class management. The bottom line is a well-structured, interesting program that motivates students under a teacher with well thought out, written lesson plans. The classroom that is stimulating is still the best adherent to impulsive, acting out, disruptive behavior.

Dr. James Doyle is an associate superintendent in the Troy School District. The answers provided here are the opinions of Doyle and not the Troy School District. Questions for this column should be sent to Doc Doyle c/o the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

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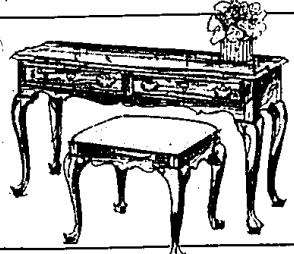


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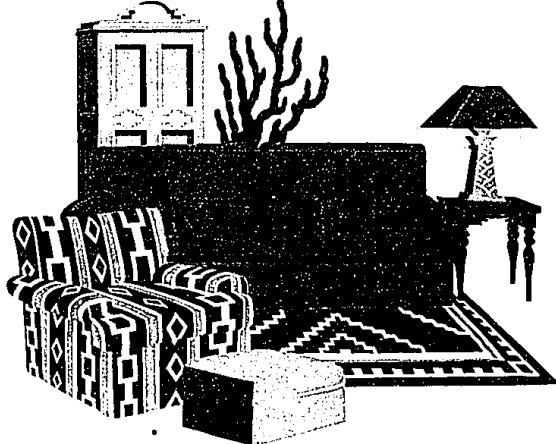
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