

EDITORIAL

See no suicide

Thanks to its ubiquitous fictional and factual presence, death doesn't seem to touch us much anymore.

That was true for me in the recent suicide of U of A student Kells Hall. That is, until someone suggested I push my face against a screen window to see where he landed.

"See the patch covered with sawdust?" he asked.

Indeed I did.

Up until then it had been a journalistic game of cops and robbers. A chance encounter had alerted us about a possible death on campus. When confronted, some official campus sources were sensitive and cooperative. Others were not, which couldn't help but make me wonder when, or if, we would ever have been told.

Gazing down those six stories I was convinced of the importance of covering this death to help readers realize that Kells Hall was a human being and not a statistic.

A newsworthy human being, though, in that most of us would say he had lost his way. A human being who had decided to end that most unique experience we so unpretentiously share. Life.

I was somewhat distressed then to have our coverage of Hall's death questioned by Mr. Wirth, the president of the Lister Hall Students Association. Mr. Wirth suggested newspapers should not publish the details surrounding a suicide. Is this really the case?

Judging by the rest of the Edmonton media's reaction I guess Mr. Wirth was right. The *Journal* has an official policy against covering suicides. Even our "cheeky" *Edmonton Sun* which delights in detailing sexual deviance, murder and drunkards' reform was politely discreet.

Two days after Hall's death CBC television twice flashed the picture of a blood splattered screen window at the scene of a double homicide on its noon hour news. But nowhere were the details of a suicide presented to disturb a child's lunch. You see, the CBC has an official network policy against the publication of suicides.

Several reasons for this state of affairs were offered to me. Dean McNulty, City Editor for the *Sun* felt his paper had a responsibility to cover "public" suicides in that the individual involved was making a public statement. He emphasized that such events were not dramatized, however, and that a person who privately took his own life would not receive publicity.

Avoiding additional hardship to the family and the stigma involved were reasons suggested by the *Journal's* ombudsman for their policy.

And executive director for TV news Dennis McVarish is going to let me know the reasons behind CBC TV policy.

Generally these are wonderful sentiments. But I wonder why the media has such tremendous tact and sensitivity in this area but seemingly not in others. Do they worry about family hardship and stigma for murderers and convicted sex offenders? Are they concerned for the reputations of drunk drivers, thieves and drug dealers?

I don't honestly think so. What I think is really happening is that the media in general is simply reflecting society's attitude towards self-inflicted death. And society I would suggest is working at cross purposes here.

On the one hand, suicide is one of our taboos and therefore should not be talked about. This thinking lends itself well to the idea that it is important to minimize hardship on family and friends.

But, on the other hand, as a society, we want to lessen the occurrence of suicide as well. And this goal is best served through public knowledge and understanding.

As a newspaper I think the *Gateway* has acted responsibly by trying to accommodate these two purposes. We did not detail Hall's landing place photographically nor his means of discovery. We avoided speculation on any reasons for his action although a hypothesis was corroborated several times.

Providing some background on Hall and his death was an attempt, not to sensationalize, but to humanize. An attempt to have us all stop in our daily robot-like scamper through the maze that is this university, and ponder on the suicide of a fellow student and human being.

Gazing down those six stories after the fact, I felt it was the least we could do.

Jim Miller

Discussion: A method of confirming others in their errors.
Ambrose Bierce

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Staff this issue:

The El Supremo Nimmo has called a staff meeting... Heather-Ann Laird and John Roggeveen, with Gilbert Bouchard, they arrive on the scene. John Algard, Bill Inglee, Kent Blinston et al, come running along with Zane Harker in tow. Martin Coutts, Shauna Peets, and grim Martin Beales, see Aaron Bushkowsky squash Ron Friesen's heels; Dave Marko, Margo Schmitt, and Stacey Bertles went fishin'. Here's Nate LaRoi and Cathy McLaughlin! And Gerard Kennedy and Jack Verme, a couple of cads, they've gone for tea!

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« LETTERS TO THE EDITOR »

Second coup hits Gateway!

We have decided, in our own slightly unusual and positively deific manner, to simply proclaim the deposition of John A. Middleton as pretender to the Editorship of the *Gateway* and assume the job ourselves. This proclamation is prompted by John A.'s flatteringly fashioned, quintessentially bloated, and utterly bemoanable communication of 1st December pertaining to his proposed literary reforms.

We exult in the assurance (we think) that Middleton has omnisciently observed the magnitude of Editor Andrew Watts' compositional inadequacy for three entire months. Unequivocally stupefying. After this perpetuity of rigorous evaluation John A. has at last divined that Watts is "...simply not capable to edit (sic) this newspaper." (Here we pause for any notes from Managing Editorial persons.)

It is entertaining how Middleton gracefully alludes to his decided arrogance and apparent pomposity. Well, John-John, you licked the label, and we trust you have some notion of where to apply it. The remainder of your ravings are simply drivel and as such warrant no other lampoonment.

Now then: we are conscious of the fact that there may possibly exist a few time-passing skimmers who are mildly curious as to our identity. Well, we are the new Windbag-in-Chief of your periodical. We have sat and experienced the preternaturally sententious missive of John A. Middleton for far too long. John A., you simply wear your bemoanable vocabulary as the less learned might an obscenely festooned t-shirt: — That is to say, (simply) somewhat self-consciously, and adolescently. Your ideas, such as they are, are as a naked man riding in the limousine of your thesauric resource. Your rhetoric is reminiscent of that of a failed politician decrying his rivals. (Watts has better ideas than words. You just have words.) Your tedious, nonsensical bombast is paralleled perhaps only in Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*.

We recommend, J.A., that you simply switch your concentration to combined honors in being-struck-with-the-full-size-Oxford-English-dictionary, and humility. We realise that the latter is, bemoanably, simply an impossible atonement. Ha ha ha.

P.S. We realise that our manuscript contravenes every known convention of typographical decorum; but we wonder just how many typing errors passed unnoticed in *Finnegan's Wake*?

Daren Johnson

Peter Clandfield, Arts I

Supreme Gods and Arbiters of Verbal Verisimilitude

Porn perpetuates attitudes

Mr. Pelton ("Wimmin vs. Humans") seems to think women have one thing to worry about: Violence. He does not seem to think that pornography plays any detrimental role in our society in regard to the status of women.

What pornography does is perpetuate an attitude towards women and sex that actually is detrimental. To briefly describe an example which supports this point: when I was in Junior High School, there were a couple of boys who had, for the most part, received their "Sex Education" from pornography; they cornered a girl after school, told her it was about time she learned "what women were for" and sexually assaulted her. I would hope this case is not common-place, but nevertheless pornography fosters certain attitudes.

Such attitudes are obvious to any women who are discriminated against and sexually harassed in the work force. The existence of such attitudes is also illustrated by the number of women, children, and occasionally some men, who are the victims of the violence promoted by pornography and who are in desperate need of facilities such as WIN House (Women In Need) and the Sexual Assault Center.

Pornography is not the sole cause for all negative attitudes and occurrences in our society against women and children; indeed, much of the problem lies in women's perception of themselves. I feel, however, that pornography is detrimental and that outright violence is not the only enemy of the welfare of women. Inequality in the Law, prevalent societal attitudes, and sexual harassment and discrimination (both occur in many ways too numerous to mention) are also enemies, along with, of course, violence.

Unfortunately, it is difficult for many of us to

understand such problems unless we personally suffer ourselves. Lack of understanding and awareness is more than enough justification for assumptions like those of Mr. Pelton.

Because the sexual assault victim mentioned in the incident is currently attending the U of A and has a well known affiliation with myself, I feel I have an obligation to withhold my name from this letter.

Anonymous

Men lack reassuring touch

For the attention of Messrs. Blodgett and Green:

I have been touched by your concern that I may not be receiving from life the pleasure that I might, and I assure you that I will take your excellent advice to heart. The next time some (happy, possibly horny) construction worker calls out to me the cherished words, "Hey sweetheart, nice t—s, wanna quickie?" I will strive to ensure that I am "relaxing" and "having fun". I will also pass on your suggestions to the more uptight of my female friends, so that in the event that a male should see fit to force his physical rather than verbal attentions upon them, they too will know to "relax" and "have fun" (what's a little fun in the game?).

Mr. Blodgett, you are correct in your assumption that I would have viewed female shouts of "approval and delight" over male presence in the fashion show as in less than good taste. It is also true, however, that considering the present structure of our society and the existing problem of harassment and violence against women, I do not see this phenomenon as so malevolent as the one of which I complained. Should you come to do so, Mr. Blodgett, and decide to lead the movement against sexual harassment of men (or even people), just ask — I will be most happy to march in your parade.

Mr. Green, I call your attention to the fact that the term "evolutionary throwbacks" is the *Gateway's*, not mine. I pass no judgement upon our predecessors.

L. Shalom, Rehab Med 4

P.S. I know why I feel so strongly about this thing, gentlemen; but what are you so excited about?

Miracle on 114th Street

THANK YOU -

To all those who took up the cause of helping to make Grande Cache's Christmas happy.

\$577.75 was collected through direct donations, and \$300.00 from the Eugene Brody Board of the Students' Union. This money has now been sent to the Grande Cache Family Centre for toy ordering.

The response from the University and the help from the *Gateway* in taking this project under its wing is a great display of the true Christmas spirit of giving.

Stay tuned in January for a brief rundown of the Christmas party resulting from all of this.

Candy Drew, Rec. IV

"Fascists" show moderation

I am concerned about Greg Madison's future. His untimely bout of 'programmed-leftist-response' undoubtedly accounts for his loss of political vision and sensitivity. Due perhaps to these ailments, Mr. Madison has been unable to contain his alarm with Mr. Pocklington's recent guests to our city. Given his political condition, Mr. Madison's fears are somewhat pitiable. May I make a comment? In interest of your own credibility, do not label William F. Buckley Jr. a fascist. Assuming you have read none of Mr. Buckley's prolific writings, let me assure you of his opposition to state nationalism of any kind.

I noticed also, with amusement, your attempts to draw out *Gateway* closet-fascists. Despite your suspicions about the *Gateway's* managing editor, might I suggest you be grateful for the moderation our paper shows? Would you prefer perhaps a CUP-run newspaper, boycotting everything from diamonds to South African toilet paper? With all its varied shortcomings, the *Gateway* does represent the U of A. Oh, to match your quote, Greg, remember these poorly paraphrased words of Conrad Black — "I have no patience with 'small l' liberals, their ignorance of a Soviet threat is a case of gravely misplaced altruism." Let's not let political naivety be the instigator of mental laxity.

Timo Taylor, Arts II