

# Perspectives

## Perhaps a vegetable suicide hotline is in order



**Dave Barry**  
columnist

Two dramatic recent developments have demonstrated, once again, why these are such exciting times in which to be a vegetable.

For openers, scientists have finally realized one of humanity's oldest dreams — the dream of creating, in the laboratory, a potato that commits suicide.

If you don't believe me, you should dig out your Oct. 24, 1996, issue of Machine Design magazine and check out the article on page 139, sent to me by alert reader Mark Mielke, concerning work being done by lading potato scientists in Cologne, which as you know is a city in France, or Germany, or possibly Belgium.

But wherever it is, Cologne contains the Max Planck Plant Breeding Institute, where scientists have

been messing around with potato genes. Genes are little items that are found in every living thing except Sen. Alfonse D'Amato.

As most of us recall from biology class, a gene can be either "dominant" or "recessive." It depends on which type of gene it.

With this knowledge and a pair of very tiny pliers, scientists can alter the genetic structure of a living thing, and the Cologne scientists have modified a potato so that, if it catches a fungus disease, it will cause itself to die.

(I did not follow the technical details of how a potato does this, although we can probably rule out firearms, because many states, despite the clear intent of the U.S. Constitution, no longer allow vegetables to obtain handguns with-

out a "cooling off" period.)

The question is: Is it morally right to make potatoes commit suicide? Potatoes are, after all, living organisms that perform the same basic life functions as humans — growing, reproducing and purchasing state-lottery tickets.

Can we look a potato square in

Every day, in TV commercials and magazine advertisements, we see close-up color pictures of the feet of human beings who are suffering from the heartbreak of toe fungus.

Are we going to start putting suicidal potato genes into these people? I hope so, because those pictures are disgusting.

We also need to give serious thought to the issue of radicchio. I don't know about you, but I hate it when I order salad, and instead of some nice, green lettuce, I get these scrawny sprigs of radicchio, which is Italian for "tastes so bad that even a starving goat spits it out." If we're going to make ANY vegetable suicidal, this is where we should start. But enough about killing vegetables. What about the other side? What about the issue of HEALING vegetables, specifically tomatoes, through prayer?

This issue recently was the subject of an experiment, which I absolutely swear I am not making up, conducted by Jay Ingram, who does a science show on the Discovery Channel on Canadian TV. According to newspaper articles sent in by several alert Canadian

readers, the experiment involved six tubs of tomatoes, some of which had been punctured and infected with tomato blight.

[http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/\(tilde\)ylliu/tomato.html](http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/(tilde)ylliu/tomato.html) — were as follows:

"In the three tubs that had good thoughts sent to them, the average size of the wound was virtually the same as the wounds on the tomatoes in the control group. However, of the three tubs of tomatoes prayed for, one tub was interesting in that the size of the wounds was the smallest of the six tubs.

What is the explanation for this? Is it simply biological variation? Or, is there something else at work here? More tightly controlled experiments would need to be conducted to explore this outcome."

So there you have it: A definite "We don't know" from the groundbreaking Canadian tomato-prayer experiment.

The Web site does not say what happened to the tomatoes, but it would not surprise me in the least to see them on TV advertising their new psychic hot line.

Meanwhile, all this research has aroused my scientific curiosity. I'm going to go conduct a tightly controlled experiment to see what happens when you put ketchup on fries. Pray for me.



Illustration by Jay Nelson

Some of the tomatoes were visited by healers, who, according to Ingram, directed "healing thoughts" toward them. The public was also invited to "think powerful healing thoughts when the tomatoes are periodically shown on your TV screens."

The results, according to the show's World Wide Web site —



Illustration by Jay Nelson

its eyes and say that we have the right to "play god" this way? And once we do this to potatoes, what is to stop us from doing it to other species?

## Letters to the Editor

### Banner exploits 'Angels'

Okay, let's not try to fool ourselves. You turned the article about Angels in America into nothing but a load of fluff and PR. How can you possibly print an article that you should know to be false? Rob Bowen told Matt[hew] Gibson that he has not changed the play. Well, if you would have used a bit of investigative reporting, you would know that the one and only black character in the play is being played by a white player. Yes, it's true. Belize, the black, gay, drag queen character is being portrayed by a middle aged white woman. Does that sound like change? Denise Crowell, who will be portraying Hannah Pitt is also playing Belize. As you should already know, Belize is neither white, nor middle aged, and definitely not fifty-five year old man as you printed. Sound strange? Well, it is. Rob Bowen had black players audition for the play, and for some reason or another, a black player is not playing the role. When he told you that the play is unchanged, he blatantly lied to you. Tony Kushner wrote a scene for Prior to appear in the nude for a reason. Ol' Rob decided to cut it out. That sounds like change to me. Ol' Rob also cut many monologue speeches that are said by Louis. That's change. But on top of all of that, we have a white actor playing a black role. Now, under some circumstances, a change like that might be okay. But when the department has black actors, why is it necessary? Could you imagine the role of Jim in "Huckleberry Finn" being played by a white player? What's more, a scene that involves Belize and Louis revolves exclusively around racism. Louis is a follower of Judaism. All of the dialogue in that scene involves Louis claiming that he is not racist towards black people and Belize is saying that he is. Please understand that the dialogue is being radically altered to fit two white players for the scene. What bother

me even more is your article about Latter-Day Saints and the play. With the quotes that were used from the interview with Dr. Hardy, it seems as though all or most Latter-Day Saints are anti-homosexual. We are not. Sure, maybe there are a few Latter-Day Saints like that, but for the most part, we are all rational, open-minded human beings who accept people for who they are, not what they are. You printed that article to sensationalize this play and what it's purpose is. You and Ol' Rob are doing nothing but making this a play about exploitation. Ol' Rob has decided to exploit homosexuals, blacks, Jews, and Mormons, and he is doing a wonderful job. You are not informing people about this play. You are attempting to make them prejudge not only the play, but the players, and the many different kinds of people who are being portrayed. How can you title an article, "Latter-Day Saints Prepare For 'Angels'?" Everyone is preparing for Angels in America. This is a wonderful play that is being used for the wrong purposes, mostly for the exploitation of minorities and religions, and Ol' Rob's ego, and ticket sales. If this play were done by the right director, this play would be wonderful. The most talented players were cast in this show, but the stage direction will be lacking. Notice that Ol' Rob is usually not a director, but Technical Director. Some advice to him, stick to hanging lights. You could have also interviewed more than just Dr. Hardy about Mormons and the play. I thought that *The Banner* was supposed to be on top of things, but obviously not. Believe it or not, but there is a Latter-Day Saints Student Association (LDSSA) here on campus that meets every Tuesday at 7:30 pm. Why didn't the writer of that article not contact any of us. As I said before, Ol' Rob is doing nothing with this play but satisfying his undying ego. I'm sure that if the players told the truth about the play, they would have told you that they are over worked by this man who treats them like slaves. Ol' Rob had this cast re-

hearing more than what most Theatre UNCA musicals rehearse, and this play doesn't have music or choreography. This was also the first play to ever have closed rehearsals. Yes, that's right. When I was sitting in the lobby, not the actual theatre, but the lobby of the building, I was asked to leave. Why is that? I was told that I was keeping the actors from rehearsing their lines, but these actors knew their lines when the came back from Christmas break, before they even stepped foot on stage. I think that Ol' Rob didn't want anyone to see how he is treating the actors like slaves. This play has nothing but flop written all over it. This is not because of the players, because I am sure that many of them will give Tony-caliber performances, but this play was directed by someone who doesn't understand what it's like to be any of the characters. He just cares about ticket sales. As for *The Banner*, well, this paper belongs next to *The Globe* and the *National Enquirer* in a super market check out line. You have done nothing but try to sensationalize these articles and exploit the play, this play is about. I worked on *The Banner* staff and I know what it's like. Exploit, Exploit, Exploit. You may have a new look, but you're still up to your old tricks.

J. M. Hodges  
Mass Communication

### Try community service

Dear Editor,

I am writing in effort to promote the idea of community service on UNCA's campus and to let students, faculty, and staff know about the resources and opportunities available. In doing community service a person will a) learn valuable skills needed to become productive members of society, b) show the community that the UNCA campus is concerned and committed one, c) gain real world experience to see how those less fortunate live and what can be done to change people's

lives and make them better, and d) become aware of the problems facing or natural environment and to help stop manage growth while not destroying our natural world.

In the Asheville-Buncombe area there are hundreds of volunteer agencies looking for people to do a variety of services. A new Community Service Bulletin Board located in the Highsmith lobby will hold information about upcoming and ongoing volunteer opportunities. If you would like information for your student organization or academic classes, please contact me. I can either assist you in gathering information, or can come in and make a brief presentation. Also, feel free to stop by my office in Highsmith 48 during my office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:30-2 p.m. and Thursdays 1:30-4:30 p.m., or call 251-6588. My e-mail address is AGHOLLIF@BULLDOG.UNCA.EDU.

Ardie Hollifield  
Community Service Coordinator  
Office of Student Development

### Lecture off base

Dear Editor,

On Monday, Feb. 17, Dr. Hopes of the literature department gave a Humanities 124 lecture that contained statements that were misleading. In the lecture, Dr. Hopes compared the Greek gods with God of the Bible in saying that they were all afraid of men. This can be seen as true with the Greek gods, but is far from the truth about the God revealed in the Bible.

Dr. Hopes spoke of the fear that God had for Adam and Eve. He claimed that God kicked them out of the Garden of Eden because He feared they would become like Him. In truth, God threw them out as a consequence of disobeying His command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In chapter two of Genesis, God said that Adam will die if he eats of the tree. While they became like God in possessing the knowl-

edge of good and evil, the book of Genesis does not say anything about them becoming like God in His power and glory as He is revealed in the previous chapters. They were kept from eating the tree of life because their punishment was death.

To conclude that God kept them from eating the tree of life because he was afraid of them is inconsistent with the rest of the book of Genesis and is not good literary criticism.

The God revealed to us in Genesis is a mighty God who created all things, a just God who punished sin, and a personal God who is intimately involved in the lives of people. In later chapters of Genesis and Exodus, God brings a flood upon the whole earth and parts the Red Sea. It doesn't seem that a God of this power has much to fear from man.

We believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God and that it gives us the only true revelation of who God is and who we are. However, if you believe that is only a myth, don't draw conclusions from only a verse or two. Examine the context.

No work of literature can be fully understood without examining the whole. So students, please don't believe everything you hear in humanities lectures!

Doug Flaherty  
Junior, meteorology

Christine Geske  
Freshman, undeclared

### Rights violated

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to last week's column in *The Banner* on the new Student Conduct Committee. I have gone under this process, and, frankly, I have had my Constitutional rights violated. One evening last semester I was celebrating an intramural championship with my friends when I was written up for a noise and alcohol violation. I admit we were noisy, but I wasn't drinking, even though I was of legal age at that

time. But my beef is not with the R.A. who filed the incident report or with the Student Conduct Committee. It is with the way my "case" was and is being handled.

First, I was never notified that I was being brought up on charges (letters were sent to my house forty miles away, but I was living on campus). I didn't receive a visit, a subpoena, or call. Second, I never received notification to appear before the committee, and subsequently I was found guilty, because I never showed up for my "open dialogue" with the committee. I was also sanctioned without notification. What ever happened to innocent until proven guilty and due process?

Upon learning of my conviction, I first visited Sue Hintz. She told me that I am on "specific probation" and therefore ineligible to be a part of a student organization. I was shocked. I had to resign my offices in my fraternity, deny my appointment of Office Manager in SGA and now cannot run for SGA President in the upcoming election.

I appealed this decision, but have been denied, because the person who hears appeals is the head of the committee that sanctioned me. Isn't it a conflict of interest if the same person is the judge and the jury? Is this an attempt at a fair trial or am I just being given a blindfold and cigarette before I face a firing squad?

Now, I have to wait two weeks to get my "fair" trial, but I will go into the trial tarnished by the original sanction.

I have to clean up a mess I did not make. I have been denied due process, an impartial appeal, and the ability to enjoy the involvement of UNCA's student organizations.

The old system might not have been perfect, but at least I am sure that I would have received more adequate notification and been given enough time to prepare a proper defense, a right given to me by the U. S. Constitution.

Ryan McGarghan  
Junior, international management/spanish