

# Perspectives

## Choosing a statute of limitations on life



**Andrew Thomasson**  
columnist

Smoking and suicide are two of the most controversial topics of the world has to offer today. Should we smoke? What are the courtesies that come along with smoking? Are cigarette companies liable for people's choice to smoke? Should we ban the tobacco industry outright? Is it OK, from a moral standpoint, to kill yourself? Are you

going to burn in the fires of everlasting damnation if you do? What about assisted suicide, by the likes of Dr. Jack Kevorkian? Do people have the right to choose when to die if they are terminally ill? Do they have the right to choose if they aren't? Should they? So, at the risk of public being, I am going to simultaneously address the two

topics. Smoking has often been termed "slow suicide." Everyone knows that the great majority of smokers will have smoking-related health problems later in life, and a good number of people will die from them. Smoking is, without parallel, the number one cause of death by something an individual can control. It costs Medicare and Medicaid hundreds of millions of dollars a year, and subsequently taxpayers have to shoulder an enormous unnecessary burden.

So now I'm going to get down off my soapbox, and leave it at the fact that I think smoking is really not too intelligent, but just on general principles, it's your body and

it's your business what you do with it. I just needed to mount the soapbox so I could make the following connection:

What's the difference between smoking a pack a day for, say, 40 years, and putting a gun to the side of your head and pulling the trigger? There's a reasonably certain chance that both actions will kill you, and the person doing each action knows what the result of the action is going to be, and does it regardless of the consequence.

So why is putting a gun to your head and blowing your brains out considered a moral evil and a horrible, traumatic experience, while dying from lung cancer or complications from emphysema considered "just something that happens to smokers"? Don't they produce the same result? Is there something like a statute

of limitations on suicide, where immediacy of death makes a difference? I maintain that there is, at least in our society. If a 40-year-old man puts a gun to his temple and pulls the trigger, we hear "I'm sorry to hear your husband went to hell" and "He died before his time, poor soul." If a person poisons their system for 30 years with cigarettes, cheap whiskey, fatty foods, artificial flavors and dyes, and dies at the age of 66 with lung cancer, congestive heart failure and a faulty liver, we send our condolences and accept this as just another part of life.

Did the second man not have as much to do with his own death as the first? Did he not "die before his time"? Would he not have lived at least a little longer if he had not done all these things? The human

body is a remarkable machine, and it is designed to work for many, many more years than our current life expectancy dictates — if we take good care of it.

This brings me to another point. Our society has an obsession with death, is terrified of death, and cannot understand why anyone would want to end their life before their time. Doctors in hospitals worldwide are programmed to save lives at all costs, letting aged men and women waste away for years with machines breathing for them, instead of letting them die peacefully, gracefully, and with dignity if they so choose.

Now, I'm not condoning suicide as "a way out," but I fail to see the purpose of attaching people to machines for years to keep them alive. Jack Kevorkian has been publicly tarred and feathered for helping people rid themselves of their earthly body when they are tired of it. In contrast, doctors are lauded for the number of people they keep alive, even those who wish to move on from the physical realm. I question which of these things is the more humane, and whether our society has its priorities in the right order.

So, is our society going to decide to be one based on fear of death? By my observations, the fear-based world that we've lived in for millennia isn't working too well, considering where we're trying to go. Why not try to live through love? Embracing death as just a portal into another lifetime, which all major world religions seem to believe, and embracing it without fear would be a great start.

## Letters to the Editor

### Liberal funding?

Dear Editor,

During the 1999-2000 school year, every UNCA student will pay a student fee of \$383 to support the school's Division I (D-1) athletic program. Your money enables UNCA to recruit top athletes by offering full and partial scholarships.

By remaining with the D-1 commitment, UNCA can compete against traditional D-1 titans such as Chapel Hill and Duke. This distinction also enables UNCA to remain in the faltered NCAA basketball tournament.

Who are we kidding? The basketball team, easily the focus of the school's athletic budget, has endured more than a few lopsided losses over the past few seasons. They are simply outmatched and outclassed.

The funding of UNCA's D-1 athletic teams demands immediate attention. The administration should take a long hard look at the present situation and consider changes. Does our small university have any

business trying to shoulder the astronomical costs of big time college basketball? Chancellor Mullen spent this past semester announcing his hope and dream for UNCA to become the No. 1 liberal arts institution in the country.

The top three liberal arts universities of 2000, ranked by US News and World Reports, "All-Keep Division 3 status, which does not offer athletic scholarships. Maybe we should follow their lead. I know, as do most other UNCA students, that my \$383 could be much better used to further my life and education than to continue keeping this ship afloat.

Mark Ebert  
Junior, mass communication

### Virtual ownership

Dear Editor,

Sometimes it takes a voice to raise others to the call. Awareness comes when one person says "No." Ladies

and gentlemen, I call you to become aware of a situation happening right now, the outcome of which may very well decide the nature of the Internet and your access to entertainment, as well as copyright.

Recently, the Motion Picture Association of America and the DVD Copy Control Association, Inc. have issued a series of lawsuits against Web providers and individuals over the issue of movie DVDs (digital versatile discs).

For those who do not see the flyers, DVD movies contain an encryption on them that prevents play without "authorized equipment." You may already own a DVD drive for your computer, and you may already own a DVD movie, but without their decryption you cannot view the movie. It sums up to paying twice for what you legally own. Several Linux (www.linux.com, www.linux.org) users have "hacked" the encryption so they can play what they rightly own. When the MPAA and DVD-CCA found out about this, they began issuing lawsuits against the coders of the DeCSS (De-Content Scrambling System) as well as any website

to open up to each other. True communication, which is often misquid by words and intents alike, must be imperative. All else is a game, one you can't take with you when you leave.

Susan Ketter  
Junior, Psychology

### No school spirit

Dear Editor,

It has recently come to my attention that some people on this campus do not know how to cheer for UNCA. I attended the UNCA-High Point game on Feb. 18, and was fairly disappointed at the performance of the fans. Sure, you had a couple of all-blue fans in the front row and the very dense student section, but by looking at most of them, you wouldn't know what school they went to. By saying this, I am not trying to talk down to any of my fellow students, or trying to make the Greek organizations look bad. I am guilty myself — I wore a bright yellow Bojanjans shirt.

Dan Fairman  
Sophomore, engineering

providing links to the code.

Why? Greed. The suits are being held under the guise of software piracy punishable by Federal Law. These lawsuits are the first major test of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), and will determine if the act is upholdable in its principles as formulated by Congress. Can a service provider be held responsible for an individual user (similar to UNCA being responsible for my Web page content)? It raises the issue of policing the Internet at the cost of free speech. It raises the legality of our video lending library, movie showings and classroom viewings. How many times do we have to pay for a product?

I urge you to get the facts. Say NO to the MPAA and DVD-CCA. Say YES to watch what you own legally. Learn what a "hacker" is and is not. Unlearn the media definition and Clinton definition of "hackers." Stand up for what you know is the ethical manner of business and speech.

Casey Keller  
Junior, computer science

When you looked at what most of us (us being the student section that was standing all night) were all wearing, it was mostly supporting our Greek organizations, not the school. Maybe it was because we were on TV, and we wanted to show off our great clubs, but wearing your "letters" for a basketball game doesn't make sense to me, especially painting them on your chest.

You should be wearing school letters, UNCA. You never see masses of fans at Duke or Carolina wearing their Greek letters. Instead they are painted in blue and white, their school colors, not Greek. And lastly, you don't see them run out onto the court with a banner supporting the fraternity they are in after the game is over.

This is just sad. We need to be supporting our teams with all we have. And if that means spending another \$20 in our bookstore to get a new UNCA shirt, or buying a big blue foam bone, then by all means, lets do it. We'll look more like a team than we ever have.

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Our telephone number is (828) 251-6586. Our campus e-mail address is banner@unca.edu. An on-line version of *The Banner* is also available at <http://www.unca.edu/banner>

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Letters should be typed, single-spaced, and should not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication should also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA. The deadline for letters is noon on Tuesday. If you have a submission, you can send it to *The Banner*, 208A Carmichael Hall, One University Heights, Asheville-NC 28804.

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