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The Daily Tar Heel

92nd year of editorial freedom.

Herpes kids: starting life as a victim

By FRANK BRUNI

More than the multiplication drills or spelling bees of my elementary school years, I dreaded the elusive challenge of meeting with peer approval. Even at that early age, there existed absurd criteria for popularity: the length of a pant leg, the timbre of a voice, the degree of avidity with which academic tasks were met, the distance a ball could be kicked. Ostracism seemed always imminent, the consequence of one false step.

For Johnny Bigley, a 3-year-old from Pasadena, Md., who only this month entered a classroom for the first time, ostracism is the given. His pants may fit perfectly and his approach to learning appear suitably nonchalant, but it won't make a difference. Johnny's classmates have been warned by their parents: *Do not touch that little boy; do not play with him; do not sit anywhere near him at lunch.* Johnny has herpes.

He is not alone, nor is his situation unique. In an elementary school in Council Bluffs, Iowa, more than half the students boycotted classes to avoid encountering a 3-year-old girl with herpes. Parents of children enrolled in a Sacramento, Calif., elementary school protested the arrival of an infected 4-year-old boy with signs promulgating, "Your Child Needs an Education, Not a Disease." With more than 7 percent of the adult population in the United States carrying the herpes virus and the number of children who contract the disease prenatally or shortly after childbirth rising steadily, incidents like these are bound to become more frequent.

These situations of panic are not only regrettable but avoidable. The fear with which parents — and in some cases, teachers — have greeted the school enrollment of children like Johnny is by no means proportionate to the threat these children pose. Most doctors and public health officials agree that the chance of classmates being infected is slim. Herpes almost always spreads through direct contact with an active lesion or through bodily fluids. In most cases, lesions are active only occasionally and, if properly covered, assert a negligible risk to others. Moreover, more than 80 percent of Americans are exposed at some point to at least one of the five herpes viruses and never show symptoms.

Of course, the parents who have protested the participation of afflicted children in public education have not taken the time to investigate the facts. Perhaps — and it would be nice to believe this — their overblown anger, targeted arbitrarily at the infected children, reflects a deeper-seated frustration with a situation in which the victims are many and the villain elusive. Whereas the innocent include the infected children, for the classmates who admittedly stand some chance of catching the virus and the parents



who cannot help but worry, a guilty party remains inconspicuous.

The parents of an infected child can hardly be blamed. So ubiquitous is the herpes virus, it requires little sexual license to contract it. Moreover, the infected parents' desire to have a child is not unreasonable. They have learned to live with the virus, which in many cases only manifests itself sporadically. They anticipate the day when a cure is found — if not in their lives, then surely in their child's. They do not anticipate a hostile public reception of their child which grossly exaggerates the threat he poses and only makes his life more painful.

While the exasperation of the other children's parents in Pasadena, Council Bluffs and Sacramento is understandable, their failure to take into account the feelings of the infected children — and the deep emotional scars with which immediate ostracism might leave these children — is distressing. Even more unsettling is their readiness to set an example of animosity for their impressionable offspring.

I have heard many parents lament the cruelty children are capable of exhibiting toward one another in group settings. I have heard these same parents say that the most difficult and heart-breaking part of parenting involves consoling the baffled child who comes home from school with a tear-streaked face and a tale of inexplicable ostracism. They assure the child that the teasing to which he has been submitted is not directed at him; it's just the way children sometimes act. They encourage the child to glean a lesson from the situation and never hurt another the way he has been hurt.

That's a crucial lesson, one that will be lost on the children in the aforementioned towns.

Instead of checking the tendency toward cruelty many children exhibit, the parents who unnecessarily warn their children to steer clear of an infected classmate only prove how much easier it is for people to hate than to love, to condemn than to condone.

For now, the conflicts in Pasadena, Council Bluffs and Sacramento have been resolved by the courts of law that continue to prove such necessary safeguards against the pervasive self-interest and eager antipathy of civilized man. Judges have allowed infected children to attend classes on the condition that school nurses inspect them daily for active lesions that might endanger other children. The ruling is fair to all concerned. It does not, however, erase the insult to which children like Johnny Bigley have been subjected. And it does not guarantee that classmates, acting primarily on the grounds of parental instruction, will grow any more compassionate.

I pity Johnny Bigley, because of the hurt he has experienced, because it will be difficult for him to ever hold much regard for the fellow man who, from as far back as Johnny will be able to remember, has recoiled from his touch. I also pity Johnny's classmates and the future society in which they will be adults, perhaps parents, possibly leaders. At a time when they should be learning the lessons of tolerance and acceptance, consideration and compassion, they are practicing prejudice and hatred. If their parents want ready-made villains to tar, feather and run out of town, they need only look in the nearest mirror.

Frank Bruni, a junior English major from La Jolla, Calif., is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

No cause for champagne

In a literal sense, former Israeli Defense Minister Ariel Sharon lost his \$50 million lawsuit against *Time* magazine, but the case has raised disturbing questions about the methods the press uses in gathering and presenting the news.

While finding that *Time* did not libel Sharon, the jury in the case took the unusual step of issuing a statement that the newsmagazine "acted negligently and carelessly" in its reporting of Sharon's alleged role in a 1982 massacre of Palestinian civilians by Lebanese Phalangists.

Using unnamed sources, *Time* reported in February 1983 that Sharon "discussed the need for the Phalangists to take revenge" for the assassination of President-elect Bashir Gamayel of Lebanon.

As it turns out, *Time* was sloppy and perhaps irresponsible in the reporting of the story. Contradicting *Time's* article, no mention of any Sharon discussion about revenge appeared in an appendix of the Israeli government's report on the massacre. During the course of the trial, *Time* correspondent David Halevy admitted that his sources had not explicitly said that the discussion was mentioned in the report, but he said he "inferred" it from the sources' statements. In its Jan. 21, 1985 edition, *Time* retracted its statement that the discussion was mentioned in the report, but the magazine did not back off from its claim that such a discussion took place. *Time* rechecked its original sources about the alleged discussion but used the same correspondent who screwed up the story in the first place.

Amazingly, *Time* managing editor Ray Cave said he never made correspondent Halevy reveal the sources he used for his dispatch. If that isn't mind-boggling enough, the correspondent who seems to have earned so much of *Time's*

unquestioning trust in the Sharon matter was once put on probation for a year for filing an inaccurate report about the health of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. At the very least, *Time's* bungling of the story should make the public skeptical about the anonymous sources reporters insist upon using.

While finding that *Time* has not libeled Sharon, the jury concluded that a paragraph of the story in question was false and that it had defamed Sharon. For a private citizen, such a ruling would be sufficient to win a libel suit. But Sharon, as a public figure, was required to prove that *Time* had published the story with knowledge it was false or had shown reckless disregard for its truth or falsity. The jury ruled that *Time* and its editors believed the story was true.

Despite *Time's* ineptitude in handling the story, we feel that public figures should be required to go the extra step in proving libel. As has been traditionally argued, public figures have greater access to the media to address false statements about them. Also, a free press would be shackled if it had to worry about a libel suit every time it published a controversial story about a public figure.

The greatest worry for the press is not libel law as it exists, but the tremendous cost of libel suits, whether media defendants lose them or not. A \$1 million legal bill may amount to pocket change for *Time* but would close a number of newspapers in the country. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that many fiery weeklies have been neutered and now amount to little more than fluffy entertainment guides.

Time claimed victory after the verdict last week, but it should leave the champagne uncorked. The rest of the press may be paying for that win for years to come.

Get a grip, Ann

There is trouble in paradise — at least according to Ann Landers. Recently, Ann took a sex survey of her women readers, asking if they would be content to be held close and forget about "the act." More than 90,000 women replied, of whom an amazing 72 percent said yes, they would be content to forget "the act."

This has a lot of people up in arms. Several renowned sex experts have denounced the survey, saying that the emphasis on just hugs and kisses could harm relationships and lead people to be boring. Dr. Ruth Westheimer, of *Sexually Speaking* fame, said of the survey: "I think this . . . will get us back into the Victorian age. It's dangerous to say a high percentage of women do not expect sexual activity but only expect caressing." Jim Peterson, who writes the "Playboy Adviser" column, says the poll results give people permission "to be boring, to roll over in bed and go to sleep. Sex is a wonderful pastime. It is not something men foist upon women."

Sorry, Ann, but we agree with Peterson. Although Landers justifies her survey by saying her mail shows "there are a lot of angry, unfulfilled women out there," chances are it's just the angry and unfulfilled who wrote to her. If a

person is happy with a relationship, sexual or otherwise, in all likelihood he or she is not going to write Ann Landers about it.

The survey was very biased. By asking readers to respond to whether they'd be content to "be held close and treated tenderly and forget about 'the act,'" Landers forced people to make a choice between the two. It would have been just as fair to ask, "Would you rather have cold, clinical sex without any hugs and kisses; or hugs, kisses and tenderness without making love?" Many people would choose the latter, regardless of how satisfied they are; what they'd probably prefer, though, is a mix of the two. And by directing her survey only to women, she is giving women the opportunity to express dissatisfaction with their sex lives, but not men. For every woman who feels she doesn't get hugs and kisses during sex, there is most likely some man who feels just as cheated sexually.

Ann Landers has no business conducting such an unscientific survey. Besides not reflecting the real attitudes most women have about sex nowadays, it actually hurts women by reinforcing the Victorian idea that women don't, or can't, enjoy sex.

To the editor:

N.C. Memorial Hospital will soon begin performing heart transplant operations. However, to qualify for such a procedure a patient will have to have proof of health insurance coverage for such surgery or put down a deposit of \$70,000. I disagree with the decision. I think it is wrong for our state supported hospital to be providing

patient services for which only the wealthy are eligible.

There used to be a sign in front of NCMH that read: "Operated by and for the People of North Carolina." I assume that meant all the people. The sign has disappeared which is too bad. One must question whether the commitment has also disappeared.

I suspect that the existence of one

or two "elite" services is only the beginning of a trend in which more such services will be developed. They will draw the best staff and will be seen as requiring the best and nicest facilities.

If patient services are to be offered at NCMH they should be for all, but at a minimum there should be public discussion of whether this hospital should offer

such very expensive procedures and, if so, who among us should decide who shall receive them.

This policy may well produce a two-class system of patient care. Is that really what the people and the physicians of this state want?

Marion S. White
Graduate Student
School of Public Health

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NCMH providing for-the-rich-only services



How 'bout a little trip, Youngblood?

Regarding Karen Youngblood's column, "The Vigilante: Doing society no favors" (Jan. 24):

I cordially invite Youngblood to spend a week with me this summer in New York City. During your stay, Youngblood, you can ride the subways — alone, through all five boroughs, during all times of the day and night, just like Bernhard Goetz does regularly — and meet

"horse-playing teen-age boys" similar to the teen-age boys Goetz met prior to this past Christmas. While you're there, you may also want to apply for a job at *The New York Times* as a staff writer. It seems that your writing style shows a certain magnanimous quality that I often find in the *Times*. For example, in the *Times'* original article on the vigilante shooting, the fact that the teen-age boys were carrying sharpened screwdrivers and had exten-

sive prior criminal records was buried in one of the last paragraphs on a "turn to" page. I'm surprised the reporter chose to include the information at all.

Hopefully, your experience in New York will not be so enlightening that you never get the chance to write your column.

William A. McQuade
Carrboro

'DTH' writes editorial on front page

To the editor:

I respect the journalistic skills apparent in the *DTH*, but the front page story on the Black Student Movement forum ("Candidates spar in BSM forum," Jan. 24) seriously clouded the BSM funding issue. If the purpose of this story was to expound on arguments against providing the BSM with constitutional funding, then it was appropriately written. However, if

its purpose was to give an account of what issues were raised concerning this matter, then it was patently biased.

Arguably it was not intended to be an editorial against BSM funding, but it certainly had that effect due to the extensive account of the opponents' arguments to constitutionally funding the BSM. Granted, one of the proponents was absent from the forum, but inadequate coverage was given to the views of

those proponents present, namely Doug Berger, Fetzner Mills and Ma' Lloyd.

Perhaps the next story will be less biased and will give equal consideration to the views of both opponents and proponents of this referendum.

Allen W. Rogers
President
Black Law Student Association

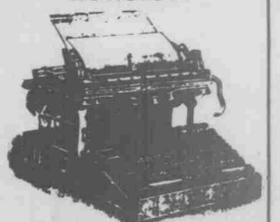
Punks aren't the victims

To the editor:
Bernhard Goetz, our "subway vigilante," is continuing to draw a lot of attention. Most of this attention is misplaced. Many of the arguments are by the bleeding hearts who want no violence or weapons to harass, humiliate or injure peaceable citizens minding their own business. In the Goetz case, the problem boils down to this: Either a person has the right to defend his life and property or he doesn't. The right of self-defense is essential in any civilized society.

New York City policemen have said they can't adequately protect subway riders. Now these same officials are trying to destroy a man who was only doing what the police themselves admitted they couldn't do. The "victims" here aren't the four punks who tried to shake down Goetz; the victims are Goetz and the other citizens of New York who don't know if they will be arrested the next time they protect themselves from criminals.

Rick Henderson
Chairman
Orange County Libertarians

Letters?!



Letters to the editor and editorial columns should be typed on a 60-character line and should be triple-spaced. Deadline for letters and columns is 2 p.m. the working day before publication.

Our own survey

Outraged by Ann Landers' unscientific polling methods and the potentially devastating effects her biased survey could have on American romantic life, our sexual experts have devised an airtight survey designed to accurately reflect the sexual attitudes and practices of UNC students. Responses should be placed in the letters box outside the DTH. Results will be printed next week if they aren't banned.

1. Are you: male female androgynous (circle one)?
2. Class: freshman soph. jr. sr. grad other
3. Is sex better with or without hugs and kisses? How so?

4. Do you prefer: a) hugs and kisses b) the act c) other unspeakable acts d) want to know just what this "act" is?

5. Do you believe Ann Landers is: a) an agent of the Mormon Church b) a disciple of Che Guevara c) one hip old chick d) yesterday's news?

6. Where do you get your sexual information from: a) Ann Landers b) Heloise c) the Kinsey Report d) DTH personals e) Mack "the ax" Snipes?