

Opinions

April 27, 1995

The Blue Banner

The student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville

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Editorial

Banner Falls Into Capable Hands

As the year comes to end, we are all going through changes. Some of us are graduating, and will go through a change of surroundings. We will move, get jobs, and start our own lives.

The Banner will undergo changes as well. Next year, we will start with a new staff, as we do every semester. The editorial board will experience some changes as well. Some of editors will remain with the Banner, some continuing in their present positions, others changing.

Kristi Hamby will stay on as features editor, and Lat Ray will continue in his position of photo editor. Our current news editor, Teri Smith will move into the editor-in-chief's position. New additions to the editorial board will be Andrea Lawson as news editor, Greg Deal as sports editor, and Will Rothschild as managing editor.

The Banner staff can look forward to a productive and successful new year under its new editors. Some changes may be made, but they will all fall into the capable hands of Teri Smith.

Next week, the new editors will try their hand at producing the newspaper. We are confident they will be able editors, and we wish them well.

As for the departing editors, we wish them well, too. Congratulations, Erin, on your new job.

The Blue Banner is the student newspaper of the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

We publish each Thursday except during summer sessions, final exam weeks and holiday breaks. Our offices are located in Carmichael Hall, room 208-A.

Our telephone numbers are (704) 251-6586 and 251-6591. Our campus e-mail address is UNCAVX::BANNER.

Nothing in our editorial or opinions sections necessarily reflects the opinion of the entire Blue Banner editorial board, the faculty advisor, or the university faculty, administration or staff.

Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of a majority of the Blue Banner editorial board.

Letters, columns, cartoons and reviews represent only the opinions of their respective authors.

The Blue Banner welcomes submissions of letters and articles for publication.

All submissions are subject to editing and are considered on the basis of interest, space, taste and timeliness.

Letters must be typed, double spaced, and must not exceed 300 words. Letters for publication must also contain the author's signature, classification, major or other relationship with UNCA.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

David D. Marshall

Columnist

I discovered early in my life that English was going to prove a challenge. My first language, Spanish, seems even now a kinder, gentler, and infinitely simpler language. The philological maxim that exceptions exist for every rule of grammar appears particularly understated when describing the vagaries of a language I consider to be the most difficult in the world. Is it any wonder that the rest of the world, finding it a political and economic necessity to learn this "international" language, harbors nothing but the deepest antagonism towards the country whose influence gives it that status? Is it any wonder that the majority of Americans, ever reeling from the mind-numbing complexities of their native tongue, fearfully defer from learning another language? The simple truth remains, however, that English, as difficult as it is to master, can be fun.

I consider the best comedic routines ever invented to be the ones between me and my English teacher in primary and secondary school. "Who's on first" doesn't even come close. I can't

remember how they went, but our comedic routines had something to do with the words cough, through, though, laughter, and the other 675,431 inconsistencies of English pronunciation rules.

I have a confession to make (this is not easy, my family members read this column). I have a particular (and perhaps prurient) fascination for English medical terms that describe what the body can do: expectoration, defecation, urination, lactation (producing milk), perspiration, lacrimation (producing tears), masturbation, ejaculation, menstruation, exhalation, inhalation, regurgitation, palpitation, eructation (belching), digestion, osculation (kissing), oscitation (yawning), taction (touching), olfaction (smelling), contraction, and copulation, to name a few. These are funny words, but how about the ones that don't end in the -tion suffix: flatulence, sneezing, wheezing, hiccuping, vaginal flatus (you look it up), belching, and the most onomatopoeic of them all, borborygmus, which

means "a rumbling or gurgling sound caused by the movement of gas in the intestines." English became something of a Freudian word game to me, as you can plainly see.

Learning English as a young boy, I remember being astonished and then delighted by the idea of a language without gendered words. Surely such a convention could only make learning the language easier. Later I learned that Americans have a habit of gendering as a form of endearment or diminution. In that context, sailing vessels, cars, bowling balls, helicopters, airplanes, and even whales ("Thar she blows, Captain!") are all considered feminine in the vernacular.

I guess in many respects Spanish, Portuguese, German, and Russian—languages I have picked up here and there (they're all easy after English)—all have their own interesting words; but English words stand out above the rest in terms of richness, variety, and sheer number. Over the years I have collected words that sound good to my ear. Cicatrix (a scar), tintinnabulation (the sound of bells ringing), sesquipedalian (given to using long words, or simply a long word), onomatopoeia, OOPS, nexus, and oneiromancy (divi-

nation through dreams) constitute only a small fraction of my list of pet words—they're simply far too numerous to enumerate.

By far my favorite pet words are those starting with or containing sibilants. Something about that sexy, sensuous, sinful, serpentine, sanguine hissing sound drives me insane. A working translation of the title of this column, "Sparkling hissing sounds without high-browed excesses marked by long words," though itself a phrase containing some superb sibilants, does not evoke the same titillating effect as the title, though both phrases sound equally contrived.

The most interesting sibilated word in my esteemed estimation is "Syzygy," a word containing no vowels and which means "the conjunction or opposition of two heavenly bodies." Imagine you are watching a rerun of "Batman" on TV. Some evil being from the second solar system of the third galaxy from the left of Alpha Centauri somehow stops the moon's rotation and places the moon between the sun and the Earth, thereby creating a static solar eclipse. Further imagine Robin then turning to Batman and spitting out the words "Holy sizzling syzygy, Batman!"

I don't know about you. It sounds pretty good to me.

You Tell Me Which Switch To Pull

Greg Deal

Staff Writer

Please, someone stick a sharp pin in me and wake me up from this horrible dream. Do you mean to tell me that there are people out there who actually believe that wack-ball in Oklahoma ought not to be juiced full of some good ol' electrical energy?

Sorry, but when you have the guts to horrify a nation and send innocent children to the grave, you have the guts to accept your fate. There is nothing, as a father, I could imagine that could ever lead me to even dream of harming a child.

It is time that we sent a strong message to these folks that we, as Americans, will not tolerate this senseless act of violence. If you can not justify the death penalty in this case, then you should refrain from calling yourself human. Humans have hearts.

If you really believe that the death penalty is not the appropriate measure in this case, then

I challenge you to go to Oklahoma and watch the tiny bodies that were meant to be, being exhumed from their coffin of crumbled rock. Watch as the mothers stand petrified as their greatest love is presented to them in a lifeless state. Do you get my point?

As I look at my little girl every morning, I wonder what it would be like if it were her lying at the bottom of all that rubble. If you have a child, it will cross your mind constantly. If you don't, then your argument against the death penalty is lacking. You are arguing about something without the qualifications to argue.

See, on this subject, in order to gain a license to argue, you must be able to understand the effects that a thing like this bombing can have on families. Sorry, no liberal arts education will give you that. In order to qualify, you must be a parent. You certainly can't be a short-sited teenager or a know-it-all college student.

Those who are against the death penalty, for the most part, have never experienced the reality of having a family member be cut down before they have a chance to live. What is the price for a life? A life, I say.

If we pardon anyone from such incredible violence we are sending the message that we, as a nation, care more about criminals than innocent, peaceful people. Here is an idea. Let's bring back public hangings, floggings, or, for that matter, let's draw and quarter a few of these bold criminals.

I don't want to hear any crap from the tree-huggers and the other lame-brainers about how the death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment. I don't want to hear that an eye for an eye is a terrible thing. In my opinion, the death penalty is the least we can do for these people.

What we should be doing is integrating some Vietnamese torture techniques into our criminal system. Hey, maybe we could even do that thing with the bamboo shoots and the fingernails. Whatever we do, it needs to be swift and proper.

I'm not turning the other cheek on this one. I'm a Christian who

has proven that he is not perfect. I've lost my ability to be level-headed about this one. If we don't nail these perpetrators to the wall this time, we are opening ourselves up for more senseless violence.

Here it is. The death penalty is not punishment, it's a deterrent. If it were a punishment, we would juice these fellas up, bring 'em back from the dead, ask 'em how it felt, and then do it again, and again, and again. Since we can't do that, we must settle for setting examples.

Why is the crime rate in many foreign countries is so low? Because why would someone commit a crime if they knew their country would have no mercy on them? Here, those heartless folks who denounce the death penalty provide harbor for the enemy. Hey, aren't they actually aiding and abetting these criminals?

Learn these two words: empathy and sympathy, and then come talk to me about what you really feel about the death penalty for those like the Oklahoma bombers.

Forgiveness is what we strive for, but the reality of being human says let's sharpen the blade on the guillotine.