THE DAILY TEXAN

LIFESTYLES

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Section B

Cindy La Ferle

Life Lines

Celebrating our right to gripe in print

"First, notice how the same people always seem to be between the ruler?" a friend pri'ded me recently. Why do these people write letters? Or is it just that their letters don't get published?"

Good question.

Since today is Independence Day, it's an good a time as any to consider our right to express opinions.

Throughout America's formative years, pundits from Samuel Adams to Mark Twain harnessed their gripes or outraged by opening newspapers. Literary dissenters have always found protest is extremely effective — set by less vs. short — when it's expressed in parts or slogans or five-option quiz.

There must be letters to the editor, and I welcome people write them. Whether or not I agree with the sentiments expressed, I enjoy passion about issues evidencing government. Nothing bugs me more than to be bored.

I get the most mail after Valentine's Day and Halloween, but several letters a day arrive in between.

I appreciate the effort put into Valentine's-themed letters, but worst of all, I appreciate the message. It takes the crazy writer to sign love letters "Satan's Sweetheart" and not even have the decency to sign it "Love, Satan."

The right to write

Signed letters are risky, considering it's human nature to worry that our opinions will be judged awful. Most write anonymous. What's the worry? Words of wisdom behind the veil of anonymity and many words long wouldn't. But the fear of putting thoughts on paper isn't going to prevent it anyway.

Author Anne Cameron believes, "Too many people are intimidated by the written word instead — and she puts the blame on overly refined professional writers with dusty red pencils. She also points a finger at the editor/display that supposedly protects us from poor writing. It's all bullshit, Cameron says, telling should come naturally as speaking. Cameron insists that writing is everyone's birthright. Instead the fear of her own words. "The Fight to Write" (Twelve Oaks 1995).

"Believe we all come into this in writers," she says. "We weren't born with gift for language and its uses. We're born with the ability to express ourselves in our world. Words give us power."

Back in 1776, lawyer-turned-author, thinker but to write down his thoughts about rights he strove to protect around the new world. Writing was his delight and tireless he encouraged others to do so, even when he was unable to accomplish them as lively verse or tales. Today, for many people, it's a huge effort to compose a handy reminder to Grandma, a note to a neighbor, a guest column for the local newspaper.

The pen is mightier

Worth your response?

If a disagreeable reflection that a few carefully-worded documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, remain the cornerstones of our nation's government — a great testament to the belief by a group of people of passion with the courage to voice their concerns and spur their servants to them.

Of all the privileges there, the right to express opinions is the most valuable. As another columnist told me, "With my opinions solidly on a freedom I never can take for granted. I know how lucky I am."

Like me, John Cameron takes pen in hand when what it would be likely to use his mouth to get a situation, where writing and expressing opinions is dangerous or forbidden.

"In prisons, people can't freely express their opinions, even their feelings," she writes. "Outside of prisons, messages are slowed and distilled to mean what corporations decide to pass on to their employees."

Cameron's words remind me how grateful I am to live in a country where I can express myself freely — even if it means I'm occasionally misunderstood.

Especially spelling, clarity is the editor's job.

Cindy La Ferle welcomes e-mail through her Web site at www.cindylaferle.com.

Emu, native to Australia, are raised for their meat as well as for the feeding and rejuvenating properties of the oil derived from their fat.

Big birds are hatching a big business

Staff Photo (Anthony Mair Silver)

By Shirley A. McAllister

Staff Reporter

I'd've happen to turn your eyeball the size of Bernstein Drive in west Brandon Town Square not to be right, not just the house on the corner? Bet that you might catch a glimpse of Noah's Ark.

If you do, you'll probably have friends again.

That's because you've probably caught sight of Double E's Ranch — upside-down, long-necked curious creatures with perky tufts sprouting from their heads.

The big birds — known as emu — are a study in contradictions. They are graceful ballerinas prancing in front of their audience, yet they're known for their awkward gait.

Emu are curious creatures, always offering their cuddle necks through fence openings. Being their unthinking tenders can be a source of torment. They are kleptos when spooked, darting like parasites around and through pens, picking up dropped dirt.

Native to Australia but raised in the United States for most of the country's ensuing flightless birds raised for their meat, feathers, skin and the oil derived from their amble fat stores. Emu oil is used in commercial products and is thought to provide necessary parts of the real life to healing and rejuvenating properties.

On rural Hubbard County, where wanted lots, rolling hills and home and business are the rule, the thought of raised bird for profitable demand is pennies still altered farmer.

Interest in emu ranching as well as the food and products derived from the prehistoric bird is growing, said Jerred Kelley, owner of Double E Ranch. And if she and other emu ranchers have their way, the big birds won't be on it again for long.

Kelley raises and sells most of her emu for their meat. He also sells the feet (doesn't matter how fierce) for use as bases for stools and as hand lotion, soaps and perfume. The collected oil is used in the latter-flesh conditioner, eyes and hollows them into ornaments, jewelry boxes and knickknacks. One small Double E emu sells for $100 at Royal Oak Farmers Market.

Most people don't know what emu are, where they're from or their useful properties. Least of all do their confectionary quality and personality that belie its use be.

Kelley's trying to change that. For a small fee she hosts visitors groups and love to set spread in the country. She's more than happy to tell you

Double E owner Renee Mickey handles a recently hatched emu.

with chapters as fat-save Market.

"A lot of children don't meet some farmer's moment," she said. "This is our way to show them how 'products' are brought up. Love is evident in the way the parks hops use text as animals."

Mickey and husband Gene Mickey have been raising emu for almost five years. They started with 18 birds and have had as many as 200 at one time. The averaging 150 birds and paradoxes on

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Emu facts

- The emu is one of the world's largest birds, second in size only to the ostrich. An adult typically stands 5 feet tall and weighs 120 pounds.
- Emu can run as fast as 30 mph.
- In ancient species, emu are believed to be as much as 40 million years old.
- Emu have been a staple for Australian aborigines for thousands of years.
- Emu hens lay fat pad-colored bark, usually between November and August in the wetter States take care of the eggs. Emu are on their own, able to gather their own food upon hatching.
- Aborigines discovered the healing properties of oil derived from emu fat. Commercial uses for the oil include healing skin diseases such as psoriasis, reducing swelling and relieving eczema, dermatitis and other rashes and soothing proper scars and wrinkles. It also serves as a skin moisturizer and hair revitalizer. Although research into the medicinal properties of emu oil is in its infancy in the United States, the Australian Department of Health has classified emu oil as a prior narcotics, primarily oil that is

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Multiple sarcasms

Popular culture suggests we're crowding on a soapbox for the snide

By Joanne Weintraub

Education Editor

As my husband, Universal audiences are further forward in real days, for anybody noticed that sarcasm has become so omnipresent as to be nearly invisible at times, the subject has become merely of the month but of the age?

Well, duh.

The surprise hit of the bestseller lists this year has been a couple usually little known called "Bad Dads Century," by that cadre of smart alecks at The Onion.

April's Publisher Pick for contemporary want to Watches Jared, the New York Times editorial writer, "is the only one way Bill Clinton is for you not raspberry vinaigrette."

Some of The Best modern fiction by television writers, from Tom Wolfe's novel "A Man in Full" to Larry Moore's short story "People Like That Are the Only People Here" have had the texture of intensely filtered, less brown a sibling of poultry wisecracks.

The 1980s is a window for the smile. Television as arena for put-down artists who have one another

There's a kind of taking stock. Everybody is riffing through their emotional and intellectual closets, and a lot of what we find in there we don't like. It's been a frightening century, and one response to it is irony and sarcasm. I think it's healthy.

Madeleine Smithberg
television executive producer

with shtick. The comedy commercial of late-night TV has inspired us to be of instantaneously talk. It's no surprise to their quality (RIGHT). If not to their talent.

But you don't have to go about of Dick to say "Bob sits to catch the wave. Listen to the way kids babble: the age of three to pronounce and become innocent phrases as "You suck" and "Oh, right."

Not to mention the indispensable "Dilbert," accused in a new that could wither what's left of the two brain.

Shakespeare and Jane do for it? It's a tricky question only scholars pull about a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife"). could certainly been a satiric remark. In this century's Mark Twain, George Bernard Shaw, Dorothy Parker, S.J. Perelman and Groucho Marx were master sarcasts, which should be a word but isn't.

It's hard to avoid the feeling, though, that something special a word given its own special twist by Dana Carvey's recurring Church Lady — looking at Rose Bowl.

Whether that temptation to think around the world" is in a millennial thing, or just "Heavenly relief."

"I think it does have something to do with the end of the century and the millennium," says Madeleine Smithberg, executive producer and writer-director of comedy/comedy series, "Saturday, "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart" (media "The Most Important Television Program Ever").

"There's a kind of taking stock. Everybody is riffing through their emotional and intellectual closets, and a lot of what we find in there we don't like. It's been a frightening century, and one response to it is irony and sarcasm. I think it's healthy."

Sandra Tsing Loh, a writer and Mr. Good Public Radio commentator whose book of essays about Los Angeles is called "Depth Takes a Holiday," says the relentless indictment of media images of people who are younger, smarter, prettier, happier and richer than those viewing themselves every one of the 24 minutes.

"And outsiders have always been sarcastic," she says. "You've always got kids in third Gay existential crisis dancing and you think, 'Great, they're having fun, what am I doing?'"

Loh, 37, a lifelong Southern California native, is one of the premier chroniclers of the hot-but-lonely Valley girl and Malibu, in which The difference "As if," spoken with the right intonation (MS, MS ER).

But Loh notes that her husband, who's from South Dakota, is as good with a smart attitude as anyone she knows. And a recent speaking tour to Indianapolis introduced her to 1930 controversy whose barbaric self-awareness reminded her of the Hillsboro of "Roseanne."

"I think sarcasm has become universal," Loh says. "New York and L.A. don't have a corner on it."

The Onion's John Krewson agrees. Krewson, 31, is one for the satirical Madison, Wis., weekly paper (motto: "Nothing Whose Bill for Reason Be Cast Upon Our Cage"), grew up in Dayton, Wis., as it was transforming itself from a self-sufficient small town to a suburb of town by Madison. Suburbia's cliffs malls and houses, he observes, are traditional breeding grounds for alienation, which in turn breeds sarcasm.

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