

OPINION

Have you ever wondered why men are pigs?

During the last few days an important question has been raised – a question that hits close to home for many people – a question with no seemingly logical answer ...



FRANK STANFORD
COLUMNIST

“Why, why, oh why would young, wealthy, handsome movie star Hugh Grant screw up his eight-year relationship with cover girl Elizabeth Hurley by soliciting a prostitute?”

If you are a man, your answer will almost assuredly be, “Shoot, I don’t know, he could have any woman he wanted, and with a girlfriend like Hurley why would he stray?”

If you are a woman, your answer is likely, “Men are just pigs.” Which, I’m told, can be a blanket response for almost any of the world’s ills.

Actually, whether you’re familiar with Hugh Grant, Elizabeth Hurley or hookers isn’t even important. Aside from a few glamorous characteristics, he’s just a guy, she’s just a girl, and a hooker is merely an extremely arbitrary “other woman.”

Maybe Grant was bored. Maybe he was uncomfortably “tense” at the moment and mistakenly looked to an illegal prostitute to “relax” him. Neither us, nor Grant may ever be able to uncover all the reasons. But we know one thing for sure; he

had a powerful urge.

An urge powerful enough to cause even an intelligent, law-abiding man to forsake the trust and feelings of a woman he loves, risk a successful career, personal reputation, arrest and even disease.

Unfortunately, this scenario of romantic betrayal sadly transcends time, all socioeconomic levels and every culture. In fact, it’s safe to say that “cheating” whether it is with a prostitute or not, is a permanent part of the human condition.

Now, before everyone gets their panties in a wad, this is not to say that infidelity should be socially acceptable. All cultures and all individuals have “rules” and even laws for love and/or marriage. In our culture, engaging in behavior that would hurt a loved one’s feelings of trust and self-worth is clearly against the rules of love.

However, it is also important to understand that while Hugh Grant’s behavior was against the rules of love and the current prostitution laws of California, he was not breaking the laws of nature. Man may embrace monogamy.

He may socially condemn and punish infractions of monogamy.

He may even preach the practice of monogamy. But regardless of whatever personal or moral

convictions a person may have, there is no denying the fact that man is not a monogamous animal.

The same instinctual laws that govern birds and baboons, warthogs and walruses, promote man – as a whole – to go against his arbitrary will and spread his seed.

This law of nature overwhelmingly has maintained its integration with human cultures. It is the same law of nature that allows for what is called “natural selection,” one of the tenets of evolution.

By having the innate urge to mate with as many females as possible, males strive to dominate the gene pool. In animal societies, only the most powerful males will mate with a number of females. Strong males overpower weaker ones, and females are most attracted to powerful males.

In the recently published book “The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life,” Robert Wright says that of the 1,154 past and present societies of humans that have been subjects of anthropological studies, almost 1,000 allow polygamy. In most of these cases, the higher a man’s social status the more wives or sexual partners he will have.

Most “civilized” societies legally regulate the practice of single spouse marriages. However, the inclination for males to have more than one wife or partner, and for women to desire a powerful, providing man prevails nonetheless.

Wright notes that this tendency is quite evident in the higher divorce and infidelity rates of wealthy and powerful men. From an anthropological point of view, divorce and remarriage is just a legal way to have multiple wives.

This evolutionary trend is equally evident in studies showing the tendency of women to “marry up” from their current social statuses.

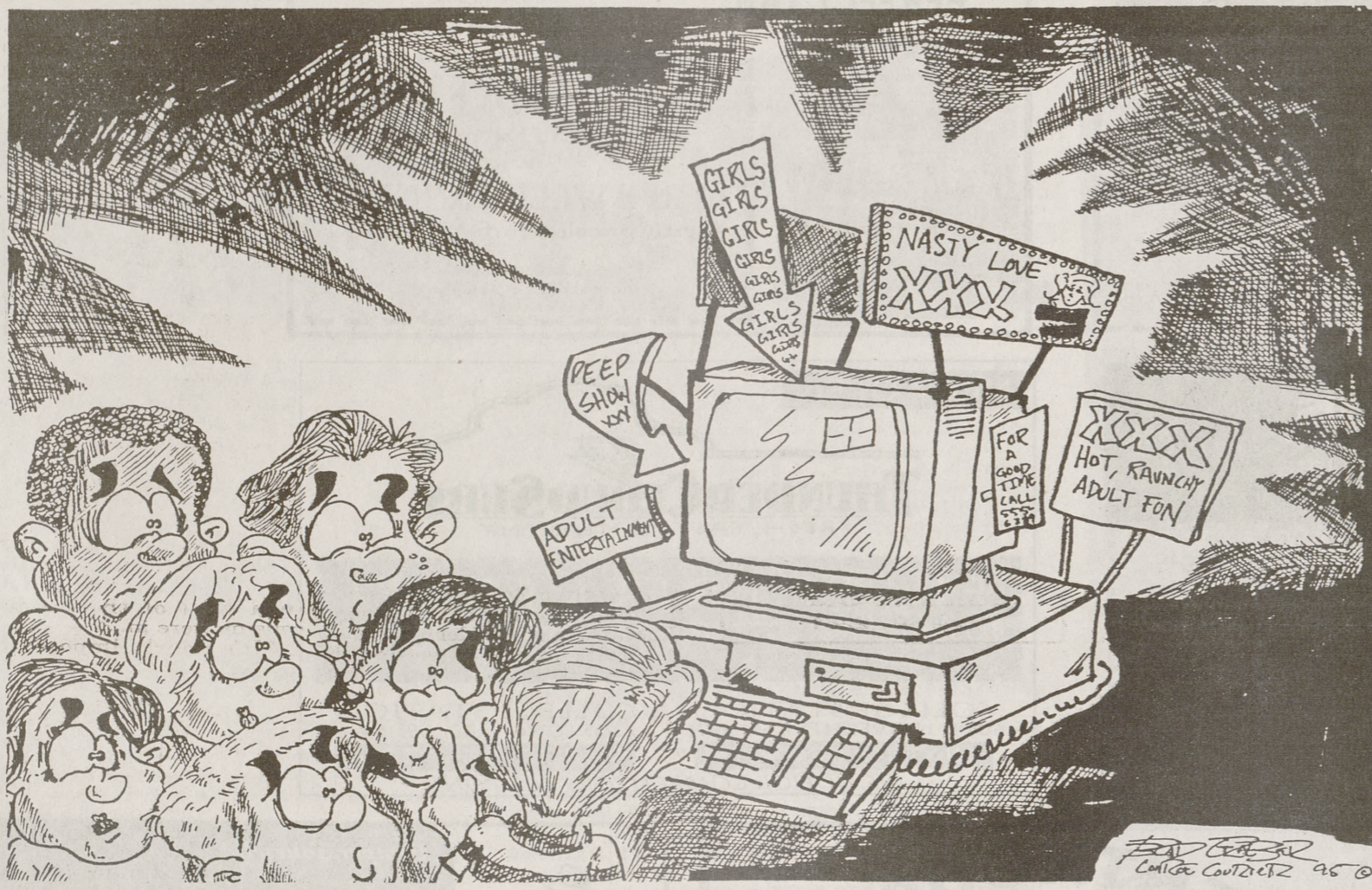
So, what we may call “cheating” or the “men are pigs” syndrome is really just a natural drive. It will always happen.

Of course, all of this evolutionary social science won’t make Elizabeth Hurley, or any other victim of infidelity, feel any better. Even if the laws of nature count as some form of biological “excuse,” the rules of love and the laws of the land won’t accept it, nor should they.

Although we share similar genetic drives and the basic physical structure of many animals, humans have an important difference. You and I are distinguished from other animals in that we have thoughts, emotions and the ability to convey them. Because of that distinction, we can make covenants.

We can break covenants. And we can be sorry. I’d like to see some warthog or walrus pull that off.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy student



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EDITORIAL

BRANCHING OUT

The United States steps forward by extending recognition to Vietnam.

After more than 20 years, U.S. ties with Vietnam are being normalized.

Despite much criticism from some members of Congress and families of POWs, the United States yesterday extended diplomatic recognition to the country for the first time since the Vietnam War.

The move is overdue.

Until February 1994, the U.S. had a trade embargo against Vietnam. After President Clinton lifted the embargo last year, American corporations have poured \$520 million into the country. Now, the United States has the eighth largest share of the Vietnam investment market.

Although Vietnam still is ruled by only one party and enjoys few democratic practices, the development of the country’s economy toward capitalism has created great opportunities for the United States.

The move has not only economic significance, but also symbolic meaning.

The main reason that the United States has refused to recognize the 20-year-old government of Vietnam up to this point is the fact that more than 2,000 American soldiers still are listed as missing in action in Southeast Asia.

However, since the trade embargo was lifted, Vietnam

has been much more helpful in discovering the fates of these men. Sen. John McCain, who spent six years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, said, “The cooperation they have shown in the MIA-POW issue has been significant.”

Many opponents of the move claim that the president, who avoided military service during the Vietnam War, should not have the right to renew relations with the country. Others claim that Vietnam has not done enough to provide accounts for the Americans still listed as missing in Vietnam.

The United States cannot operate in the world by ignoring governments it doesn’t like. The establishment of formal relations will aid both in locating remains of MIAs and in the development of economic opportunity in Vietnam.

Most importantly, the United States will be moving beyond American society’s attempt to deal with the past tragedy of Vietnam by ignoring it in the present.

Recognizing the Vietnamese government makes no judgment or acceptance of communism and does not reject the sacrifices so many Americans made in that conflict.

Recognizing Vietnam does take America a closer to putting the past to rest.

Ending one’s own life should be legalized

Last week, George Delury was



MARGARET GORDON
COLUMNIST

charged with second degree manslaughter for the death of his wife Myrna Lebov. Though this is not uncommon in a

large city like New York, where the couple lived, this event was unusual because she asked her husband to help her end her life.

Lebov had suffered from Multiple Sclerosis since 1973, and the couple often talked about how to end her suffering.

In an Internet article at the Euthanasia Research and Guidance Organization, ERGO, web site, Delury was quoted as saying, “The last six years had been hell for her. She felt the disease was affecting both her body and her brain.”

Lebov decided it was time for her to die and “made a very clear request to me,” Delury said. Lebov wrote a note indicating she was voluntarily ingesting the drugs her husband prepared.

Delury mixed an overdose of an antidepressant that Lebov had been taking on prescription with honey and water and helped her to drink it since her hands were deformed from her disease.

After his wife died, Delury

called the police.

He was then taken into custody, and may now serve up to 15 years in prison if convicted.

People rejoice in their rights to free speech, to have abortions.

But what about the right to die? Should people have the legal right to choose when and how to end their lives?

If recent bills in state legislatures across the country are any indication of common opinion, the idea of a person’s right to die is becoming more accepted.

In Maine, a physician-assisted suicide bill was introduced in early June.

Though the bill was defeated in a 2-1 vote, this was the first bill of this type to reach the floor of a state legislature. Similar bills were introduced in 14 other states this year, but never passed the first committees.

Because of advances in medicine and science, people are living longer than ever before. Many diseases have no cures but the goal of medicine to stretch life out as long as possible remains, no matter how artificial the means.

The struggle to lengthen life often overshadows the impor-

tantance of the quality of life. Living another day does not always bring joy to those who only face another day of pain.

Euthanasia literally means a good death. There are two basic definitions of how a person’s life ends under the concept of euthanasia.

Passive euthanasia authorizes the right of a family to authorize removing a patient from life-support systems in the event of vegetative or comatose states so that natural death is allowed to occur. This is legal in most states now, including Texas.

The term active euthanasia covers a broad spectrum of situations, but simply translates as the active taking of life to prevent suffering.

ERGO and other organizations are working toward legalizing one type of active euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide.

That is where problems begin. Most religions oppose suicide and consider assisted suicide synonymous with murder.

The Pope recently reinforced the Catholic Church’s stance that life is a gift and that death should be determined only by God.

The state of Texas has a problem with suicide, as do many other states.

It is a misdemeanor in Texas to assist a suicide at-

tempt and becomes a felony if the suicide results in death or serious injury.

Some believe that the legalization of physician-assisted suicide will result in the elderly “sacrificing” themselves to prevent financial distress on their families.

Some fear that patients will be coerced into requesting death, or won’t be competent enough to make such a decision. With careful regulation, these situations could be avoided.

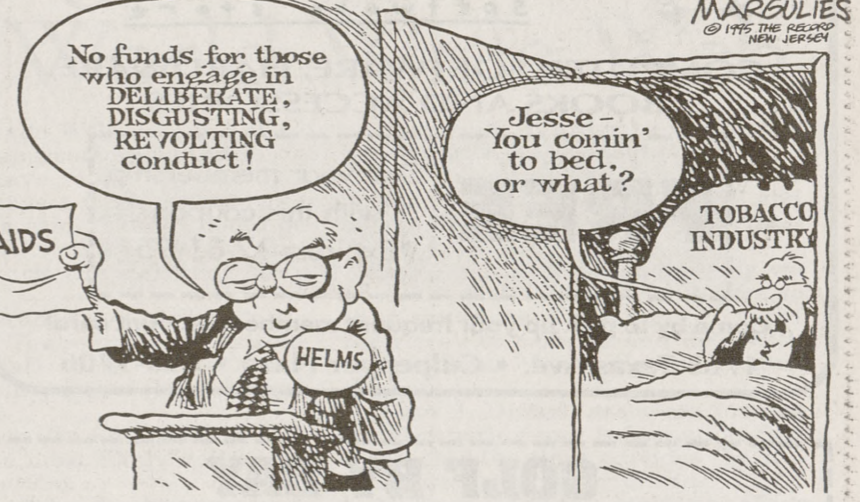
Physician-assisted suicide should be legal. Mentally competent adults suffering from incurable, terminal or unbearable diseases should be able to decide if the quality of their lives justifies further existence.

When a person courageously has fought a disease but is worn from the battle of everyday survival, they should have the right to choose a peaceful, easy death.

And if they are unable to bring death upon themselves, a physician should be allowed to help them without fear of legal ramifications.

In the days where a natural death often means wasting away in a hospital bed hooked to a machine, euthanasia provides a comfortable alternative to those who are suffering.

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