Wyoming is responsible for Shepard's death

On the network news I keep hearing Laramie residents say they hope the whole world doesn't think all of them are bigots.

Whether they are bigots or not, the people in Wyoming share responsibility for the atmosphere here of hate toward homosexuals in this country that led to the death of Matthew Shepard. It is the people of Wyoming who, over and over again, send gay-bashing Republicans back to the State House and Congress.

Those of you who ignore the homophobia openly expressed by your elected representatives are as much accessories to Matthew's murder as the killers' girlfriends. It is time for voters in Wyoming and everywhere to let their elected representatives know that if they don't support hate crime legislation, including protection for gays, they will have future hate crime victims' blood on their hands, just like Matthew's blood is on the hands of the religious right, and homophobic Republicans, now.

JIM SPENCER

Austin, Texas

State needs to reconsider its stance on hate crimes

I hope the state of Wyoming's residents recoil and reconsider their stance about a hate crimes law.

Mr. Shepard died an unnecessarily cruel death in an atmosphere of laissez-faire. One of the killer's father states this wouldn't have made national news if Shepard wasn't gay. As if any treatment of any human being would be OK.

This death should and cannot go by quietly.

BRIAN KAPLAN, PH.D.

New York, New York

We need help from above

How sad it is that there is so little tolerance to differences in our society at a time when we are becoming so sophisticated in many other ways.

My heart goes out to Matthew Shepard and his family, for the pain they are suffering now, and have suffered before and will suffer in the future for no other reason than Matthew was different from some others in our society. He seemed to be a fine young man, peaceful, law-abiding, a respectable member of society who would have otherwise made a positive contribution with his life had he been allowed to do so.

These men who so mercilessly beat him and left him to die will no doubt be more accepted by our strange society than he ever will. To be hated for whom you love is something I have never understood . . . particularly when this hate comes from so many religious groups who take their beliefs from the biblical teachings of "loving one another."

God bless you, Matthew Shepard . . . and God help us for fostering the hate that has led to his suffering.

RUTH A. SIMONSON

Bakersfield, Calif.

Appropriate action needs to be taken

When I was in high school band class, I was pushed down a flight of stairs and savagely attacked by a classmate. My fellow classmates failed to come to my aid. Several later lied that I had started the altercation. The teacher ushered me to the administrative offices where I was suspended for fighting in class.
I protested that I hadn't even made a fist, let alone thrown a punch to defend myself.

My attacker, who wasn't suspended, whispered to me "no queer's gonna sit next to my sister."

I was attacked because it was perceived that I was gay. At the time I wasn't completely aware that I am gay. The emotional scar left by this attack is as painful today as it was when it was inflicted 25 years ago.

This morning I cried when I learned Matthew Shepard had been beaten to death and left tied to a fence to die.

Matthew, my prayers are with you.

As for your attackers, they've ruined their lives. It's painfully obvious to me their actions were premeditated, and I hope the criminal justice system will find a way to appropriately punish and possibly teach them they need not hate another person just because he or she is different. I wish their parents had learned that lesson so they could have taught it to their children.

JEF NORTON $ T
Burbank, Calif.

WT-E coverage has been exemplary

The Wyoming Tribune-Eagle's coverage of the Matthew Shepard story has been exemplary.

Just the facts and only the facts. It's a shame the facts in this case are so ugly. But facts are real. The life of Matthew Shepard was cut short because he forthrightly chose to express his constitutionally guaranteed freedom and independence. The boys who beat him into a pulp are no more part of the spirit of the West or this nation than plain stupid killers on a spree, or are they?

This part of the world has had its share of killers, but it has also had its share of good people whose aim in life is fairness and justice for everyone, no matter how misguided their actions.

The boys who attacked Matthew Shepard have no more right to be anywhere than a pack of rabid dogs. I say kill the $#@&**%^$ and the parents who raised them.

I wish Barry Goldwater were alive to see this mess; he'd set it right, pious old curmudgeon of free will that he was.

Until we have equal justice under law, then none of us is safe from the kind of paleopuritan hatred that made this ghastly crime possible. I pray the citizenry of Wyoming all feel safe in their beds tonight, knowing their negligence in failing to pass a hate crimes bill has made them accessories to murder.

If the boys who tortured Matthew Shepard can even read this, and if their parents can even understand, I pray to your hateful God that the vengeance against homosexuals you so crave falls back upon you hard. Only our conscience can be our guide.

Evidently, the good people of Wyoming have no conscience, social, spiritual, or otherwise, or they would never have allowed this crime to happen. Shame on you, Wyoming.

R. HOSKINS
Salt Lake City

Shepard murder is a cut and dried case

I wanted to write regarding Mr. McKinney's statement that he thinks this story has been blown out of proportion only due to the fact the man that was killed was gay and that his son is guilty before even going to trial.

Of course his son is guilty! A trial is just a formality in my opinion when you have a cut and dried case of murder here. He needs to face reality and see that his son has no morals. Has he stopped to think how Matthew Shepard was killed? How can a killing like this NOT make national news? A man beaten with a .357 magnum about the head and tied to a fence post for all to see? That is sick, disgusting and deranged!

What is wrong with people today that they can't take a little humiliation or teasing without thinking they can go out and KILL that person? Look at the Jenny Jones case a few years ago. Give me a break people! Get control of yourselves and get counseling!

LISA DUNTLEY
Anchorage, Alaska

Cheyenne is the next Stalingrad
Mr. Coppinger’s Oct. 6 piece really hit the nail on the head, but I’m going to take it even further by saying, as nice as I can, that Cheyenne is becoming like the Stalingrad of 20 years ago.

One can’t even express a non-conformist opinion in this city without being called every name in the book or being targeted for exile. The latest example . . .

On the Oct. 6 edition of SportsLine Live, KFBC owner Dave Montgomery called for me to be banished from Wyoming because I have never attended a UW home football game.

That tidbit came up while I was making some constructive suggestions on how UW could increase its home attendance by having state corporations sponsor some big time programs coming to Laramie to draw more fan interest, including mine. Just because I am not a huge UW fan doesn't mean I can't express my opinions on UW sports-related issues.

Mr. Montgomery uses his position as a media mogul to attack a disenfranchised soul like me, even going as far as apologizing on behalf of this city for expressing myself constructively on SportsLine Live.

His little riot act reminds me of what hard line Soviet democracy was; that is, forcing its people to vote for the party candidates and then claiming there was a high voter turnout of 98 percent.

Mr. Montgomery, if you want me out of Cheyenne so bad, then put your money where your mouth is; then my cat and I will take it as a sign from the heavens to leave this place, which is so intolerant of different points of view and different kinds of people, period. Just like John McConnaughey’s 9/29 letter alluded to.

The majority of Cheyenne's political, social, and religious leaders only want cookie cutter molds of themselves to be here.

Just be a little merciful by not banishing me to the modern-day Casper.

ROY A. BARNES
Cheyenne

All teens are not a bunch of drunks

I am writing you concerning the Oct. 6 article called "Drinking, Driving Make for Disaster." In the article you only stated the percentages of teens that drink and drive. The article never stated the number of teens that don't. The article makes it look like all we do is just drink, and it gives us a bad name.

There were also no percentages that tell how many adults drink and drive. I feel there are more adults that drink and drive than there are teens who do. People above or at the age of 21 can drink legally, but they still cannot drive drunk, but they do. For anybody to drink and drive is against the law no matter who you are or how old you are.

I think you should consider printing articles that show how many kids under 21 don't drink and drive instead of making us look like a bunch of drunks.

TY BOWMAN
Cheyenne

Emphasis was placed on the wrong side

I am writing in response to your article in the Oct. 6 newspaper entitled “Drinking, Driving Make for Disaster.”

I think the emphasis is placed on the wrong side of the issue. Instead of informing the public about the few bad kids in our state, why don’t you commend the good kids? There are far more kids doing the right things than not. It seems the media focuses on the bad points in life all the time. No wonder adults stereotype teenagers as wild and uncontrollable; that's the only thing they ever read about.

JESSE FLAGEOLLE
Cheyenne

Most teens don't drink and drive

I am writing this letter regarding your article on "Drinking, Driving Make for Disaster" (Oct. 6). I feel your article made good points on teens driving drunk. I also feel you are making it a stereotype by saying all teens drink and drive.
You neglected to mention the majority of teens do not drink. In your article you mention nothing of those statistics, but have made a point to print the statistics of those drinking. If you were to print them both together, I'm sure you would find teenagers do not drink and "kill" as many as you have put it. My point being, you say nothing to defend those who do not drink at all. The people who will and have read this article are only getting half the story. In all regards you should at least print a story on how you, as the editor, should bring more light on the issues (not all negative) regarding teens.

JAIMIE BONITATIBUS
Cheyenne

Stereotyping teens is the wrong approach

I do not believe the article written about drinking and driving. You have stereotyped us kids under 21 as drinking, driving killers.

You said that 14.7 percent of fatal crashes from drinking are by kids under 21. That means that 85.3 percent of fatal crashes from drinking are by adults 21 and above. Now I am more afraid of getting hit by a drunk adult than a kid.

You also said nothing positive about the kids that do not drink and drive. I bet if you were to find out the percentage of kids that do not drink and drive, it would be a whole lot larger than the ones that do. I feel you owe us an article about kids that do not drink and drive.

MATT CHESNA
Cheyenne

WT-E is neglecting the over 21 crowd

I'm writing you about your Oct. 6 article, "Drinking, Driving Make for Disaster." I cannot understand why you insist on cutting down the 14.7 percent young adults that have been in fatal drinking and driving crashes. The truth is that most of your drinking and driving comes from people over 21. Why can't you concentrate on the people over 21 that have caused most of the fatal crashes in 1997?

Instead, you need to look at the number of people 14-20 who do not drink and drive and have an article about them, because at the moment we are the bad guys. Your article makes it seem like we are the people (14-20) that cause most of the fatal drinking and driving.

MATT PUCKET
Cheyenne

Blaming teens is not the answer

I am writing regarding your Oct. 6 article, "Drinking, Driving Make for Disaster." I think a more appropriate title would have been, "How to Blame Teenagers for all Major Problems in Wyoming."

You failed to mention several key points in your article that I would like to bring to your attention. You stated in your article that in 1997 18.3 percent of car accidents were caused by drivers under the age of 21. What you failed to tell your readers was that an incredible 81.7 percent of car accidents were caused by drivers over the age of 21. This is something I think your readers have the right to know.

Another fact you brought up was that 14.7 percent of car accidents caused by people under the age of 21 end fatally. What about the 85.3 percent of people over the age of 21 that are driving under the influence, killing innocent people?

Killing is killing. The innocent person(s) killed aren't going to be looking at your age.

If you are going to bring forward statistics on teenage driving under the influence, you should be prepared to face the statistics on drunk driving by those over the age of 21.

JENNY AUZQUI
Cheyenne

How much are voters willing to spend?

Have you taken notice of all the taxes Laramie County voters have and will be asked to pass?


May 1996 - $35,000,000, capital facilities tax.

Nov. 1998 - $36,000,000, 5th penny tax.

Nov. 1998 - $8,419,354, Laramie County Community College. (This is a 5-mill levy which is in addition to 5 mills already on your property taxes.)

There is a strong indication there will be another election in May 1999 for a capital facilities tax and the Sherrard Water Treatment Plant. The capital facilities tax could feasibly be around $30-$31 million. The Sherrard Plant could be either $14 million or $28 million.

If all the requested future taxes were approved by voters the 77,000 residents of Laramie County could be looking at $88.4 million to $103.4 million in taxes over a four-year period.

Take a real hard look at this tax burden Laramie County residents are being asked to assume. Can we afford to vote "Yes" on all these taxes?

You are also already paying many other taxes such as the 5-cent per gallon gasoline tax and property taxes.

I remember the words of a lady who called in to one of our local radio talk programs. She compared Laramie County’s dependence on the 5th penny tax to people on welfare -- once you get on it, you never want to get off.

Our vote -- which is our voice -- could tell our elected officials to tighten their belts and stop the gimme, gimme, gimme.

CAROLYN J. FISHER
Cheyenne