

Editorial

Penthouse rush degrading to women

"No new Penthouse till next week."

That red-letter announcement was put up at the Nebraska Union Bookstore this week after bookstore cashiers were asked by about eight people if they could buy the Penthouse with the de-frocked and de-crowned Miss America Vanessa Williams.

Besides the demand at the university, the president of the Lincoln News Agency, Ken Pocras, said he had received 15 to 20 calls Monday asking about the magazines.

Lincoln will have to drool and lick its chops in anticipation a little while longer. Lincoln won't get the new Penthouse until Tuesday.

But Omaha is another story. According to the Lincoln Star, one Omaha newsstand sold 197 of 200 new Penthouses on Monday alone. And 60 percent of the magazines bought all over Omaha were bought by guess who. Men? No. Women.

It seems that women would have more sense than that. It's hard enough to choke down the Miss America pageant itself, with its slim, firm, flesh-flashing contestants who talk about world peace and harmony between all people.

But for women to rush to the stands to buy a magazine that does nothing but degrade women is amazing. No, embarrassing. By buying magazines that show women as nothing but sex-starved, passive objects who like to run naked through the dew and eat red popsicles (a fictional example), women support the image that others have been fighting for so long.

Both beauty pageants and magazines like Penthouse do nothing but display women as objects. Both show the women as less than intelligent. How much skill does a red-popsicle-eating hobby take? How much intelligence does it take to say you want harmony between all people without saying how that can be accomplished?

Harmony between all people won't be accomplished by treating half the population like mere objects to ogle and drool over. Harmony between people will be accomplished when everyone wakes up and rejects the kind of degradation and inequality women face as long as the Penthouse mentality exists.



FORGET THE MOVIE... HOW DO WE GET TICKETS FOR THE MISS AMERICA PAGEANT?...

'Family' theme appeals to U.S. empathy

The convention was the week the Democratic Party went back to every root in its genealogy.

The pilgrimage began in St. Paul, Minn., where Geraldine Ferraro told the nation that, "My father came from a little town in Italy called Marciante." It ended in San Francisco, when Mondale said in his acceptance speech, "My dad was a preacher and my mom taught music. We never had a dime."

In between, the Democrats, assembled in one of the more rootless cities in the Western Hemisphere, bared their personal tales of humble origins.

It wasn't just Jesse Jackson who turned his lowly past into his speech prologue. George McGovern described himself as "a small-town lad from the

South Dakota Prairies." Rep. Barbara Mikulski spoke of herself as the "grocer's daughter from East Baltimore." Texas State Treasurer Ann Richards talked to and about her "mamma and daddy back in Waco, Texas." The governor of New Mexico, Tony

little ado about economic genes from Democrats like West Virginia Gov. Jay Rockefeller.

The refrain finally led one Ted Kennedy aide to muse over the vision of the senator opening his speech with the words, "I am the son of a millionaire."

There was nothing unique about the political cache of humble origins. It's worked for politicians since William Henry Harrison was scornfully accused of coming from a log cabin. Harrison turned that into a campaign plus and Lincoln made history with it.

The log cabins of today are sharecropper huts and urban ghettos and immigrant ships. Americans may have mixed feelings about the people in those huts and ghettos and ships, but they have respect for those who rose out of them. The simple invocation of the All-American story still works.

But if roots are the rage this year, there's an additional reason. The Democrats are staking out one side of the class struggle. The biggest applause lines in Moscone Center had to do with Reagan and the rich.

As Texan Jim Hightower expressed the generic Democratic attack on Reagan: "In just three years Ronald Reagan has turned the people's house — the White House — into a private club for a bunch of Gucci-wearing, Cabernet-sipping, globe-hopping Hollywood plutocrats." The Democrats are trying to woo a wider "us" from the Reagan "them."

This approach is full of risks, especially in pursuit of the much-heralded Yuppie vote. Yuppies do like a bit of Cabernet with their Camembert. They are less likely to hark back to ethnic roots. Baby-boomers weren't born in neighborhoods; they were born in suburbs. They didn't, like Mario Cuomo, see their father's feet bleed; they say their fathers mowing lawns. They don't all swoon for the hard-working people ethic; some prefer tennis.

What the Democrats are counting on is that our sense of roots and family go beyond one generation or one blood line. As Ferraro said in her acceptance speech, "What separates the two parties is whether we use the gift of life for others or just ourselves."

They are counting on Cuomo's definition of family, "mutuality... the sharing of benefits and burdens for the good of all. Feeling one another's pain. Sharing one another's blessings."

Finally, this litany of roots, this chorus of humble origins, was more than a series of private memories. It was an appeal to America's collective empathy.

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Ellen Goodman

Anaya, referred to his "adobe house with a dirt floor and no utilities." Washington Mayor Marion Barry reminded us he was the son of a sharecropper, and New York Gov. Mario Cuomo spoke as the son of an immigrant.

Democrats seemed intent on telling the country where they were coming from — and not in the California sense. The issue wasn't where your head was, but where your roots were. The parade of poor parentage induced even the private Gary Hart to talk about Kansas hardscrabble with the Hart-pences.

If there was a son of a doctor or daughter of a lawyer on the podium, we shall never know. The convention didn't boast the class origins of Franklin Delano Roosevelt or John F. Kennedy. There was

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Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

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