

'... a Fight Every Day ...'

# Daily Nebraskan: From Start to Stardom

**Heritage Includes NU Greats**

By Jerry Petsche  
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The Nebraskan Newspaper

"There's a fight going on down there every day," the veteran observer of the University of Nebraska campus newspaper said.

Pressed for an explanation, he continued:

"Yes," he mused, "it's between the pitfalls of inexperience and the struggling desire of youth to communicate well."

The Daily Nebraskan is not a large daily newspaper, nor can it lay claim to being the oldest in the state, nor is it produced by the most adult thinkers. It does, however, have a heritage enviable by the standards of great metropolitan dailies as well as our nation's finest weeklies dedicated to community service.

From the confines of its editorial walls in the past have clattered the typewriters of



Herbert Brownell Jr.

literary and journalistic giants, statesmen and ambassadors.

**Now-Famous People on Staff**  
The young people still clutter away — searching for the apt phrase, the expression that will "stick," the meat of an idea, and in their attempts to find these, they hope to find themselves. And if the clattering echo of the Daily Nebraskan's ancient typewriters could strike by-lines, here is a sample of how they would read:

— Willa Cather was one of the first editors of the Hesperian Student, a monthly from which the Daily Nebraskan found its direct origin; she won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922 and is going down in history for her writing and observations of the American immigrant.

— Dorothy Canfield Fisher was an editor about the same time as Willa Cather; she became famous for her novel "Bent Twig," and will be remembered as an all-time Nebraskan literary great.

— The late Herbert Johnson, (a graduate at the turn of the century) was the highest paid cartoonist in his business at the time he retired from the Saturday Evening Post in 1941.

— Internationally famous Herbert Brownell Jr., former U.S. Attorney General, was a reporter for the newspaper in 1920.

— John Allison, a Daily Nebraskan editor in the mid-20s, has held high office in the U.S. foreign service for 27

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years, serving in Japan and Indonesia. He is presently our ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

**A Few More Greats**  
Just as impressive is a list of eminent men who have turned to careers in journalism and who might well have struck the keys of a typewriter for the first time in earnest for the Daily Nebraskan. Records show these men were on the staff:

— Eugene Robb, 1930 publisher of the Albany, New York, Times-Union;  
— Paul Zimmerman, '27, sports editor, Los Angeles Times;

— Bill McGaffin, '32, Washington bureau, Chicago Daily News;

— Herb Kelly, '26 editorial page, Des Moines Register;

— Edward Morrow, '27, associate editor; Omaha World-Herald;

— Victor Hackler, '27, executive, Associated Press, New York;

— Julius Frandsen, '27, news editor, UPI, Washington, D.C.;

— Howard Allaway, '33, editor, Popular Science Monthly;

— William McCleery, '31, associate editor, Ladies Home Journal;

— Glenn Buck, '27, publisher, Nebraska Farmer;

— Edward Stanley, '26, director NBC, New York;

— James McGaffin, '26, news director, WOW-TV, Omaha;

— Robert J. Kelly, '31, manager of public relations, Chrysler and Imperial Company, Allen Park, Michigan;

— Burton Marvin, '35, dean, William Allen White School of Journalism, University of Kansas, Lawrence.

**List Goes On-and-On**  
The Nebraskan weekly newspaper field has its share of former student staffers. Included in the list of men who will be remembered are

Fred R. Zimmer, a Cedar county publisher who wrote a bang-up sports column; Jack Pollock, news editor of the Sidney Telegraph, a former student editor; and George P. Miller Jr., owner of several newspapers in the state.

There is no way of completely separating history and tradition from the present policy and operation of the Daily Nebraskan, and before we review the mechanics of operation, we should look at the history.

**Nebraskan Started in 1892**  
Early in the 1870s (the University was founded in 1869) several small pamphlets appeared on the campus.

They were primarily outlets for student literary expression. Included in the list were the Sombrero, Lasso and the Hesperian Student. The Hesperian Student was owned by a small group of students and professors. Willa Cather and Dorothy Canfield Fisher were among the first contributors.

In 1892 the Nebraskan (a weekly) was founded. Even



Here is a modern staff of the Daily Nebraskan in the quarters in the Student Union.



here the newspaper did not completely break away from its literary tradition. Poetry and short stories appeared frequently although the greater portion of the newspaper was reserved for news. **Hesperian Takes Exception**

Editorially, the Hesperian Student and the Nebraskan were at odds, battling each other on the basis of what the editors called "style and literary excellence."

This kind of writing struck the editorial and literary nerves of both staffs and the breach widened until 1901, when financial difficulties forced incorporation. The Daily Nebraskan was begun in that year and was published and owned by the Hesperian Publishing Company, a group of students and a few professors.

**Pub Board Comes Into Being**  
In 1906 the Board of Regents purchased the fledgling operation which started with a capital value of \$1,500. Ac-

ording to the newspaper's own account, the University received all editorial physical property and what plant facilities were owned by the students and professors.

The Board of Regents then appointed a group of men to take the place of the Hesperian Publishing Company management. All student positions were retained. Since that time a Senate Subcommittee on Student Publications (referred to as the "Pub Board") serves in a reviewing capacity. The board is made up of five professors and administrators and three students selected by the student council from the sophomore, junior and senior classes.

**Editorial Freedom**  
A few comments from Dr. William E. Hall, director of the school of journalism and a member of the subcommittee, will serve to explain the relationship between the University and the Daily Nebraskan where "editorial freedom" is concerned:

"There is no editorial censorship of material prepared for the Daily Nebraskan. Students stand responsible for what they write and print. Editorial freedom does not mean editorial license to violate commonly accepted canons of journalism. Student editors recognize this and pattern their papers accordingly," he said. "This does not mean panty-waist journalism; it means all sides get fair editorial hearing. There are no 'sacred cows' in the campus community. The ability of student editors to use freedom constructively is perhaps as good a test of the effectiveness of our educational system as has yet been devised."

**First Dubbed "Riley's Rag"**  
Several long-time observers of the Daily Nebraskan believed the influence of the school of journalism during the past two years has had a

very sobering effect on the newspaper. Gone, they say, is much triviality and the tone of the periodic "Rah, Rah" sheets of a few years ago. These observers believe for the most part, that interpretive stories of depth and quality are running at a higher rate.

The operation of the "Rag" (it was first dubbed "Riley's Rag" in 1893 when a colorful student, Frank T. Riley was editor) has changed slowly during the past years.

The editor of the daily changes each semester and a general policy of ladder promotion based on experience and ability prevails. Key positions are filled by paid students. Salaries range from \$85 per month for the editor to \$35 per month for an experienced reporter. More than half of the staff, however, are not paid.

Many of the students carry normal scholastic loads. Key staff members, including the editor, usually carry less than the average number of hours per semester.

Several points should be reviewed before outlining the present business and editorial operation of the newspaper:

—The Daily Nebraskan is a responsible business—not at all unlike the larger weeklies and smaller dailies in the state;

—Not a dime's worth of tax money has been used to subsidize operation of the student newspaper;

—It is a self-supporting, non-profit enterprise and both advertising and subscription revenue succeed in defraying expenses.

The newspaper's gross income figure runs about \$35,000 per year at the present time. The finances are audited under direction of W. C. Harper,

director of student activity funds, although the business manager is primarily responsible for the continuing solvency of the newspaper.

The business manager of the Daily Nebraskan will be quick to point out that the "Rag" serves as a vital link between retailers and student. It is estimated that 8,000 students attending and families visiting the University of Nebraska each year spend nearly \$10 million in Lincoln.

When you walk into the offices of the Daily Nebraskan you realize at once that here is a group of young journalists and businessmen who mean business. They are proud of their heritage and traditions. They will be first to admit that they've made mistakes and will make many more; they guard their "freedom to speak" and realize that the body of the University is with them even if it might not always agree with their comment.

**'The Rag Spells Education'**  
Professional daily and weekly newspapermen watch the "Rag" for the trends in the thinking of youth. It is not uncommon to see an issue discussed by the Daily Nebraskan one day and see it reported upon or editorialized upon the following day by the Lincoln Journal, Lincoln Star or Omaha World-Herald.

You might call the Daily Nebraskan an institution within an institution. The interplay between student and professor, seller and buyer, foreman and manager, reporter and editor, the University of Nebraska and the public creates a world of mental activity all of its own and spells education in the most vital way.

## Ex-Editors Recall Old Troubles And Offer Advice on Education

"That's the editorial that got me in trouble with Phi Beta Kappa," Eugene Robb announced.

Robb, now publisher of the Albany, N. Y., News-Times, and other former editors of the Daily Nebraskan were reviewing old issues of the paper at the first Daily Nebraskan Editors' luncheon Friday at the University Club.

The luncheon, arranged by Herb Probasco, editor for the fall semester, was attended primarily by editors from the Omaha and Lincoln region.

Robb, graduate of 1930, said he wrote an editorial denouncing the method of choosing members of Phi Beta Kappa. In view of the different grading levels of the various schools and colleges, he felt that grades should not be the only consideration in naming members. He said he also believed, and still believes, that first semester college grades reflect high school training more than ability and should not be used in selecting Phi Beta Kappas. Robb was named to Phi Beta Kappa himself before the editorial was published.

"When they read it," he said, "they wouldn't take my money. So I wrote another one," this time denouncing them for their treatment of him and their sensitivity, "and then they took my money."

Another former editor with an even longer memory was Sterling McCaw, editor emeritus of the Norfolk News-Telegram, who in 1901 was first editor of the Daily Nebraskan. Founding editor might be a better term for him. During his editorship the Daily Nebraskan merged with the Scarlet

and Cream, and for a semester the Rag had two editors.

**NU Bought Paper**  
It was also during McCaw's editorship that the University Board of Regents bought the Daily Nebraskan from the private corporation which owned it. Before University ownership and University pay, McCaw said, he was paid in stock.

The editors turned away from back issues to discuss education as they knew it, and education as they recommended it.

Herbert W. Potter, editor in 1909, was most specific. Counseling, to him, is one of the most important facets of the modern University—and the one most lacking when he was here, he said. "I graduated and hadn't the slightest idea what I was to do," he said.

In contrast, E. E. Hines, editor in 1958 and now a University graduate student, recommended a fine arts curriculum as being the most important part of a college education today.

Dick Shugrue, also a 1958 editor, and a law student, recommended history and psychology as the most helpful courses for students to take.

**Language and English**  
Robert Schlater, 1942 editor, now with KUON-TV, highly recommends the study of foreign languages.

English courses were most frequently recommended by the former editors. Belle Farman, 1922 editor, who is now coordinator of senior high school curriculum for the Lincoln Public Schools, emphasized the "rich background" offered by English courses.

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