

From Grain . . .

. . . to Missile Silos

# Are Nebraskans Genuinely Isolationistic?

**Editor's Note:** The following story by senior journalism student Hal Brown won first place in the news division of the William Randolph Hearst Foundation Contest. A few months ago he won first place with a story in the sports section of the Hearst contest. This winning story is a depth report on Nebraska and isolationism.

By HAL BROWN

"We just never give much thought to the missile site. We realize it's there, but we don't think about it. We just go about our business."

That was Roy Carlson, a garage owner in Mead, Nebraska, (population, 428). Yet not a mile from the spot in which these calm words were spoken was the scaffolding for a silo unlike any other silo in this farm community.

For this silo would hold not silage, but an Atlas missile with a deadly nose cone destined for an enemy target.

These two scenes eloquently illustrate one of the strangest contrasts in Nebraska's history. One, the quiet, calm main street approach paints a word picture of the detached viewpoint, sometimes called isolationism, for which the Midwest has become noted.

The second, that deadly silo, presents physical evidence that this same part of mid-America has in fact become the front line of defense for the western world.

It was cold that day on Mead's main street. Bitterly cold, in fact. Nebraska was nearing the end of two months of near-Arctic

weather. On at least 16 days during December and January, the thermometer had dropped to zero or below.

On the farms around Mead where the ordinary kind of silo is the rule, work had all but halted. Frigid temperatures and biting winds had chased the farmers indoors, or at least to protected repair work around the farmyard. But at the missile site, work had continued without a slowdown. In fact, Strategic Air Command spokesmen at home base south of Omaha announced that no slowdowns in the massive missile program had been caused by weather. They pointed out that there had been some brief stoppages, but none of these could be laid to the chilling temperatures that had brought much of Nebraska to a halt.

Elsewhere in this state, often called isolationist, some schools had closed. Some towns had practically shut down because of gas shortages, and normal construction had often come to a frozen halt. But over the state near many little towns like Mead, work went on in the effort that was fortifying this as the center of our national defense.

Those few who drove the lonely highways on cold nights may have seen the lights at the missile complexes and wondered:

Is this Nebraska? Is this the Midwest where we have approached a new business but our own with caution?

They asked a question that has been argued in Nebraska for decades:

Is this state an isolationist?

Perfectly proper is another question:

If it is isolationist, is that bad?

You will not find agreement on the answers to either question.

Some historians say Nebraska never was isolationist. They point to the role played by the Mississippi Valley in the early shaping of America's dealings with foreign powers. Parts of this great section of mid-America have existed under five flags, they point out. They also refer to the large number of immigrants who settled in Nebraska.

But at least one historian says this immigration was a factor in making this state isolationist. Richard W. Van Alstyne, writing in the Mississippi Valley Historical Review, says:

"After the Revolution, New England isolationism which I take to be indistinguishable from nationalism, seems to have focused on animosity toward the British as competitors and oppressors on the high seas.

"Isolationism in the Mississippi Valley must have drawn heavily on the New England inheritance, but the remoteness of the interior from the seas is believed to have emphasized cultural as well as political separation from Europe.

"Furthermore, political animosities which link isolationism with Anglophobia (dislike for the English) were reinforced in the Mississippi Valley by the introduction of non-English emigrant strains, in whom inherited prejudices from the Old World were poured into the new mold of American nationalism."

Other historians, such as Dr. James C. Olson, chairman of the University of Nebraska history department, says Nebraska is and always has been isolationist.

Olson, who defines an isolationist as one "who believes in unilateral action and wants to work out his own destiny without reference to outside forces," points to the voting records

of Nebraska Congressmen to back up his stand.

Beginning with the late Senator George W. Norris who in his latter years was not considered an isolationist by most, Nebraska Congressmen have generally opposed war, mutual security, and foreign aid, this group of historians points out. They add, however, that the Nebraska Congressional delegations have generally supported the Trade Agreements Act of 1934 and the extensions of the act.

An examination of the voting record of Nebraska's Congressmen does back up this viewpoint. While in some instances votes have been split on bills generally considered internationalist in nature, in the majority of cases, Nebraska representatives in Washington have voted against foreign entanglements.

Perhaps George Norris, who in his later years was considered by many to be somewhat of an internationalist, best makes the point. In World War I days he was one of six who voted against entry into the war. Twenty years later he was considered by many to be in agreement with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on many internationalist points. However, an historian even at that time quotes him as saying:

"In spite of world tensions even greater than at the start of World War I, the U.S. should have no interest in so-called collective security. Our business is in America."

Today, historians who say Nebraska is less isolationist than in the past point to (1) the Cuban refugees who have been accepted into Nebraska, (2) development by the state of survival ratios such as the Nebraskan and the milk bar, (3) the University of Ne-

braska's cooperation in founding and maintaining a university in Turkey, and (4) the foreign student programs that are gaining momentum on many of the state's campuses.

None of this answers totally the question of whether we are isolationist, or not. Nor does it tell us whether isolationism, as such, is good or bad. But it explains why this part of the country has been called "the isolationist Midwest."

And with that tag our steadily growing importance as a defense center makes us another paradox in national history. That the Midwest is the front line of defense for the western world is easily established. There is physical evidence.

It started, probably, during World War II when temporary air bases and training centers were set up in Nebraska. However, these were temporary and they were several steps removed from the front lines.

Nebraska moved into the front lines of the cold war after World War II when Offutt Air Base near Omaha was selected as headquarters for SAC in the spring of 1948.

From a total assigned strength of 1,100 men, SAC headquarters has grown to a strength of more than 10,000 in the past 14 years. What once was an army outpost is now headquarters for one of America's biggest businesses with a payroll topping 224,000 men and women, scattered on 70 bases on four continents.

It is from this building and its almost unbelievable underground control centers that retaliatory weapons would be fired if the United States should be attacked. For all its reputation, its red phone to the President, and its second-by-second

world-wide contact, the building itself is not conspicuous. It seems to nestle down in the middle of Nebraska farmland and cattle feeding country.

The Offutt base was joined by the Lincoln Air Base later, as LAFB became one of the larger SAC bases from which first line bombers flew. And then came the period of the missile.

This, to a degree, changed the focus of worldwide attention on Nebraska. As SAC spokesmen explain, their headquarters were located in the Midwest originally as part of the dispersal from Washington, D.C. and because of the central location. Geographically Offutt Base became the center of the world for retaliatory purposes.

However, the speed of missiles, many times faster than manned bombers, has eliminated some of the advantage of the central location, they explain. The warning time on an attack has been drastically cut, they point out, with intercontinental ballistic missiles traveling several thousand miles an hour.

Even so, the red phone is still in Nebraska, and in or near many small Nebraska towns, such as Mead, those deadly silos are under construction.

Have Nebraskans resented the monsters being installed in their backyards?

Generally not, say SAC spokesmen. In fact, they continue, the reception has been good. In only a few instances have their been problems.

Men working on the missile sites have found a welcome in nearby towns.

As for the presence of the missile itself, there seems to have been little change in attitude by the people. If Mead is typical, most residents of small communities feel the installation

has had little or no influence on their lives. Most take the attitude that it is there, so what? They admit that little thought is given to the fact that their town may have become a prime target area.

Most of those interviewed felt the missile work had done little to increase their interest in world affairs. There has been no sudden interest, they explain, in fall-out shelters, for instance.

From Mead to the other little towns with their strange silos, to SAC with its red phone, the questions about isolationism may still be unanswered. But over the same route there could be no question that the Midwest, sometimes called isolationist, was the center of defense for the western world.



Hal Brown

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## Activities Mart Groups Named

The organizations participating on city campus in the second semester AWS activities mart Wednesday are AUF, Alpha Phi Omega, ACE, Builders, Cornhusker, Daily Nebraskan, IWA, Union, Red Cross, Tassels, UNSEA, YWCA, and Campus Publications.

Those that will be participating on ag campus are Ag Union, Ag YMCA, Ag YWCA, Block and Bridle Club, Builders, Daily Nebraskan, 4-H Club, Home Economics Club, IWA, Union, Red Cross, Rodeo Association, Tassels, and VHEA.

This is the first time AWS has sponsored a second semester activities mart. The mart will be located on city campus in the Union party rooms from 3-5:30 p.m. and on ag campus in the Ag Union from 12-3 p.m.

## Delegates Named For Model UN

Five University students have been chosen to represent Nebraska at the Model UN which will be held at St. Louis, March 29-31.

The students are: Ted Munster, acting chairman, H. P. Tipnis, Marguerite Plum, Joel Lundak and James Moore. These representatives will act as Nationalist China at the meeting.

## Geology Grant

Shell Companies Foundation has given the department of geology at the University a \$2,764 grant to support its annual fellowship.

## NEBRASKAN WANT ADS

**POLICY**  
Classified ads for the Daily Nebraskan must be entered two days in advance and must be paid for in advance. Corrections will be made if errors are brought to our attention within 48 hours.

**LOST**  
Square golden wrist watch, black nylon band, lost on Friday in Stout Hall or on way to 17 & R. Reward, 1713 R. 422-0609.  
In Union, pair of sunglasses, \$3 reward, GR 7-7061, Bob Peterson.  
Lost, Post Versator slide rule. Lost in vicinity of Bancroft or Student Union, Reward, Phone 477-4172.

**PERSONAL**  
If you lost your wallet, don't lose your head! Put a want ad in The Daily Nebraskan. Many a lost wallet has found its way home through the NEBRASKAN CLASSIFIEDS.

Let me give you the business! Because I've had it for 25 years now I'm willing to give it to you. I have 25,000 World War I uniforms hanging neatly in my warehouse ready to wear. Price lower with good bank reference and a sense of humor.

OH K.C. up on fourth floor? Can I knock upon your door? When your work and play are through Come and see me on floor 2. (And bring Mattie with you.)  
Flood Fax, Chilton the same . . . smoke for sleep, running on—

## Lecture Cancelled

The University of Nebraska Research Council has announced that Professor Gerald E. Bentley of Princeton University is ill and will not be able to keep his appointment here for the Montgomery Lecture series. Professor Bentley was to have lectured on the Shakespearean theater.

## Campus Library Ranks Nationally

The University's Love Memorial Library has been named by Daniel P. Bergen of the University of Notre Dame as "one of the opinion leading university libraries."

He said that it ranked with those libraries of Princeton and Harvard.

"The lesser university libraries seek to emulate these building and organizational models," he said. The three libraries are subject to a great deal of discussion and imitation.

According to director Frank Lundy, and Kathryn Renfro, head of technical services, new librarians are awed by the breadth of their responsibilities here at Nebraska.

They are given a gradual introduction to their split duties and a full orientation.

## AUF Fall Drive Just Under Goal

The All University Fund (AUF) Fall Drive and Pancake Feed collected \$3,911.47 according to Stevie Dort, publicity chairman.

A goal of \$4,000 had been set for collections from University students and Lincoln people.

All classifications were short of their goals except Selleck Quadrangle which exceeded its goal of \$300 by \$52.10. Fraternity collections totaled \$701.55.

Campus organizations contributed \$267.95, while Ag campus organized houses gave \$286.10.

City organized houses, including the girl's dorm, gave \$90.61, and the Independent Women's Association added \$31.00.

Sororities contributed \$1065.32, while Ag campus independents gave \$151.99.

AUF Financial Director Grant Gregory, commenting on the Fall Drive said, "Although all the goals were not surpassed, I feel the drive was a success in that the approximate goal of \$4,000 was nearly met by \$3,911.47 in grand total."

The next AUF activity is the Faculty Spring Drive which will be held April 2-14. The goal for this drive is \$1,000.

## Campus Calendar

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship will be held tomorrow in 332 Union at 7:30. There will be a group discussion on the Book of Acts.

Orchestrals tryouts will be held in Grant Memorial Gym at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Builders Spring mass meeting will be from 7 to 8 p.m. in 232, 234 and 235, Union.

The Lincoln Chapter of the National Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation will meet at 7:30 p.m. Saturday in the board room of the National Bank of Commerce.

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