

Editorials

Commentary

Into oblivion . . .

As the revised ASUN constitution sank slowly into oblivion Friday, student politicians began the inevitable explanations as to why it failed.

Some blamed student government leaders for not campaigning on behalf of the document. But as ASUN President Mike Naeve pointed out, that is not their responsibility.

A few others blamed the Daily Nebraskan for lack of support. This, too, is wrong. It is neither the duty nor the right of the Nebraskan to push a political issue with a front page campaign. The students were openly and fairly informed of the alternatives.

Beyond that, despite what Harper Hall President Cliff J. Sather says, the Nebraskan's only obligation is to present (as objectively as possible) the choices — not to be "the overriding influence."

The new constitution failed, not because of student leaders or the newspaper coverage, but because most students did not feel the issue was crucial. Either they were satisfied with the present arrangement, or they do not attach a high priority on the workings of student government.

For those who feel a revised governmental framework is the answer, the only thing to do is start again on changing the existing set-up. It will accomplish little to seek a handy place for blame.

Ed Icenogle



"Outside agitator . . . !"

De profundis

by Fred Schmidt

Look at that gal shake that thing— We can't all be Martin Luther King.

—Julian Bond

The affectionate glee Julian Bond conveyed with this couplet has taken on a tragic meaning in the year since Dr. King's death. Bond's lines gently mock Dr. King's moral character; most men, it is generally assumed, simply cannot overcome their passions as Dr. King desired.

Jealous critics in the black community scoffingly referred to him as "De Lawd." Whites generally regarded him as a self-righteous troublemaker, padding his pockets at the expense of "poor, ignorant niggers."

"WE CAN'T all be Martin Luther King." That fault, my fellow Americans, lies in ourselves, in our unwillingness to accept the idea that man can be so much better than he is, in our pathological suspicions that any prophet of love and reconciliation must be a kook or a con-man, in our derision of those who refuse to accept the "fact" that any evil which is now evermore shall be.

It is a beautiful irony that the first anniversary of Dr. King's murder falls on Good Friday. Like Jerusalem, America has killed its prophets and forsaken the principles on which it was founded, choosing instead a soft, comfortable, accommodating way of life. When we are charitable, we make headlines — headlines for DOING WHAT WE ARE SUPPOSED TO DO.

Like Christ and the great Hebrew prophets, Dr. King asked only that men love one another, that our demons of fear and hatred, of hunger and poverty, of greed and betrayal be cast out.

He was resolute yet sensitive, tough, but never hard. What kind of society allows such a man to be murdered? What kind of society, if only subconsciously, longs for his death?

"WE CAN'T all be Martin Luther King." So let's not even try. The world has survived this long and our efforts won't make that much difference. As for Martin Luther King, he's all right now. He's dead, and we have one more Great American to praise while we install our ABM system, fight in Viet Nam, and police the corridors of Lincoln High School.

Of course, we have to be on our guard for crack-pots with wild, phony rantings about "non-violent action" — characters like Caesar Chavez, Jesse Jackson, Charles Evers, Saul Alinsky, and Coretta Scott King.

As you pause this week to honor Martin Luther King, don't weep for him. Look around long enough to notice that The Fire This Time is here to stay and then weep for yourselves.

Besech the hills to fall and curse your own fertility. Envy the barren and the dead. For if these things are done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?

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The high cost of health and doctor-lab fees

by Martin L. Gross

Only the most naive or nostalgic patient now expects to pay a flat fee for a visit to a doctor, whether it be the country doctor's \$5 or the city internist's \$20. As the cost of physician's extra "ancillary" services — especially laboratory tests — continue to confound the patient and push the rising price of medical care further upward, the exact medical fee is becoming as anachronistic as the pediatrician's house call.

Doctors are quite human and therefore prone to exaggerate their nobility. They often more-than-hint that X-rays and lab tests are profitless conveniences in which the physician plays the role of sacrificing altruist merely passing on what is charged him.

THE REALITY mars the neo-romantic image: It too-often includes staggering bills to patients for lab tests and an economic profiteering by some doctors that threatens to tarnish the profession's golden Caduceus.

A modern physical examination increasingly includes a glossary of necessary laboratory tests: blood count, blood sugar, urine analysis, sedimentation rate, urea-nitrogen, cholesterol, uric acid and others. The bill for these tests is often more shocking to the patient than the biologic results. Increasingly, the \$20-\$50 charge for this laboratory work exceeds the physician's fee itself.

What is wrong with paying the doctor for essential lab tests? Nothing, if the physician has not made himself a commercial middle-man, "marking up" the cost to the patient more extravagantly than a fashionable couturier.

ONE MANAGEMENT consultant to doctors estimates that while some physicians refuse to make a profit on outside lab tests, physicians typically pay a wholesale cost of 55 per cent of the amount billed to the patient, pocketing the rest. Critics interpret this "commission" as unethical and indefensible fee-splitting while physicians-defenders

claim it is a true fee for "medical interpretation" of laboratory results.

While this controversy quietly stews, a more invidious doctor scandal is incubating involving physician lab test mark-ups in the magnitude of 1000 to 10,000 percent. An advertisement signed by Dr. Leo Mayer, M.D., recently appeared in 17 New York State newspapers referring to a practice that he terms "scandalous."

"I am ashamed," the physician wrote, "that too many physicians act as commission merchants manipulating patients for their own profit 'by taking care' of lab tests they prescribe." Dr. Mayer claims that these doctors pay a "pittance" to automated labs "which give them rewarding deals, and the doctors then collect exorbitant fees from patients for the pittance cost lab tests."

WHEN INTERVIEWED Dr. Mayer explained the apparently legal but near galactic economics of this operation. "The doctor signs with a so-called 'contract plan' laboratory at a flat fee of \$60 to \$80 a month," he says. "For this he receives several hundred or even an unlimited number of laboratory tests. The laboratory even sends a car around to collect the specimens, then phones the results to him."

"The doctor pays perhaps 10 to 15 cents a test, then bills the patient anywhere from \$3 to \$15 for each test. I understand some doctors make well over \$1000 a month on the system. It is simple profiteering."

Dr. Mayer's charge had already been substantiated to me in at least one case by a suburban physician who has long used a super-inexpensive laboratory. "I use a contract automated laboratory for my blood and urine tests and I pay only a flat fee of \$70 a month," he happily revealed. "For that I get all the usual blood and urine tests I want. They cost me only a few pennies each and I bill them out at the going rate."

THE AUTOMATED contract lab is a nationwide

phenomenon and its attractiveness to dollar-stimulated doctors is enhanced by such beguiling Lorelei slogans as "Our services could help elevate your income," and "It will pay you to use our plan."

New York State Assemblyman Edward J. Amann, Jr. and State Senator John Marchi are among the sponsors of two new pieces of legislation expected to curtail the nefarious exploitation by making it illegal for a doctor in that state to bill a patient for a lab test not analyzed in his office.

"It is unethical and illegal for a doctor to split a lab fee," says Assemblyman Amann. "However, the contract lab system enables the doctor to circumvent the law because he is not being charged for a specific test. I saw a flyer from one contract lab which promised to do all the doctor's lab work for \$50 a month including furnishing of bottles and picking up of specimens."

The New York bills, which include threat of license revocation for doctors who continue to make money on lab work not done by them, have already passed the State Assembly and are being considered by the state's Senate.

IF THEY are passed and signed by the governor, some New York physicians will have to relinquish a lucrative "medical" system, and labs will have to bill patients directly. They will then risk the repressed wrath of patients who traditionally shrink in obsequious acceptance before a high-billing doctor, but who would gleefully tear the Bunsen burner out of an over-charging commercial laboratory.

For all citizens whose sense of economic propriety is outraged at paying a doctor \$5 for a 10 cent automated procedure, or who even blanch at supporting his 45 per cent "vigorous" on regular clinical laboratory costs, similar legislation in all 50 states may be the first step for us abused medical consumers to regain our pride.

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Random restroom rating results released

Slightly irreverent

by John Fryar

Under the category of things to do and places to see: bathrooms. One's half-remembered Scout training condemns unpreparedness. In the belief that every University student should be Prepared, we here propose a sort of sketchy guide to some of Lincoln's more frequented plumbing.

The true-hearted bathroom enthusiast (no generic term for such tourists has yet been coined: gourmet doesn't seem quite appropriate) must be well-equipped. The tools of his avocation might include camera, Lysol and the D.L.'s Guide to Four-Letter Words and Appropriate Synonyms.

The restroom rating system includes five categories of quality, marked with diminishing numbers of stars. Much like the Junior Scholastic movie reviews, only the special "bell-ringer" award has been omitted. Unfortunately, the review will be limited to male accommodations in view of certain barriers of taste and legality which this writer does not choose to challenge. We will instead give an automatic top rating to the ladies' facilities, with the parenthetical hope that men will someday become emancipated enough to put couches in their own johns.

AH, YES, THE RATING SCALE. Five stars mean the accommodations are interesting enough to attract your philosophy professor — par excellence for Nebraska culture. Four stars brands a facility good enough to entertain your bachelor uncle who is trying to bridge the generation gap.

Three stars are bathrooms clean and bright enough to steer your mother to when she comes down for the honors convocation. Two stars are johns in the right place at the right time. A one-star restroom is just right for an ASUN senator, but hardly anyone else.

Cleanliness, intelligence of graffiti, availability and design are all factors to be considered in the evaluation.

Our tour begins in the vital center of the University — the Union. The quality of Union johns varies, but if one catches them in the off-season (between wall scrubbing), they are second only to the directories in the telephone booths as to prurient interest.

The North Restroom (***) Lacking in artistic expression, possessing a color scheme seldom matched by pre-school coloring books, this

neatly subdivided Union facility seems to cry for a shower to make it the complete locker room. It has one redeeming feature: a huge fountain-like apparatus that could use the addition of a pseudo-classical sculpture at its top. Maybe some kind of Greek or Roman jock.

THE SOUTHEAST RESTROOM (****). A historical remnant of the past, the drab grays and browns of this facility make it a well-coordinated annex to the sinister "brown room" of the Crib. Its graffiti is flourished in magic marker, but the chief artist seems to have some kind of homosexual hangup, all contributing to the Early Institution motif.

The Basemen's Can (**). Mostly utilitarian, this john is the domain of special-interest groups: pool sharks, bowlers, and unfortunately who drop by to shed a tear as they look at themselves in the mirror after another last-minute visit to the Union Barber Shop.

Next, the tour investigates the periphery of the campus, the classroom buildings. The faults of classroom restrooms are legendary. There are few spaces to set down notebooks. The mirrors are either too small or too few. And have you noticed that whenever you finally find an unoccupied stall and close the door the lock doesn't work? Sometimes they are not well-marked as to gender, with experience proving a harsh teacher.

General rating for classroom facilities: (***). There are a few standouts. Homo Harry has evidently moved his graffiti efforts to one of the lounges in Burnett, raising it to an occasional (****). One John in Avery (****) maintains the tradition of scrawling obscenities concerning just about every Chem teacher ever encountered. Oldfather deserves a (****) for the originality of designing its high rise classroom and office bathrooms to look like high rise dormitory bathrooms. Bathtubs are expected soon.

THE NEXT OUTWARD CIRCLE of University facilities are to be found in its living accommodations. A word of explanation is due for the lack of ratings of Greek houses. Like most independents, the author has never seen the secret recesses of these houses. We have come to assume that there aren't any. Facilities, that is. It is a common belief that this is just one more manifestation of pledge hazing. (****) rating to the Greek houses, anyway, for guts.

As for the dorms, Selleck gets (**) — further extensions of the locker room principle. The high rises get an average (**) for perfecting Murphy's law and allowing daily maids to clean off

the graffiti. ADD (*) to the newer dorms for putting doors on.

A special (****) rating to Cather, however. It was designed to be a girls' dorm, including the plumbing. Moreover, the government and staff periodically tape mimeographed announcements and quotations from James Joyce to the inside of the john doors. They applaud the rate of residents' recall of the information, having created a "captive audience" of sorts.

All the University facilities should be subtracted (*) for the "save from waste" bathroom tissue. All need softer, "whisper" toilet paper.

THE NEXT CIRCLE of service facilities are outside the realm of the University's control, but they all have points pertinent to a complete tour. Running over these briefly, the gas stations get a (*) for locking their restrooms to keep them clean and then hiding the key somewhere in the garage while the attendant is waiting on cars outside. (**) additionally for stations with desert-beat hand burners and empty soap dispensers, and subtract all points for johns with bubble gum in



the sink or signs that command to "wipe, don't blot."

Valentino's (****) gets a high rating because its music is piped into the restrooms, causing remarkable peace of mind and unbelievable traffic jams.

Downtown department stores (**) that is, if you can find them or are gutsy enough to ask, facing the withering stare of a clerk who makes you feel like you are one of the few in the world who even need one. At last resort, look for signs that say "Employees Only" (****), leading to hidden alcoves noted for bare light bulbs or single half-used bars of hand soap.

Restaurants (**), usually only for sanitary needs during the daytime and bodily needs at night. Nobody even wants to stay in one long enough to enjoy it, what with the rest of the group impatiently waiting to order. Notice the lack of paper towels-always just out. Blase.

THE FINAL POINT of the bathroom tour centers around the tavern latrines. Some of the best ratings are to be found here, usually because of the nature of the graffiti and the lifelong friendships one makes while relaxing in the facilities.

Myron's (****) or maybe even (**) unfortunately has painted its john walls black to discourage further artwork. Pen knives do nicely, but are also frowned upon. Moreover, the door on the women's side sticks open, establishing an audience. The management has installed pinball machines outside to occupy those in line.

DB and G (****) in addition to the twists and turns one has to undergo in an unbelievably small space, has instituted a new concept in architecture whereby the entrances to the johns are remarkably similar to the next-door kitchen.

Der Loaf deserves a special rating for the times when it allows minors in to listen to the combo, not allowing them beyond a certain point in order to keep them away from the bar. The restrooms, naturally, are also beyond this point. A (****) plus (*) to the Loaf.

IT MIGHT BE WELL to end today's bathroom tour before Casey's, even though that bar has some of the best graffiti. (Gentle Ben is Drugged. Put the X Back in Xmas, etc.) The last tour conducted by 'his guide visited so many tavern facilities that the culmination found one eager, inebriated tourist trying to stencil five stars on the barmaid's forehead.

The next tour will attempt to incorporate a corollary look to the homes of Southeast Lincoln in order to study the arrangements of bath towels and the correctness of portable scales.