Regents' dirty laundry

Regent Edward Schwartzkopf was quoted in the Omaha World Herald Aug. 20 as saying University administrators, in reviewing a man to be hired, "had better take a look to be sure his skirts are as clean as possible before they recommend someone to be hired."

His remarks referred to Michael Davis, a pre-doctoral fellow and instructor from the University of Michigan whose nomination to the Philosophy Department faculty had just been blocked by a vote of the Board of Regents.

Regent Schwartzkopf continued to say the Regents had not questioned Davis' professional ability but that "there were circumstances about his social conduct we didn't approve of." Later he said the Regents had "received information which alerted us, so we kept working on it."

Davis wrote to the Regents, requesting "specific, complete evidence and reasons" why he was not hired. The Regents' reply was that their action "was not based upon any specific charge or compalint made by any person or institution." This contradicts Regent Schwartzkopf's statement that the Regents were acting on information they had received.

Later in the Regents' letter it was stated the Board was not convinced he possessed the qualifications which it desired. The difficulty here is that the Board is not clear about what they mean by "qualifications."

Regent Schwartzkopf admitted the Board had not disputed Davis's "professional ability." Dr. Robert E. Dewey, Chairman of the Philosophy Department stated that academically, Davis was "top notch" and "a cut above" the other applicants the department had interviewed.

Many students and faculty have withheld comment on the matter, hoping the Regents had information others were not privy to — as the Board had indicated. In the World Herald article, Dean of Arts and Sciences Dr. Melvin George was quoted as saying, "I can only assume the Board had access to information which neither Bob (Dr. Dewey) nor I had seen."

We can no longer assume this is the case. In response to a request for specific reasons from the man they had turned down, the Board responded with vague and insufficient answers. If their disagreement was on "social conduct" as Schwartzkopf said, then they must state the criteria they used. We cannot accept their decision without knowing the basis for it.

If as Schwartzkopf said, administrators "must read the road signs more carefully . . . as they travel down the road of hiring personnel . . .", then they must be told what the road signs are. Otherwise, we are operating in a vacuum where decisions can be based on whim or prejudice.

The implications are sobering . . . choice based on undefined "social" reasons cuts at the quick of academic and social freedom. A person could be penalized for his beliefs and actions even though he expressed them in an entirely legal manner. Such action would bring discredit to the University and the Regents.

Davis has stated he will request that the American Association of University Professors investigate the matter. Based on the fact that no specific reasons were given for denying Davis' appointment, it is possible that the AAUP would decide to blacklist the University. A few years ago, such an action would have caused a large exodus of respected faculty from NU. Given the depressed state of the economy, it is doubtful that many of the faculty would leave, but the black-listing would be a stain on the University and could cause ill effects in the future.

The Board of Regents has the right to review all appointments to the faculty and to block those it wants to. But with this right goes the responsibility to the university and to the people of the state that the actions of the Board are responsible and based on sound, fair reasoning.

Therefore, the "Nebraskan" asks the Board of Regents to justify the faith placed in it by the people of Nebraska by stating the reasons it denied the appointment of Michael Davis.

THE NEBRASKAN

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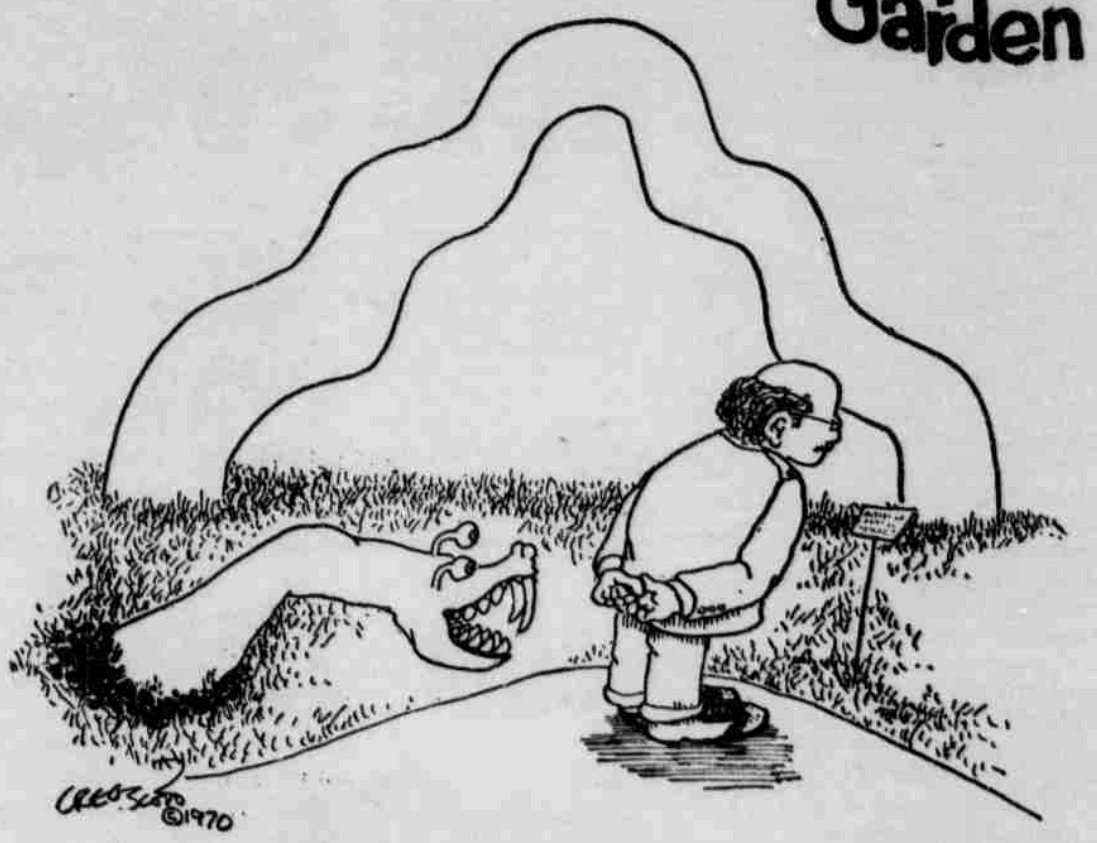

Cover your flanks!

by GENE BARRY

I don't have an umbrella.

Now, I don't mind the thought of getting wet, but the threat of being buffeted by a throng of class-goers carrying lethal weapons on sticks was frightening on my first day of class.

I stepped into the street cautiously. And there they were, all of them carrying the one item I had sold in a fit of drought panic in September of my freshman year. (That signaled the start for the five-day floods of 1967.)

The alarm had gone off at seven that morning and I already felt defeated. But, I managed to survive with only minor injuries and two collisions.

I was accosted by a demure chick who, by her dress, was probably associated with the Women's Lib movement. Her umbrella blocked my view of her as well as her view of her path.

Obviously unnerved when I politely told her "watch yourself" as she approached a mud puddle, she looked quickly down at the zipper of her bell-bottom levis and walked straight into the puddle.

At any rate, the prettiest parasol of the day had a spine without equal for its ability to commit crimes against my body. Perhaps I could be accused of passing on the wrong side, but according to the rules on defensive walking . . . Ah, well.

When an umbrella is placed over the prized head of its owner, an incredible thing happens. The owner immediately consumes 147 percent more space than normal. He is also given god-like protection (or oblivion) from the torrential monsoon season that descends each September.

With the space problem created by these devices it seems logical that the University, on rainy days, should either open more sidewalks or revoke about half of the 147 percent. This would work out to 73½ percent, a good round number.

Well, this is almost enough. You probably want to know just where I received my major injuries. It was in the most vulnerable place a man could be hit, the place where it hurts the most. It was indeed slightly to the left side and directly in front of the Love Library mall.

Please, all of you who have one, remember:

I don't have an umbrella.

In Concert
Thurs., Sept. 24
8 p.m.
U of N Coliseum
$3.00 advance tax included
$3.50 at door tax included
Ticket sales begin Sept. 14 in Nebr. Union
No chairs
Public invited

Presented by the Nebraska Union Concert Committee