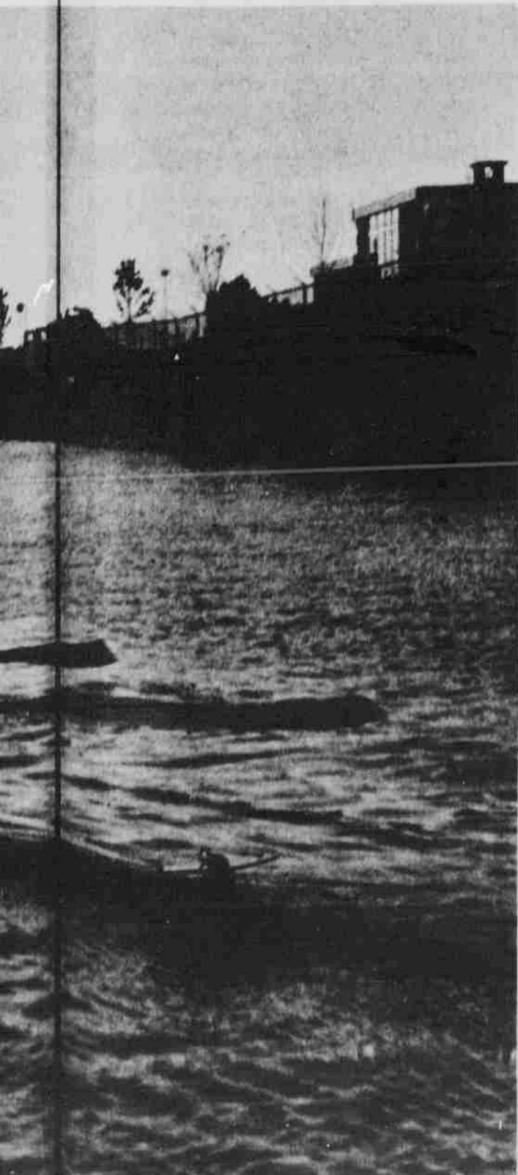




Stories and photos
by John Russnogle



Crew lacks local support, funding

Four old ladies sitting on a bus stop bench smiled and waved as the UNL crew team drove down O St. on its return to Lincoln.

"That's about par for the support we receive in Nebraska," Coach Allan Maybee said sarcastically.

The groundwork for a crew program was started by Maybee eight years ago. He said his initial effort brought no response because crew was "completely foreign to Nebraska."

After figuring out how much equipment he was going to need for a crew program and after pocketing some administrative encouragement, Maybee began to write letters to get equipment.

He said he'd accept anything, even a broken oar, just so he could get the program started. That first piece of equipment was a broken oar—from Don Rose, crew coach at Kansas State University.

Maybee also got some responses from east coast schools and in the spring of 1970 he drove along the eastern coast picking up cast off equipment from other schools.

Since crew is not a recognized Big Eight Conference sport, the UNL Athletic Department wouldn't sponsor it. All the equipment and funds for the team comes from donations.

During that first spring (1970), the team had to practice at 5 a.m. to fit around students' schedules. Despite all its problems and lack of support, the

team won the first race it entered. The UNL freshmen team traveled to Topeka, Kans., and defeated the Washburn crew team.

The team has since "taken over" a building on the UNL campus, scheduled for destruction. But despite Maybee's pleas to let the team continue to store its equipment in the old tin structure, the University still wants to tear the building down. If destroyed, more than \$15,000 of equipment will have to be stored outside.

Maybee says he can't go to too much trouble for the crew program, even if it is a frustrating process.

"To get encouragement and support we have to go East where we're welcomed with open arms. Nebraska's attitude is really cold," he said.

The problems Maybee has faced haven't only been here at the University, however.

In order to make it legal for the crew to practice, a state law first had to be amended and eventually rewritten. Previously it was illegal for anyone to be in a boat without a life jacket. A bailing bucket, whistle and sponge also were standard equipment.

"I think sometimes we offend people because of our overenthusiasm," Maybee said. He added that any offensive attitudes were unintentional, but also unavoidable because of all the

frustration the crew team encounters.

Maybee said competing in events like the Head-of-the-Charles Regatta gives the UNL team credibility. He said coaches and UNL personnel thought the program was a lark at first, but began to watch more closely when the team began to win.

The support from eastern schools also is increasing, Maybee said. Institutions such as Notre Dame, Brown and Purdue have invested time and equipment in the UNL program, he said. "They have bent over backwards to help us."

The University, on the other hand, places crew in the league with table tennis, Maybee said.

"The things we ask our team members to do are similar to asking Johnny Rodgers to bring a lawnmower to football practice to mow the practice field."

Despite the current status of the crew program, Maybee predicted that crew eventually will "come into its own in the Midwest."

Several coaches in the Midwest are "willing to do anything to help other programs," Maybee said. But the real future of crew in Nebraska lies in the high schools, he added. They've got to encourage the sport, he said.

The fact that rowing is not just a lark is best pointed out, Maybee said, by a six-member team which drove 1,800 miles non-stop for a 20 minute race.