

On parking, again

With incredible regularity over the past couple of decades, the Daily Nebraskan has graced its pages with almost predictable tirades about the state of parking on and about campus.

All the standard complaints still apply. Student, faculty and administration lots all are overcrowded, for the most part messy and unkempt, and essentially impossible to use. But they all seem to be made increasingly worse by another problem—on and near campus, parking parking lots seem to be dissolving into thin air.

Within the past few years a goodly number of these disappearances seem to have taken place.

Last year, you will remember, a huge number of dormitory and commuter student parking spaces were eaten up by the construction of a recreation complex east of Cather and Pound residence halls. This year the trend is continuing with the abolition of two staff parking lots, north of Love Memorial Library and the College of Business Administration, to make way for library expansion.

Supposedly taking the place of these convenient, on-campus lots, the University has managed to add lots in the most remote, inconvenient spots possible. Specifically, the University has added to its parking resources the untouchable State Fairgrounds lot and, while less distant equally hard to use, a new card operated and automated lot near the Harper-Schramm-Smith residence complex.

In order to provide access to campus from the distant Fairgrounds lot, the University currently provides a shuttle bus service which is, in some cases, adequate. It is not adequate however, in sub-zero weather, when students must wait between buses which frequently break down in such weather. It is not adequate when the fairgrounds lot becomes a swamp due to heavy rain or snow. And it is

not adequate after 6 p.m., as students with night classes are not afforded shuttle bus service.

But these inconveniences are only half the story. In addition to the 952 Fairground spaces there are 3,697 student parking spaces on or near the city or East campuses. On city campus there are 1036 spaces for commuter



"Down the Drain"

students, 1,312 spaces for campus residents with an additional 555 spaces in the automated card lot split between the two groups. On East Campus, there are 634 commuter spots and 160 spaces for dormitory residents.

With some 12,000 off-campus students contending for a little over 1,200 spots and approximately 8,000 on-campus students vying for about 1,500 spots, this spells trouble.

This trouble comes in the form of the "vulture patrols"—student drivers hang around filled lots waiting for some car owner to abandon his parking space, after which they battle each other for the honor of parking their cars. All this is, of course, dangerous and a bit foolish. And a terrific waste of time.

In four years of University classes, the vulture patrol has never ceased to exist, except during low class attendance periods, such as final examination weeks. Even so, the administration and regents have ignored this and other symptoms that indicate more on-campus parking is needed.

It is easy to say that students should be willing to park in the Fairgrounds lot if adequate shuttle service is provided. Human nature, however, would indicate that to believe they would do so is hopelessly idealistic.

In most cases, a student would much rather wait and swoop down upon an evacuated on-campus spot than take the time to use the Fairgrounds-shuttle system. The nearly half-hour per day it takes to use the system is a definite drawback, not to mention the inconvenience involved.

The solution to the problem is, of course, not simple. It will involve planning, value reassessment, and mostly ingenuity.

Possible forms for solution must be undertaken soon, however, if the problem is not to come to the boiling point. It is inconceivable that students will continue to pay \$15 per year to not park their cars much longer.

Regents, faculty, administration and students should begin work on this too-persistent dilemma immediately. Whether in the form of a multi-level garage, surface parking or whatever, a plan must be drawn up to solve what should be a simple matter.

And let's hope the solution begins soon, so next year's Daily Nebraskan doesn't have to write the annual Parking Editorial.

Jim Gray

