

The filmmakers

by Bart Becker

John Spence lit a Pall Mall and began to talk about why he lives and works in Lincoln. He's been other places, see, but he's always returned to Lincoln. To make films, which is what he does.

"The insanity of it all is that I'm here, you know. That I continue to be here," Spence said. "I think that I understand it. I think that I know why I'm here.

"But at times it really gets to be too much to take, you know, and I've just got to get out, go away, and get my batteries recharged or get my head together or something. And I always wind up coming back here.

"I know that I can function anywhere in the world because I've been everywhere in the world," he said. "I've been there and I've always come back."

Spence, who is currently working as a cameraman at KUON-TV, spent the years after he graduated from high school traveling, moving from place to place, but always returned to Lincoln. He said he always expected he could make a break with the Midwest.

"I so detested, I so hated what I was, what I'd been made into by fortune of birth and family and all that, that I just had to completely destroy that," he said. "I had to completely get away from it.

And so I made a conscious effort to do that.

"But in doing that I realized that it was an impossibility. There was no way I could totally deny everything that I'd been forced into. I couldn't deny everything that was totally beyond my control."

The city's attraction for another filmmaker, Gary Hill, is similar. He, too, has spent a lot of time trying to find the right place to do his work.

"I was at the University here for two-and-a-half years," Hill said. "Then I went to San Francisco and got into San Francisco State. The second semester that year was the strike semester so I quit school and came back here and got a job.

"The energy was really high then, man."

For Hill and a group of his friends it was a relatively productive period. They lived together, hung around together and made a film. Shortly after that he began putting his film *Crime* together.

"I got really anxious right at that time," he explained, "so I started pretty neurotically putting a film together. I just felt like I had to do that. So I put *Crime* together the next year.

"And I was not here all the time. I was taking little trips out to Chicago and

places. I finished that film in Chicago. I shot some of the footage in San Francisco and some between here and there."

Last winter Hill got into a graduate program in Toronto in order to work on a film with synchronous-sound. He shot most of it a year ago but hasn't completed it.

In April he returned to Lincoln and "got a job hauling garbage because I had to feed myself." Since then he's been working on some scripts and shooting some still photography. But his affinity for Lincoln is simple:

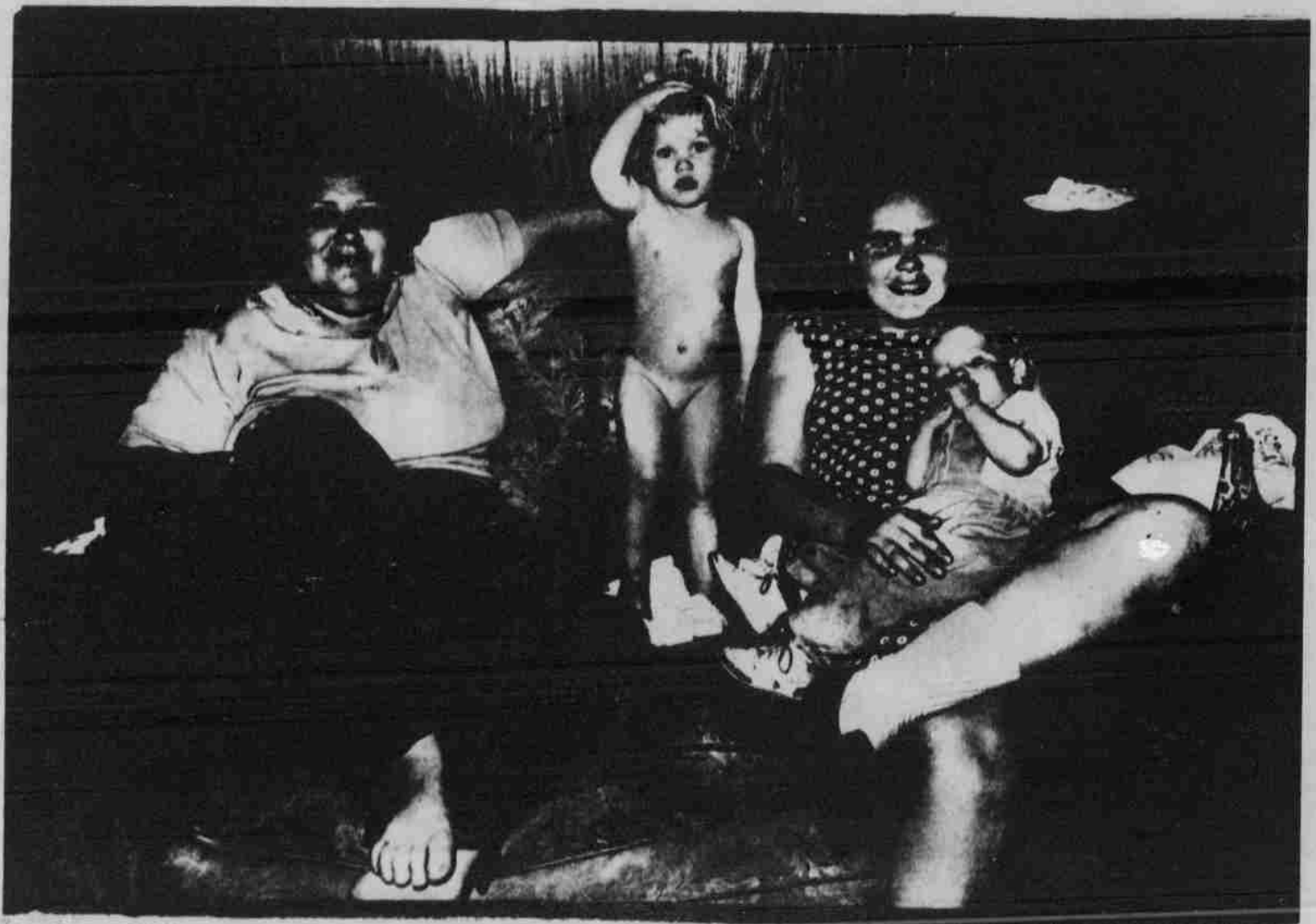
"I suppose one reason I was satisfied enough to come back here after Toronto, after I'd shot the film, was that this is where I'd shot the best film I had," he said.

Both Spence and Hill outline a clear difference between working in Lincoln or working in a more traditionally creative geographical area. Spence is confident in his ability to produce regardless of where he is.

"See, if I was living in New York I wouldn't be doing the kind of stuff I'm doing now," he said. "I realize that. But I'd be doing something, I know that.

"I haven't had those kind of self doubts, you know, that if I was in New York I'd get sucked in. I know I'd get work done, but it might be different work."

But living in New York does provide a creative impetus that doesn't exist in Lincoln.



Gary Hill