

Chris Miller- from Cocoa Puffs to Lampooner



National Lampoon's Chris Miller...said he "desires to touch people and make them feel something."

by Bart Becker

"When I'm writing, all I'm really trying to do is write something that makes me laugh," Chris Miller said Monday "But underlying that is a desire to touch people and make them feel something."

"Depression is the major disease of our time. So I don't care if it's a belly laugh or an 'Oh, God!' Either way it's cool because I've put somebody through some changes, which is what I'm interested in doing."

Monday afternoon, Miller, a contributing editor to the *National Lampoon*, put about 500 people at the Nebraska Union through some of those changes. During his performance, he read from two of his *Lampoon* pieces, gave a short history of the magazine and fielded questions from the audience.

Miller chortled into his cigar as he recalled that the magazine's "porno" issue skyrocketed sales 50,000. Now the *Lampoon* has monthly sales of 600,000 to 700,000, jumping 50,000 every issue.

"It's really growing," Miller said. "The only magazine which is out performing us is *Penthouse* and we all know why. You build a better mousetrap, right?"

"The rest of the magazine is an envelope just to contain the pictures of those women."

But Miller is proud to be with the *National Lampoon*. He doesn't brag about it and he even gets slightly embarrassed when he discusses it.

For one thing, "Everyone around the *Lampoon* is so funky. Everyone is people you can be comfortable with. But at some of those magazines you've got middle-aged business men and stuff."

Miller said he came to work for the *Lampoon* in a roundabout way.

"When I was in college I was an English major but I never took a creative writing

course. After college, I went to the Army where, needless to say, I didn't do a whole lot of writing."

After that he got a job in advertising, writing television commercials.

"Ever see that 'Cocoo for Cocoa Puffs' commercial?" he laughed. "Yeah. They were really fun, man. We took the concept and changed it into, you know, none of this how it tastes or anything."

"You eat Cocoa Puffs and you get high. You jump around like that bird jumps around. Like speed and acid, that's what it's like when that bird swallows those Cocoa Puffs."

Miller said the magazine has had little trouble with lawsuits. "People discover that if you sue a humor magazine, you not only lose, you look like a fool."

"Satire is really a form of journalism. It's humorous journalism, and in its way, it's more potent than straight reporting. In satire you can catch the essence of a situation."

"George Wallace may not feed his wife cancerous rates (as he was shown doing in a *National Lampoon* cartoon story) but that's the kind of a guy he is," Miller said.

The 31-year-old Dartmouth graduate mentioned a number of *National Lampoon*-associated projects like *Radio Dinner*, a record album, and "Lemmings," a stage show.

Miller said he expects the *National Lampoon* will branch out into other areas "because it's really becoming a humor factory."

"I'm really proud to be working on that magazine," he said. "I can't think of a single magazine in the country, that I think is a more far-out, interesting, contemporary, hip publication."

"And I think we've got years before we reach our peak. We've just scratched the surface of innovating with the magazine."

Number 8 plagues Czech politics

by Ruth Ulrich

Anyone who has lived in Czechoslovakia since the early 20th century has been exposed to almost all forms of political government, Dr. Otto Ulc said Monday at the Nebraska Union.

Ulc, an Eastern European specialist, discussed Czechoslovakia since 1968 at the first of four programs in a Czech conference sponsored by the Slavic and Eastern European Area Studies Program at UNL.

A professor of political science at the State University of New York-Binghamton, Ulc was a judge in Czechoslovakia before his defection in 1959.

"Czechoslovakia has been playing a numbers game revolving around the number eight," Ulc said. He said that most of the major Czechoslovakian historical events occurred in years ending in eight. The so-called Communist "innovation" which began with the Russian invasion on Aug. 21, 1968 fits into the scheme, he said.

"The impetus to change," Ulc said, "was to dispose of inefficiency," instead of moral reasons.

He described Czechoslovakia prior to 1968 as a place where a "judge made less money than a busdriver," and promotions were made on the basis of incompetence. "The higher the education, the lower the position," Ulc said.

What occurred in 1968 before the invasion was a victory of the reformists, he said, or a victory of improvisation. Economic reforms fostered political reforms, he said.

Some failures of the Communists innovation were not changing election laws and non-admission of new political forces into the government, Ulc said.

None of the 1968 innovations have survived, he added.

In the first place, Ulc said, the nation is too knowledgeable and secondly, the nation is alienated.

The reformists are now out of power in Czechoslovakia and the Communist party has lost its mass base, Ulc observed. "Today there are more former members of the Communist party than there are existing members," he said.

One reason was the recruitment problem, he said. There is a limited pool of persons willing to get involved and the ones at the top are "third-rate" individuals.

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Correction...

ASUN Sen. Behrooz Eman was incorrectly quoted in the Daily Nebraskan on Thursday, Feb. 15, as saying the School of Architecture does not get enough money from the Engineering College. Sen. Fran Lubischer made the comment.

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