

The week that was

Next Monday is the first day of Greek Week on the UNL campus—traditionally a time of self-evaluation and celebration for fraternity and sorority members.

This week has been Hell Week, or Help Week as modern usage would have it, for a number of UNL fraternities—traditionally a time of pledge harassment.

Hell Week.

The term, coined by fraternity men themselves, accurately describes the pre-initiation activities in many Greek houses. Hell Week is "final installment" of the price pledges must pay to be "brothers in the bond." It is a time for pledges to exchange menial and pointless tasks for signatures on a pledge paddle, for endless rounds of push-ups, and for substituting "fun and games" and harassment for sleep.

According to the recently revised Interfraternity Council (IFC) By-Laws such hazing of pledges is prohibited. "Any tactics likely to prove injurious to the pledge or any form of activity that may bring discredit to the fraternity or the organized fraternity system as a whole" also is forbidden by that document.

A few years ago IFC established a Pledge Education Contract. That agreement was more specific: "All forms of hazing will be prohibited where hazing is defined as any action taken or situation created, intentionally, whether on or off fraternity premises, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule. In effect, all pledges will be treated

as mature and intelligent college men." The membership of IFC chose not to use the contract this year.

IFC officials say the contract wasn't renewed because it duplicated the By-Laws and is therefore unnecessary. They also say fraternities resented having to sign the document because, they said, it implied they had followed unethical policies in the past. Individual house members agreed with both reasons. The fact is that unethical policies have been enforced during some fraternity pre-initiation activities. They are unethical because the IFC By-Laws, house regulations

and rush week promises seem to mean little or nothing during Hell Week.

Because it chose not to renew the contract and has not developed a new, constructive pledge education program, IFC must share the blame for any harassment or unethical pre-initiation activities. But IFC is not the only one at fault. Individual house members can be held accountable also. It is they who set the policies for their respective houses and determine the Hell Week schedules.

The image of the Greek system can be no better than that of its members. At one time it seemed Greeks were seriously attempting to build constructive pledge programs. Such attempts at reform are much less visible today—perhaps because they are nonexistent. In fact, there seems to be a resurgence of the old "hard-line" programs.

There will be some truth in the praise given fraternities and sororities next week. Although the Greek system has its faults, not all houses have regressive programs. Many students find fraternity and sorority membership to be a valuable experience both during and after their college years.

But future students may never get a chance to have that valuable experience if some fraternities continue their violations of IFC By-Laws and possibly of University policy. To assure their continued existence they must re-evaluate and update their policies.

IFC has an opportunity to take an immediate step in this direction by working for the implementation and enforcement of ethical, explicit and humane pledge education regulations.

Tom Lansworth
Michael (O.J.) Nelson



Saddening celebration over the victory spoils

Editor's note: Arthur Hoppe, political satirist and humorist, occasionally writes in a more serious vein. Today's column is one of his serious writings.

For the past week the front pages have carried little else but the story of our returning prisoners of war.

Each day, I've glanced at the pictures of grinning young men and tearfully happy wives. And I've turned the page.

I don't want to read about it. "Hero's Welcome For Freed POWs," the headline says. I don't want to watch as the tiny figure on the television screen waves joyously from the steps of the airplane and then, through the electronic magic of instant replay, waves joyously once again.

I know this is the one happy moment of this long and ugly war. I know this is as close to a victory celebration as we'll ever have.

Yet I can't bring myself in the mood of national jubilation. I only feel sad.

Partly, it is the 500 or so young men themselves. I'm glad they're finally coming home. I try to imagine what it would be like to spend eight years in a foreign prison camp. The poor bastards!

Yet it was we who sent them over there to be captured and confined. It was we who sent them to fight this long and ugly war because we could find no way out of the mess without admitting we were wrong.

They are living evidence of our guilt. They are, in a way, us. For we were all, as the peace pamphlets used to say, prisoners of the war.

arthur hoppe
**innocent
bystander**

And their happiness now is in direct ratio to the agony we put them through. Maybe this is true for the nation as a whole. Maybe this is the cause of our jubilation now. So when I see the joy in their faces that their agony is over, I turn the page. I flick off the set. I only feel sad.

The President has asked us to offer "a prayer of thanks for all who have borne this battle." When he says that I don't think of our 500 prisoners. I think of those who bore far worse in this battle. But they are dead. More than a million of them. I can't thank them for dying. The poor bastards! I only feel sad.

The President says we must "resolve anew to be worthy of the sacrifices they have made." The sacrifices for what? The map of Vietnam is unchanged. The Viet Cong still hold their enclaves. A dictator still rules in Saigon. More than 145,000 North Vietnamese troops still remain in the south.

A decade of sacrifices. A million lives, a billion dollars, our own country torn apart. Yet nothing has changed. And I am asked to feel worthy of this. I only feel sad.

But that is only part of it. It is mostly, I think, that I begrudge this long and ugly war this one happy moment.

Its very ugliness and pointlessness, I had come to feel was its only virtue. After a decade of this ugly and pointless war, the country had come to look upon it with revulsion. And I had hope that this

revulsion would extend to any future war our leaders might want to embroil us in as they play their game of global strategy.

The how quickly we forget.

The President talks now of the "selflessness" of our cause, of "peace with honor" of noble "sacrifices." And now the nation's mood is one of jubilation as we celebrate what is fast becoming a famous victory in glorious battle.

So I glance away from the happy faces of those 500 young men. They are the symbol of this war. We should never have sent them over there. Now at last we have them back. They are the only fruits of our victory. And yet the nation celebrates.

How quickly we forget.

And that, I think, is perhaps the saddest thing of all.

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