

Suter: police story ill-timed

Editor's note: Although it is Daily Nebraskan policy to publish letters to the editor on the editorial page, the editorial board decided that because of the issue at hand an exception to this policy was necessary.

The following letter was delivered Wednesday to Daily Nebraskan New Editor Tim Anderson by Ombudsman Jim Suter. The letter is a response to a story printed in Wednesday's Daily Nebraskan that concerned UNL campus security and an alleged attempt by officers to copy confidential information from Suter's office.

Although the letter is critical of the Daily Nebraskan, Suter agreed that the basic facts in the story were correct. Parts of Suter's letter were paraphrased for space purposes.

Suter first says he wishes to make it clear to the university community that he did not contact the Daily Nebraskan about the Campus Security situation. He stresses the confidentiality of his office as the reason.

The Daily Nebraskan learned of the situation through an informant and then contacted Suter. He writes, "Since articles had appeared previously in the Lincoln Journal and because the reporter already had information from other sources on this matter and indicated an article would be published irrespective of whether or not I answered questions, I did deem it appropriate to try to keep the story as accurate as possible without violating confidences."

Suter then relates the interview with the reporter in which he agreed only to answer specific questions and clarify any misconceptions implied by them. He says "This format was agreed upon with the additional understanding that I would be consulted regarding the timing of the publication of the article and that I would be allowed at least a few days to continue my efforts to clarify, review and help to resolve the issues in

question. The reporter said he saw no problem with this approach and that he would work it out with the editor.

"About half an hour after this interview, I was called by the editor who said that in good conscience he could not honor this agreement and that an article would be published immediately. I attempted to dissuade him, but it was his judgment that the public's right to know was of paramount importance. Again, with all due respect for the rights of the press and the public, I responded that in my judgment such an article at this time would serve only to exacerbate existing problems and make the negotiations regarding resolutions (of problems among Campus Security personnel) more difficult. Accordingly, I stated that the interests of the university community would better be served by allowing a few days for clarification and resolutions of the problems before publishing the story."

Suter says he believes it would have been more appropriate to publish a story that was more accurate. This could have happened, he says, if the Daily Nebraskan had waited and then published a complete account not only of the problems but of their resolutions as well.

He continues: "While I fully recognize and support the right and obligation of the press to inform its community, I am most distressed by the manner in which the article in question was handled. I consider the article to be ill-timed, misleading and, in some respects, irresponsible."

The article's headline, Suter asserts, was misleading. The headline read "UNL police blamed in break-in attempt." He says, "I do not, myself, know who is blaming them, unless it is the Daily Nebraskan. Further, this banner line connotes that the Campus Police were involved in a conspiratorial attempt to break into my office. The fact is that one, and only one, member of the Campus Security force is involved."

Suter says he believes the Campus Security force is an "honest, dedicated, hard-working group of people who are stuck with one hell of a difficult job and who, in the main, do a good job at what is often a thankless task. They are underpaid, frequently misunderstood, and capable of making mistakes; however using the poor judgment of one person to impune the entire security force serves no end but to generate and increase mistrust and alienation between the officers and the rest of the University community."

Suter says the article also is misleading because it is not made clear that statements attributed to him were actually answers to questions being asked by the Daily Nebraskan reporter.

"An Ombudsman cannot be effective if people fear that he is going to 'blow the whistle' on them, particularly by going to public forum, unless it is his last resort," he says.

Suter also says one statement is inaccurate. He says the reason that he put new locks on his doors was not to keep the police out, as the article said. He had been thinking of having them changed for some time, he says, because of the confidentiality of his office. The incident with the security officer only precipitated his doing it now, he says.

Suter summarizes by saying that the article has made the resolution of existing problems more difficult; could have been more comprehensive, complete and less misleading if it had been written later; created the impression that the Ombudsman might have been attempting to coerce or intimidate through "public exposure"; and impuned the whole Campus Security force because of the unresolved situation involving one person.



Ombudsman Jim Suter

Sexuality, camping, yoga all part of Free U

Dave Howlett has his work cut out for him. Howlett is chairman of the Free University Committee, and his work is rousing Free U from last year's lethargy.

"I think there's a common feeling that Free U went downhill last year and we're trying to build it up again," Howlett said.

"As of today we have about 25 courses lined up. We're still looking for more people to offer courses or one-day workshops or seminars."

Howlett said Sept. 19 is the deadline for registering for courses to be published in the course description booklet. He said that Free U will run an ad in the Daily Nebraskan for any courses that come in late.

Student registration for Free U will be Oct. 3 through 5. The cost is \$1.

Howlett said he is planning a program to publicize Free U on the Union plaza, Oct. 3. He said tentative plans have been made to set up a registration and information booth.

According to Howlett, Free U now has teachers for the following courses: how to become a pilot, buying and repairing stereo systems, political rap session and the occult.

Men's liberation, women's liberation, gay liberation, fencing, mountain climbing, bicycle repair, sexuality, beginning camping, ham radio operation, meditative yoga and physical yoga.

Basic bartending and cocktail hostessing, history of jazz, science fiction, photography, mind control, parliamentary procedure, theology and history of the Nebraska Democratic Party by Hess Dyas.

In addition, Free U has scheduled workshops on community action research and death and dying, Howlett said.

Howlett said Free U will also be working with the Human Potential Conference Series. The series will present four speakers on the potential of the human mind. Howlett said he hopes to set up courses on each of the topics.

The series' first speaker is Dr. Andrew Weil, author of *The Natural Mind*. Weil will speak on Sept. 20.

Howlett said the mind control course, offered by Yuko Yates, will follow up on Weil's speech.

Free U also plans to offer a two-day conference on consumerism and world economics. Howlett said Ralph Nader and John Gardner of Common Cause are being considered as speakers, as well as business

executives and local consumer advocates. Howlett said he would like to follow up this conference with courses also.

Howlett said other ASUN chairpersons have shown interest in the conference proposal, but where financing will come from remains to be worked out.

Howlett said he would like to see Free U become financially independent of ASUN. (ASUN boosted Free U's budget \$200 this year to get the program back on its feet, according to ASUN President Ann Henry.)

"One of Free U's basic philosophies is to fill a void in the University curriculum, to offer academic and nonacademic courses not offered by the University," Howlett said.

"This year I see a new direction in Free U's philosophy. I would like to see Free U go community-wide. I think it will have to for its own survival," he added.

"Other free universities, such as the one that started at the University of Denver, have successfully gone community-wide. I think Lincoln is a large enough city to support a free university if it is managed properly. I think a free university should try to meet all of the people's needs," Howlett said.