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'Gazette' staff splits; two papers formed

The "free or donation" slogan associated with distributors of the *Lincoln Gazette* may be heard twice as much because of the *Gazette* staff breakup, resulting in two new papers of the same nature.

The *Gazette*, a political newspaper, was published for the last time April 5 because of differing ideas between Ron Kurtenbach and Bill Arth, Milton Yuan and Tom Headley, the four permanent staff members of the *Gazette*.

Arth, Yuan and Headley already have formed a new newspaper, the *Nebraska Dispatch*, which was published for the first time Thursday. Kurtenbach hopes to begin his own paper within the next two weeks. He will continue to call his paper the *Lincoln Gazette*.

Kurtenbach said the staff split was because of "ideological differences between myself, Bill Arth and Milton Yuan."

He said Arth and Yuan would reject some things submitted to the *Gazette* because those things were "too personal and not political enough."

"I wanted the *Gazette* to print everything," Kurtenbach said. "I wanted the paper to be an open, public accessible area."

He said the paper should have been more surprising and experimental, and not as predictable as he thought it was getting.

"The *Gazette* was becoming a less vital paper and this bothered me," Kurtenbach said.

Arth said the mechanics of the split were "Milton, Tom and myself—especially Milton and myself—decided we could no longer work with Ron. Tom was close to us politically, and he decided to go along with us if we decided to split."

Kurtenbach was asked to resign, Arth said, but he refused. Finally they decided to split, with each side forming its own paper.

The type of newspaper Kurtenbach wanted was more of a literary magazine," said Arth. He said Kurtenbach wanted a broader range in the type of material that appeared in the *Gazette*.

"But I don't think that's the issue," Arth said.

"What really caused the split were two things—the decision-making process and the direction we wanted the paper to go," Arth said.

Any of the four staff members of the *Gazette* had veto power, Arth said.

"The resulting situation was that we could never reach a decision because we would nearly always have a 3 to 1 vote," he said. "Some of our meetings looked like the civil war."

"Ron is more interested in civil liberties and public access," Arth said. "He considered the feedback section (the section of the *Gazette* in which readers' letters were published) a sacred area."

Arth said if Kurtenbach couldn't get the other staff members to agree to publish something sent to the paper, he would argue that the article should be put in the feedback section.

Kurtenbach said the *Gazette* needed some light things put in the paper, such as recipes, poetry and more articles on things such as women's liberation and ecology.

"When we struggle for serious things, we have to have some light things in our life, otherwise we'll have no fulfillment in our private lives," Kurtenbach said.

Concerning the request for his resignation, Kurtenbach said, "They wanted to drive me out of the paper, but I wasn't about to be terrorized out of a project I've been working on for a good part of my life."

"They said if we split, both sides would have a new paper with new names," he said. "But this was a concession in my opinion. It was more of a ploy to drive me out."

He said he hopes to have his new *Gazette* out within the next two weeks, and that it may grow and it may not. He said the paper still will be sold on a "free or donation" basis, as is the *Dispatch*.

Of the *Nebraska Dispatch*, Kurtenbach said, "I don't think their paper has credibility. They will reject criticism they don't like. They'll strive for unity at the cost of honesty."

"I admire Bill and Milton for what they're trying to do," he added, "but their credibility makes me suspect."

Arth said the *Nebraska Dispatch* "will be pretty much like the *Gazette* was. In fact, it will be the *Gazette* without Ron."

Arth said he doesn't expect Kurtenbach to be very successful with his new newspaper.

"He might put out a small paper, but I don't think he has the people to do it," he said.

"I don't wish him failure, I just don't think he will be successful with it," he added.

Arth said the split is something which already has occurred, and it won't be discussed in the *Dispatch*.

"We won't declare war against Ron and his paper," he said.

Kurtenbach said all he wants is for the facts behind the split to be disclosed, and then the people can make their own decision.

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