

Battling spirit now, not nature

"Geysers of controversy" were plugged up on Wednesday.

The Nebraskan Legislature passed a resolution to accept the hotly debated Interstate-80 sculptures. Governor Exon was named co-accepter and a provision seeking other sculptures more in line with the Nebraska heritage was scrapped.

The unique Bicentennial sculpture project should be a credit for Nebraska. It often is forgotten that there are persons who live in this state whose primary interest is neither football nor Nebraska's rural heritage. They may not be interested in the I-80 sculptures either, but the sculptures perhaps mean more to them than would a statue of a saintly, downtrodden pioneer woman dragging a covered wagon.

This is not to make light of the pioneers, who did fight all of nature's worst elements—blizzards, drought, scorching sun, freezing winds—to carve out some sort of existence for future Nebraskans.

The pioneers also battled illnesses, depression and loneliness, stranded on the prairie.

But they persevered, always looking to the day when their privations would end. And if not for them, at least ended for their heirs.

It is just possible that they would find distasteful the preoccupation some Nebraskans have for reenacting the pioneer past. The pioneers never looked back.

A different sort of battle for survival is being fought today. Depression of spirit, mental stress, overwork and a piecemeal lifestyle composed of shuffled time segments, are the enemy of people in places like Nebraska; people who, like the pioneers, have their own dreams for the future.

Those dreams are important, for without some thought and planning, the future rarely turns out well.

So, as a gentle reminder that dreams and thought exist, even if they aren't always used, the "abstract" Bicentennial sculptures serve a more important purpose than some rendering that would not be mentally challenging.

There is some comfort in smooth, solid steel and weathered bronze and solid forms etched against the sky in a world where the normal pace of existence is to jump, jump, jump.

Accepting the sculptures was an appropriate move. After all, "Erma's desire" may be our own.

Vince Boucher

letters to the editor

Dear Editor:

While the grumblings last semester of the law students about their library were entertaining, a number of things have gone unsaid.

I wonder how many people understood the significance of the extra \$50,000 spent on books last summer at the Law Library. Where did the money come from? Why, from the library book funds of every college and department in the university. Where else? So the next time the library doesn't have a book you need, get it from the Law College.

The privileges of the law folk extend even further. We were informed by the Student Bar Association that the Law Library is grudging on its hours. For, you see, it was only open until 2 a.m. and not until dawn, and never on holidays.

I suppose we must rest content with another cut in our book funds so that our budding jurists can learn their vocation without burning the midnight oil at home like the rest of us.

The lawyers also seem bent on an autonomous Law Library. But no one seems to have considered the cost. Will our Legislature in its infinite generosity appropriate the additional funds? How many books will English, economics, chemistry and agronomy have to give up this time?

Peter H.D. Murphy

innocent bystander | Unemployed gain esteem; 'Thank God It's Monday'

By Arthur Hoppe

A White House spokesman said last week the Ford administration knows "the economy is continuing to recover" because unemployment is holding steady at 8.3 per cent.

Somewhat confused, I called the Bureau of Unemployment for an explanation. "Yes, isn't it glorious news?" said Assistant Director Milton Haberdash enthusiastically. "It should go a long way toward making everyone happy."

"Including the unemployed?"

"Them in particular," he said. "You see, for years the bureau has been trying to fight unemployment by creating all sorts of new jobs, ranging from aardvark inspector to zygodactyl dancing instructor. But as the statistics show, absolutely nothing has worked."

"That's good news for the unemployed?"

"Certainly. For now that we've proved beyond doubt that we can't lick unemployment, it's obviously our duty to make the unemployed happy with their lot."

"A brilliant concept," I said, "if you can pull it off."

"It shouldn't be difficult," he said. "The basic problem is to restore the unemployed's self-esteem, to make them feel they are contributing to society by not working."

"That sounds tough."

"Not really. Instead of 'unemployed,' we plan to refer to them in the future as 'patriotic inflation fighters who, through their personal sacrifices, are building a better world.'"

"They are?"

"Certainly. By reducing the demand for goods and services, they are doing far more than others to curb rising prices. By using less gasoline than their neighbors, they are making America strong and independent, reducing smog and creating more parking places."

"True," I said.

"By steadfastly remaining out of work," Haberdash continued, "they selflessly create jobs for others, including tens of thousands of dedicated government employees such as myself."

"And all those people who count 'food stamps.'"

"Right," he said. "They must realize they belong to an elite minority, the leisure class, with plenty of time for self-improvement, recreation and being with their families. After all, what's the difference between the idle rich and the idle poor?"

"Only money," I agreed.

"What's more, members of our new National Jobless Corps will wear little badges that will make them the envy of all their working friends and neighbors."

"What will the badges say?"

"Thank God It's Monday!" said Haberdash.

"Esteem, accomplishment, leisure," I said. "What else could they want?"

"Our surveys do show one thing," he said, frowning.

"What's that?"

"A job," said Haberdash.

(Copyright Chronicle Publishing Co. 1976)

vine st | Where's Rosemary Woods irregulars when we need a tape gap?

By Michael Hilligoss

Yossarian's face still radiated the warm glow of Christmas cheer and an apparently wild New Year's Eve party.

"Hilligoss," he said, "It was good to get away from academia for a while."

"Well," I replied, "It certainly looks like you took good advantage of the opportunity."

"True!" he said, nodding almost sheepishly in agreement. "But now I'm rested up for another semester in Lincolnland. Imagine, four more months of escape from the real world of work (as some call it) lie just ahead of us. What a joy to be an overworked, underpaid graduate student...."

Small, brown package

"Yossarian," I interrupted, "I know you didn't come all this way just to sing the praises of graduate student life. Do you have something from the VSI that might interest my readers?" I asked, noting the small, brown package in his hand.

"Oh yes!" he said, "I almost forgot. I have a tape. The quality isn't very good, but we think it's a welcoming speech given last week by a department chairman to his returning graduate students. We aren't sure where it came from, but we thought you'd be interested."

"Thanks," I said. After Yossarian left, I listened to the tape. Here is a partial transcript (with names deleted):
SPEAKER: It's good to see all of you again and I hope that we are all looking forward to a productive and stimulating semester. I do, however, want to comment on the rumor that some of you weren't too pleased with the program here last semester. Several points need to be covered:

A child genius

(1) There is simply no truth to the rumor that Prof.

_____ was poorly prepared for his course. I have spoken with him and he assures me that the visiting high school student who demolished him in the proseminar must have been a child genius with both incredible gifts and bad manners.

(2) The ban on using departmental pencils was not intended as a slight to graduate teaching assistants. I want to assure you that the deficit in K-budget funds was necessitated by the very real need to provide Prof. _____ with unlimited Xeroxing for his research work. The fact that his article was rejected simply illustrates that we need even more funds. As graduate students, you should realize that financing is the key to good research and that we want our faculty to have every possible advantage. This is why we also must impose a ban on the use of departmental paper clips this semester.

No truth to rumor

(3) Finally, I do not want you to worry too much about the students who dropped out at the end of last semester. There is no truth to the rumor that they were unhappy with the intellectual and social atmosphere of the department. We will, however, miss the income from the research fellowships that these ungrateful students were permitted by the National Science Foundation to take with them when they left our program.

So, as you can see, any basis for dissatisfaction on your part is completely unfounded. I hope this clears the air so that we can now get down to work. If there are any problems you would like to discuss please come and see me during the special office hour I have reserved for graduate students, 9:30 a.m. 10:00 a.m. every third Tuesday of the month. END OF TRANSCRIPT.

I thought to myself, this tape must be something from the improvisation lab in the drama department. It couldn't be real, or could it?



d.n. soapbox