

# the desire to win

"The chances are quite remote that a person could win high public office today," Comer said. "It's not just circumstance that people who wind up in the United States Senate come quite old."

"The people who govern American society are achievers," political scientists Kenneth Prewitt and Sidney Verba have written. "They have shown they can manage large enterprises or direct the efforts of others or attract the loyalty of large numbers of people."

Prewitt and Verba set the number of important political leaders at all levels in the United States at about 1,500, out of an adult population of 136 million.

Campaigns must be adapted to the race being run, Sittig said. There are various routes to high office.

**"There is a great deal of accident in a political career."**

"It's possible for someone to enter at the top of the ladder," he said. An example is U.S. Senator Edward Zorinsky, who served less than one term as mayor of Omaha and who had been on the Omaha Public Power District board of directors before winning the Senate election last year. Sittig termed the freshman Senator a "double outsider" because he not only was a relative newcomer to politics, but he had switched his registration from Republican to Democrat just before entering the race.

Similarly, former Gov. Norbert Tiemann held no post higher than the chairmanship of his county's Republican Party before his successful 1966 gubernatorial campaign. In the process he beat a former governor and a lieutenant governor who was a member of one of the state's most prominent Democratic families.

In contrast, Gov. J.J. Exon took a traditional route to office by working quietly for a decade in the Democratic Party, filling a series of party posts which culminated in the national committee. Then, after helping others try for election, he made his own bid for his first high public office—the governorship.

State Sen. Steve Fowler, a former ASUN president, comes from yet another mold in Sittig's assessment of political styles. The Southwest Lincoln representative was part of a liberal, issue-oriented group of activists, according to Sittig. Fowler and a handful of "faithful troopers" ran an intense door-to-door campaign in 1972 to surprise an older, conservative incumbent.

This "volunteer amateur approach" can work in a small district election, Sittig said, but it is likely to fail in city-wide or state-wide contests, which call for professional campaign staffs, organized fund raising and purchase of media time and space. A city council try by a candidate much like Fowler failed because the scope of the race was too big for that approach.

A candidate running in a small district needs to be respected only within his neighborhood, but a candidate in a broader race must have a reputation to match the scale of the office, he said.

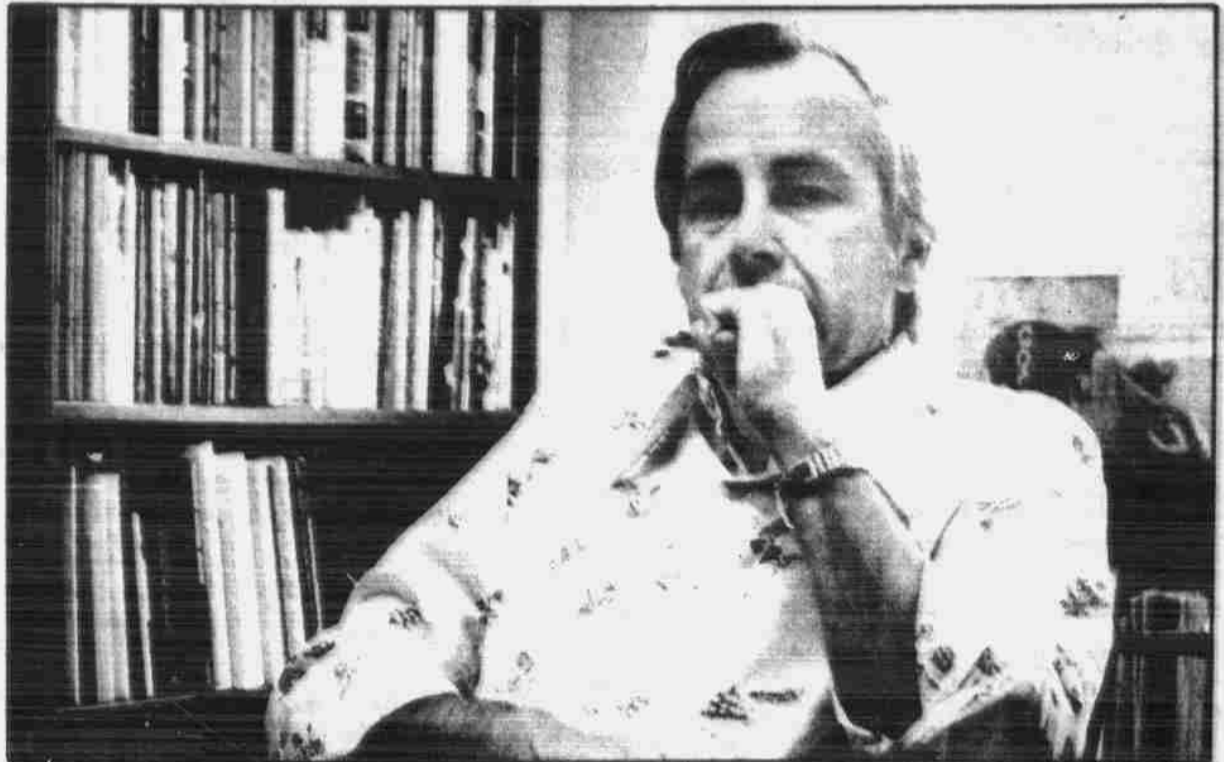
Sittig emphasized that he is talking about the people who win elections when he lists characteristics of candidates.

"We have a lot of people who pay the filing fee and run for office," he said. "If a person is interested in running, it's wide open. If you want to win, that's when some of these other factors have to be taken into account."



Jon Comer

Photo by M. Billingsley



Robert Sittig

Photo by M. Billingsley

## Headed back into the womb And around the bookstores



A dazed look escaped through the heavy eye mascara and blue lid liner. The apparent freshman was wandering through Nebraska Bookstore, carrying a course schedule and a shiny, new, leatherbound notebook. She spotted a friend.

"I've spent \$45 on books this week," she said, "and that isn't even enough for two classes."

I walked away, dodging others wearing similar expressions. The prices were a couple of bucks higher than they were when I had last deposited my backpack at the bookstore entrance and wound my way past cash registers and suspicious door guards to the textbook section.

Across a chest-high stack of "Developmental Psychology Today" books the freshman had run into another friend.

"Forty-five bucks on three books this week, and that's only two classes," she lamented again.

I mentally added together the prices on my own books: \$67 for four classes. Rent is due, the van needs work and tuition statements come out soon. Suddenly coming back to college after a year's layoff didn't seem like such a good idea anymore.

I can spend hours intellectualizing about why I came back to school—pick up courses I wanted to take the first four years but couldn't, enhance my liberal arts education, restimulate my intellect in the academic atmosphere and escape the mental stagnation of small town Nebraska.

Of course, the womb theory of higher education doesn't apply to every graduate student, or even to me, totally. Yet more than a fifth of the University's graduate students share my role this year—unclassified and having no connection with a department or degree program.

At first glance the unclassified grad seems to be here without purpose, but this is not necessarily true. I chose my class schedule for fall with greater care than I have used the first four years. And I feel more committed to learning something worthwhile.

There is a good enough reason for this. Every cent for tuition and living expenses this year comes from my own pocket, savings from a year working for a small daily newspaper in York. My undergraduate study, in contrast, had been financed entirely by a combination of scholarships and social security.

Also, a year off puts school in a different perspective. The average undergrad enters his four or five years of college after 13 straight years of often unrewarding public schooling. College, then, is just another motion to go through. A ritual to prepare for—or stall—entry to the "real world."

My brush with the 9-to-5 world was paradoxical. The real world turned out to be less real than school was.

I lived in a barely habitable basement apartment in York with a small, hyperactive dog and a scuffed-up store mannequin. This comprised by social circle outside of working hours.

In a small town, the options for social interaction are limited. Mainly, marriage is a prerequisite. For singles there are the bars and parties. For the non-drinker who doesn't enjoy the bar scene, there are not other choices, except hermitism.

In a university town, however, bachelorhood is the predominant state of being, and there are alternatives to the bars.

A year's absence hasn't been long enough for either the school or me to change very much. Mainly, the faces are different. Most of the class with which I entered in 1972 is gone now.

Leaving the freshman to her \$45 worth of books and her tales of woe, I came upon a high school classmate whom I hadn't seen for several years, a business administration graduate who works for the bookstore now. His hair was shorter than I had ever seen it, and he seemed uncomfortable in a tie.

We went through the ritual of reciting where old friends are and what they're doing. "Would you believe I'm married now?" he said with an embarrassed grin. "Not only that... she's pregnant. I'm going to be a father. Can you believe that—me, a parent?" "Do you believe it?" I asked.

## 'll fail in your business

—What is the traffic count and flow, i.e., how many people come through this area that might need their poodle trimmed?

—What is the competition like? Does *Mitzi's Grooming* pose a threat?

—Have you talked with *Mitzi's* and other firms in the area and listened to what they tell you about the poodle trimming business?

—If you have some firm answers and supportive figures—what Niehaus calls good research—then a loan officer will be willing to cosign for a bank loan for one-third of the total needed to start the business.

For example, if you need \$30,000 to start *Pieree's Grooming Parlour* and are well-researched, count on the bank loaning you \$10,000.

If your sparkling initiative and profound idea has then convinced, they may even loan you 25 percent initial equity.

After you get the money you must know what to do with it.

"No amount of money can make success," Niehaus said. "I've seen people with plenty of money," he said, "but they really didn't have the expertise to know where to go with the business."

To prepare yourself for your own business, a likely route is to graduate from college, work for someone with a poodle parlor, eventually manage the place and then branch out on your own.

There you are, with your money and your research, ready to branch.

"You can learn something about a business by looking, but no experience compares to working in that field for somebody else," Niehaus said. "Make sure you know your field before you get started."

"And to make a small business work," he said, "you have to put in long hours."

Some business students are already putting in about 100 hours per semester investigating small businesses for academic credit.

Through the Nebraska Business Development Center, students from nine Nebraska colleges, including UNL, team up to visit a manufacturing or retail company, a service business or an agribusiness and evaluate employee-employer relations, do market feasibility studies, help with bookkeeping and visit customers and suppliers. In general they get an inside look at everything from inventory control to store layout.

According to Pat Smythe of UNO's Small Business Institute which controls the program, 87 percent of the businesses would like to have a student research team return.

And 85 percent have adopted some student suggestions for better business.

"Some of the business have tried to hire the students," Smythe said.

This might be one way to prepare yourself for a future in your own business.

Another is—to borrow a cliché—avoid being out with a pitchfork when it's raining soup.

What if it doesn't work?

"It's a bit of a tragedy," Niehaus said. "It's not all that uncommon to find bankruptcy."