

A year as NU president turns Roskens into realist

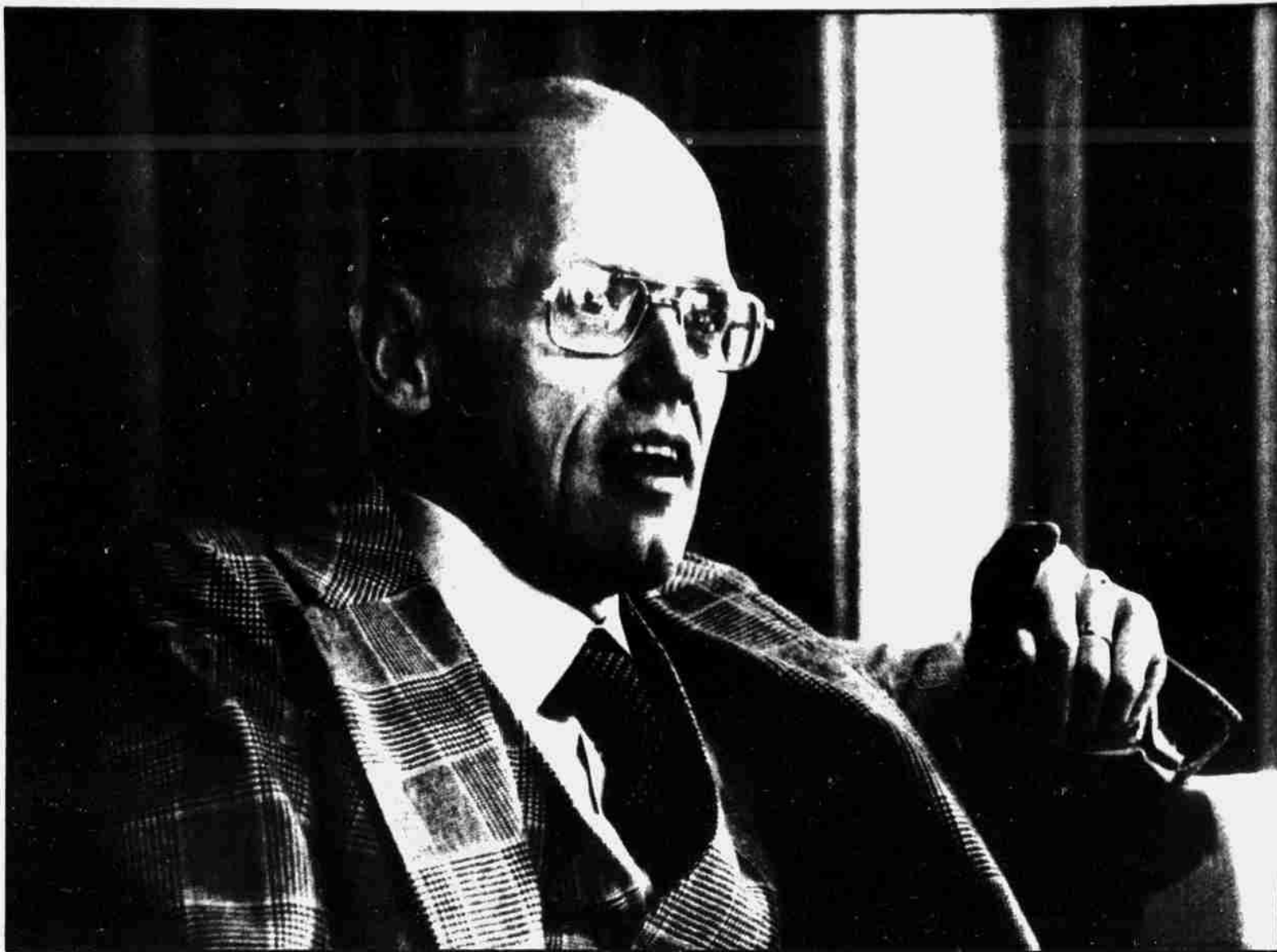


Photo by Ted Kirk

April 1 will be Ronald Roskens first anniversary as NU president.

By Mary Fastenau

President of the University of Nebraska. To many, the title evokes visions of importance, prestige, authority and a sense of remoteness.

But, add the name Ronald Roskens to the title, and university president takes the shape of a farm boy, an early morning riser, a physical education advocate and a man who does not let titles interfere with living.

Roskens is the farm boy who said he still has the urge to get on a tractor for field work when spring arrives.

He is the man who is in the office at 6:30 a.m. because he said he likes to set his day's agenda. He is the runner who jogs two miles at least two days a week and tries to do it five days.

Despite his position, Roskens says, "I'm not unusually modest, but I don't regard this as a regal office."

Wrapping his long leg around the arm of the brown, overstuffed chair and filling his office with the pipe

smoke, Roskens talks about his term as president which will be a year April 1.

People sometimes tell him they think he occupies a prestigious position, Roskens said, but he disagrees.

"I don't think people should feel awe when they enter the office," he explained.

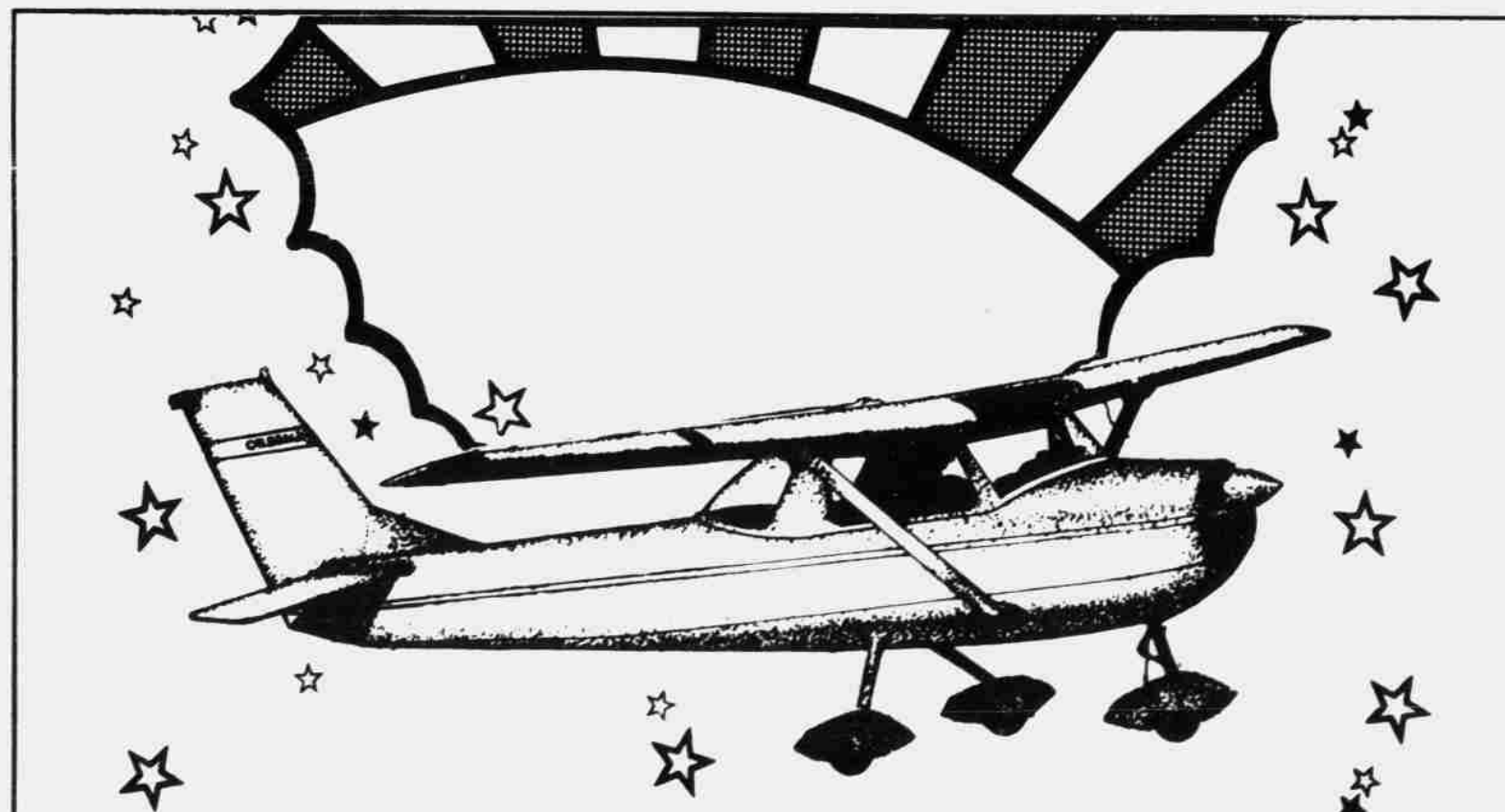
Rosken's said he leaves university problems at his office.

His children do not have to contend with being 'the president's children,' Roskens said, because it is not discussed at home.

"We have always played that low key," he said. Roskens said he has a "fairly firm sense of self-discipline" and recognizes he is not effective without sufficient sleep or relaxing time with his family.

Roskens said he gets up early, which is "strictly a hang-over from the farm." He admitted he is not effective late at night.

"I begin to fold or wilt just like a week," he said.



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Although the job creates frustrations, Roskens said he does not become "mired in frustration."

Roskens said he wishes he could meet with all faculty members and students but knows it is impossible.

"I have become a realist," he said, "and I realize the roster of things to be accomplished will never be a clean slate."

Roskens said his duties as NU president differ from those of the University of Nebraska at Omaha, chancellor, his former position. He admitted he feels "much more remote from campus" and has had to readjust.

"It was a difficult adjustment because when you are on campus you can draw people together," he said. But from here I can merely suggest."

Being NU president is easier, he said, because he is "blessed" with a supportive Board of Regents, effective student regents and "first-rate campus leaders."

When making decisions, Roskens said he listens to these people and others whose opinions he respects, then weighs the alternatives.

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