

opinion / editorial

Legislature celebrates Nebraska's 112th birthday

By Randy Essex

Happy birthday Nebraska, only one day late.

Although the ground and trees probably don't look any older today, the state they help compose was 112 years old Thursday. The day had passed without ceremony several times in the past, but not this year.

A birthday party was held in the capitol rotunda Thursday afternoon, complete with cake and the governor, who was there to cut the cake. The number one-ranked UNL gymnasts put on an exhibition, which was the first athletic event held in the capitol.

Secretary of State Allen Beermann organized the event, which was open to the public. The Lincoln High Choir helped congratulate the state on living one more year.

And, happy birthday to two state senators who were born on Feb. 29th. Thomas Fitzgerald of Omaha and freshman Harold Sieck from Pleasant Dale were wished a happy birthday by their fellow senators Wednesday.

By coincidence, the Legislature was not in session on the state's birthday. Senators were given Thursday and Friday off because the National Convention of State Legislators met in Washington Thursday and is meeting today. Ten of the state's 49 senators attended the event.

As any diligent or occasional reader of the *Daily Nebraskan* probably guessed, abortion laws took up a

great deal of time in the capitol this week. LB316, which is an attempt to bring the state's laws into compliance with court rulings went through extensive amendments and floor debate before it was advanced to final reading.

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, who warned senators that they were passing an unconstitutional bill when they passed the law that has been rendered useless by court injunction, issued the same warning again as LB316 was rewritten by amendments.

"You can understand my exultation at this point," Chambers said. "Venditte (Omaha Sen. Patrick) doesn't know if DeCamp (Neligh Sen. John) is on his side. . . confusion reigns."

"You have chosen to lumber and blunder your way out of the swamp and into the wilderness," Chambers said. "The entire matter has become frivolous, and I'm going to treat it as such."

"The courts will make the bill unconstitutional, and we will be dealing with this again next January, but that has never been an impediment to this Legislature before," Chambers said.

Probably by coincidence, but worth noting anyway, were absences during Judiciary Committee hearing this week.

Venditte and Chambers both sit on the committee. It is certainly fair to say the two are not close legislative

allies. If they agree on a consequential issue, it is usually for very different reasons.

Tuesday, Venditte argued for a bill that would require fetal death certificates and funerals for fetuses aborted after the 12th week of pregnancy. Chambers missed the hearing.

Wednesday, Chambers presented his bill to repeal the death penalty. Venditte was absent.

Perhaps for selfish reasons, I had hoped both would make it to both hearings, to help relieve the dryness and make the hearings' length more bearable.

Toad-child devours laundry basket, cat

There are many things which depress me: funerals, weddings, nuclear testing, pimples, the Boston Red Sox when they drop a two-night double-header to Cleveland, four-putting a green, American Lung Association commercials—and going to the Laundromat.

Going to the Laundromat ranks right up there among my least favorite things to do, right under eating liver and kissing a goat on the lips.

Perhaps the best way to illustrate my distaste for Laundromats is to give you a minute-by-minute account of a typical Laundromat visit. This visit is usually made on alternate Sunday mornings between the hours of 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.

pete mason

11:00—Enter Laundromat carrying large basket of dirty clothes. Trip over crawling child.

11:00:01—Run outside for breath of fresh air. Laundromat smells like warehouse full of soiled diapers.

11:01—Tie handkerchief over nose and mouth and re-enter.

Cast of characters

11:02—Load washer with dirty clothes, sit down and regard cast of characters. Cast of characters includes:—one two-year-old child of undeterminate sex which resembles a toad.

—its mother.

—a man with no nose.

—a comatose wino.

—two elderly women.

—a cat with no hair on its back.

—the attendant.

11:05—Rummage through pile of magazines. Begin reading six-year-old *Field and Stream*.

11:05:15—Toad-child snatches *Field and Stream* and eats it. Smile tolerantly at child and find another magazine.

11:06—Elderly women begin discussing yeast infections. I move to other side of room. Sit beside wino.

11:07—Wino wakes up and asks me to lend him my shoes. I move to chair beside mother of toad-child.

Eats underwear

11:10—One of my washers begins making funny noises. I open the lid. Washer is eating my underwear. Call attendant.

11:48—Attendant comes. Kicks washer. Washer stops making funny noises. Three pairs of underwear disappear.

12:04—Put remaining clothes in dryer. Sit down beside toad-child's mother again. Man with no nose joins us. Asks me to lend him my handkerchief. I go back to elderly women. Toad-child follows.

12:05—I regard signs posted on walls. **WE CLOSE AT NINE, BE DONE IN TIME! NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR LOST ARTICLES. ATTENDANT WILL REMOVE CLOTHES IN YOUR ABSENCE.** Look at attendant. She is 60 years old. She has a moustache. Make mental note never to come in when someone's absent.

12:15—Check clothes in dryer. Still wet. Put in another dime.

Snake stories

12:16—Elderly women talking about L-iberi. Go back to mother. Toad-child follows. Man with no nose is telling mother how he lost it. Go back to wino. Toad-child follows. Wino tells me not to sit on snakes. Go back and sit with elderly women.

12:25—Check dryer. Clothes still wet. Put in dime, turn up heat.

12:26—Toad-child begins making funny noises. Starts eating my shoes. Kick child. Go and sit beside mother. Toad-child follows. Man with no nose sneezes. Go back to elderly women.

12:35—Check dryer. Entire load fits in my pocket. Swear and give laundry basket to toad-child. Toad-child eats basket. Give handkerchief to man with no nose. Give digital gesture to attendant. Turn to leave. Trip over crawling child.

12:57—Regain consciousness. Leave Laundromat. Turn to regard cast of characters one last time. Attendant removes clothes. Toad-child eats cat.

Hard to justify any death penalty

First-degree murder is defined as the premeditated killing of a human being. Second-degree murder is a rash, unpremeditated act. Manslaughter is an unintended, often accidental act. Then there is execution.

Execution is an act sanctioned by the governing body of a society. Although murder and manslaughter are considered immoral acts by most, execution usually escapes similar condemnation.

We do not need biblical guidelines to tell us the taking of a human life is wrong. Humankind knows almost instinctively that there is something inherently wrong with the act of killing a fellow human. It can be argued that the aversion to murder is nearly biologically ingrained.

When we get to the fringe areas—war and capital punishment—we suddenly find ourselves in a moral quandary. We find ourselves wondering if there are times when killing fellow humans is acceptable, such as when defending our homes or ridding our society of killers.

When speaking of the death penalty, logic rarely reigns supreme. Morality, by its very definition, is subject to emotional interpretation.

The proponents of the death penalty are motivated by emotions. They illustrate the classic battle between the concept of justice, which, in its purest form, is logical and objective, and vengeance, which is a purely emotional concept.

Emotions speak louder than logic, irregardless of from what side of the coin they are derived. Where the punishment or murder is concerned, logic takes a back seat to emotion. When a murderer is spared the death penalty, it is a decision based on compassion, either for the murderer or society. When he or she is sentenced to die, it is often a revenge-motivated decision directed against the heinousness of the crime rather than the perpetrator himself.

The most chilling argument for the death penalty is the economic one, i.e., it costs society so much to keep a murderer housed in a place of confinement for so much time.

It is the ultimate indignity, reducing the worth of a human life to a calculable amount of money. This argument is also a sham because it is a feeble attempt to logically defend the motive of revenge. Emotion can not be logically dissected. It is the nature of the beast that it can be approached only emotionally, in subjective terms.

A logical defense of the death penalty may be little more than the abdication of moral responsibility to the condemned. The argument is that there is a greater responsibility to society. If this is true perhaps society would be better served if it were spared the burden of guilt for condoning the premeditated execution of one of its members. For certainly, if a society stands by and allows a person's life to be systematically terminated, it is as guilty as the judge who passes sentence or the technician who pulls the switch.

letters to the editor

A letter to Forde

Dear Nels W. Forde,

Let me share with you two things I have learned at UNL:

(1) The *Daily Nebraskan* is not the word of God. I learned this in Philosophy 266.

(2) Flippant, uninformed people tend to write flippant, uninformed articles and letters. I learned this from reading Tom Prentiss and yourself.

I realize that as a historian you have been trained to rely on second-hand sources, but I propose to you that the *Daily Nebraskan* might not be a sound basis for indignant tirades. Doug Erlandson can defend himself and his class if he chooses. I shall concentrate on (a few of) the idiocies in your *Guest Opinion*.

For instance, it is very easy to flunk Philosophy 266. All it takes is plagiarism—mindlessly repeating facts gleaned from some reference work. His written work requires the student to produce eight to 10 pages of their own ideas, without relying on outside sources. One suspects that, to get an A in a course like yours, one must cleverly paraphrase at least three independent sources, with an appended "interpretation" paragraph.

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The Mobile Blood Bank held at Wesley House on Valentine's Day was a good success! The final tally was 83 pints of blood that were especially for burn patients at St. Elizabeth Hospital and for over-agers who can no longer give blood.

For the Community Blood Bank and for the recipients, I want to thank all who donated blood and all who volunteered their help. And also to the *Daily Nebraskan*—thank you for your help through our paid ad and through the news coverage of the event.

The Community Blood Bank is a local resource worth supporting because it provides thousands of pints of fresh blood immediately available to local hospitals. Persons who join, by giving one pint of blood a year, can have all the blood they or their family members need without replacing it.

Thanks to all who gave so generously!

Mel Luetchens
Minister-Director
Wesley House