

# Roskens: 'Today's students less alienated'

By Shelley Smith

The end of the Vietnam war has lowered the level of unrest on college campuses across the country, according to NU President Ronald Roskens.

Ten years ago, when riots and war protests dominated the campus atmosphere, students felt alienated because they were shut out of the administrative process, Roskens said.

"Administrators were expected to operate as parents. We were the shepherds of the flock."

Because things weren't discussed 10 years ago, Roskens said, problems ballooned.

However, the administrators' approach to university leadership and to students has changed, he said.

"There is more openness, candor, and desire to be forthright on the part of all parties," Roskens said.

Roskens, born in Spencer, Iowa, was educated in a one-room country schoolhouse. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in education from the University of Northern Iowa. He received his Ph.D., also in education, from the University of Iowa in 1958.

After teaching at Minburn, Iowa, High School, and serving as an assistant dean at the University of Iowa, Roskens was appointed to the administrative staff at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio.

Roskens was an administrator at Kent State from 1959-1972. On May 4, 1970, four Kent State students were shot by Ohio national guardsmen.

**ROSKENS SAID IT** was hard for him to remember his exact thought the day of the shootings because it was so long ago, but said "it was without a doubt a horrible experience for all of us."

"It was something I and others hopefully will never have to repeat," he said.

He said it was difficult to compare administrators during that period with administrators now because he said he must look at both roles in context with the time period.

"In the last ten years we (administrators) have been the product of new learning, of new experience performing in our roles," he said.

If a riot, broke out on one of the NU campuses today, Roskens said he "would try to do now what we tried to do then."

**"WE WOULD KEEP** the avenues of communication clearly open so the grievance we were dealing with could openly be discussed. We would try to keep the atmosphere as devoid of emotion as possible. If someone has a reason to demonstrate, that reason needs to be



he finds middle-American values comfortable.

**HE WAS APPOINTED** interim NU president in January, 1977, and was chosen as president in April. He said he enjoys his job, despite his hectic schedule, and he said he likes Nebraska's university atmosphere. Roskens was interviewed for the Michigan State presidency by MSU officials last January.

He said he talked extensively with Michigan State trustees and search committee members, but after reflecting on the situation, he decided that he preferred to stay in Nebraska.

Many people ask him how he can enjoy a situation like Nebraska's where he has multitude "live" problems, he said.

"I typically respond, 'Is there any place anywhere which does not have problems which require channels and tough explanation of alternatives?'" he said.

He said although heated disagreements arise between the regents themselves, and between regents and students, he doesn't let those disagreements upset him.

"The university process is the provision for an arena for disagreements," he explained.

"What I am concerned about is the ability of this whole enterprise to both continue and maintain a qualitative base," he said.

**IN THE FUTURE**, he said, universities and colleges throughout the country will see their enrollment leveling and eventually declining.

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discussed," he said.

Roskens said he senses that today's students don't feel alienated as they did 10 years ago because of the emergence of independent spirit in students.

"Students are not inclined to be shaped by, or allow themselves to be shaped by a single issue. Some call it apathy, but it's not really the case," he said.

Roskens returned to the midwest in 1972 to serve as chancellor at UNO. He said he came to Nebraska because

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