

opinion/editorial

Courtroom door slams on reporters

Nebraskans have once again had courtroom doors slammed in their faces.

The case in Seward County, which deals with truancy charges against a Milford juvenile, was closed to the public last week without any of the attorneys asking for the courtroom closure.

While juvenile cases in many states are protected from the scrutiny of the public and news media, one has to question the manner in which Seward County Judge Robert Cattle handled the case.

After arguments presented by attorneys in open session, Cattle

used his judicial power to exclude the public and the news media.

What is even more frightening is the fact that he refused to even permit Lincoln attorney Alan Peterson to argue against the court closure.

As the age-old battle between free press and fair trial continues to claim Nebraska as one of its battlefields, it is hoped some kind of clear decision can be made to ensure equal treatment to both sides.

But a clear decision hinges upon the Supreme Court's ability to recognize the importance of the First Amendment and the implications the Bill of Rights has on the American

system.

Allow the First Amendment to be violated too often for the sake of Sixth Amendment rights, and it may have serious implications on the intentions of our forefathers.

Serious questions must be answered before a courtroom is closed. Does pretrial press actually influence a jury? Are there alternative means of ensuring a fair trial? Does allowing a courtroom to be closed lessen a jury's responsibility to the public and does the public have a right to attend courtroom proceedings?

It is hoped that the Supreme Court will answer these questions clearly in a case now before them.

Unfortunately, an earlier test at North Platte concerning closing the Simants trial failed to provide the court system with stringent enough guidelines to settle the issue decisively.

The Supreme Court needs to consider carefully closed courtrooms in this country and give us some workable guidelines from which the press and judiciary can work.

Until then, it is hoped that judges in this state and others will concern themselves with all sides of the issue and not arbitrarily close their courtrooms without hearing the cry of the public and news media.



Big Eight life inspires columnist

By Kevin Field

"That's life in the Big Eight."

That is a pretty common statement heard around campus. It's often given in response to someone who has been relating an experience they have had with UNL—usually an unpleasant one.

big eight

And there is a line that says something about life being rough in the Big Eight. I don't know if that one refers to the dominance of Big Eight football teams or if it is a response to the weather typical of this part of the country.

Curiosity about those two statements as well as interest in other Big Eight Schools prompted this column.

While traveling through Custer County, Oklahoma, take care not to let the local authorities catch you drinking a beer and dancing at the same time.

It seems as if several hundred students from Southwestern Oklahoma State University have dared the authorities to enforce a 1966 attorney general's opinion restricting dancing at establishments selling beer.

They did so by dancing in a bar and carrying signs reading, "Dance at your own risk." The local police decided to enforce the statute.

Economic woes are common throughout the Big Eight. Everyone (administrator and regents) wants to increase tuition or housing costs, always citing inflation as the main reason.

The University of Kansas is seeking a 9.5 percent increase in low-rent housing rates despite being in the black. But that is less than a 13 per cent inflation rate, says Jordan Haines, regent chairman.

Kansas also is contemplating raising the state's drinking

age from 19 to 21. I do not think the 19- and 20-year-olds have much to worry about, though. It appears the proposed bill never will get introduced.

The Kansas Legislature's most controversial issue so far this session has been the fate of 225 parking spaces surrounding the capitol.

KU is also the home of self-professed diplomat Norman Forer. The associate professor of social welfare is doing more about the Iranian crisis than just providing lip service.

Several University of Missouri-Columbia students were out of luck after returning from their Christmas break. Many returned to flooded dorm rooms only to learn that UMC will not cover any personal losses. A broken water fountain was the culprit.

Also at Columbia, it was determined that campus lighting could stand improvement, even though it compared favorably to that of other Big Eight schools. Does that mean UNL lighting is inadequate?

Student control recommended for DN

In the lead editorial of last Friday, the quotation from Thomas Jefferson concerning a free press was a nice idea, but it was beside the point. The Editor argues that I, as an

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ASUN senator, reflect the current mentality of government in the wake of Watergate, in insisting upon "more control" of the press, which locally means the Daily Nebraskan.

He writes, "UNL has always enjoyed a free student press edited, operated and controlled by students." I agree with the First Amendment to the Constitution and even

letters to the editor

If Jerry Fairbanks (Jan. 22 Daily Nebraskan) finds the anti-abortion movement "worrisome", then maybe he ought to consider the question in its historical perspective.

Rather than an "occasional wave that sweeps over segments of American society in 20-year cycles", the abortion question represents the current low point in the declining respect for all forms of life.

The anti-abortion movement encourages not a "return to the Good Ole Days" or the creation of a "Great New Society", but rather the preservation and edification of that which is sacred to all: the dignity of life. If Mr. Fairbanks still considers this cause philosophical and dogmatic, then I suggest he observe that the pro-abortion position is a product of the decade so appropriately called the Me generation.

Steve Dofing
Graduate student in Agronomy

'Misrepresentation'

I found your article on Boys Town to be a complete misrepresentation of the facility and its treatment programs. Boys Town was shown in an unfavorable manner by only presenting the opinions of those not satisfied with the Teaching Family Model. The fact that the opinions cited were mainly from disgruntled former employees lends little credibility to the article. With only minor research it would have been easily ascertained that the program itself is not new; only its introduction to Boys Town. The youths who reside there are thus not the guinea pigs depicted in your article. The rationale of the Teaching Family Program is that youths get into trouble because of a lack of adequate socialization by their family. The surrogate Teaching Family Parents are to socialize the youths so that they can cope with the problems of living in modern society. This includes smiling for points when being introduced to others. The points are to reinforce the behavior so that it will continue once the youth is returned to the community. Facilities are being shut down and employees faded out because each cottage is self-sufficient and does not require other assistance. The population has dropped because the Teaching Parents must provide intense interaction with each youth and this can only be done with eight to ten youths per set of parents. This type of program will not be effective for so called "hard core" juveniles so a screening process is involved. The real question here is whether it is better to babysit a thousand boys or to restructure the lives of a few hundred. I find the latter to be a better alternative.

Jeff C. Miller
Senior, criminal justice

the state guidelines respecting the conduct of the press. The point is not whether the Daily Nebraskan should be controlled or more controlled, but rather who has control. A short review of events may help.

Previous to January 1972, the fact that there was no paternal guidance from the administration "left the staffs of the student newspaper with the total responsibility for this area." (Guidelines, 1977) Since that time the Publications Committee, at the order of the Regents, has taken it upon itself to hire the editor and business manager and now the ombudsman of the Daily Nebraskan. "As publishers they would have the right to assure themselves that candidates agreed with the guidelines and planned to operate them." (Guidelines, 1977) The editor, carefully screened for the position, hires the remaining staff. Should it be seen that in "overall judgment" the editor was not acting ethically, they can be rebuked, or dismissed by the committee.

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