

Hazing 'minimized'

Some UNL fraternities revise social procedures

By Mary Fastenau

Some UNL fraternities have re-evaluated their social education programs and developed a revised curriculum which doesn't include hazing.

This change in attitude has resulted from increased pressure from national fraternity headquarters, awareness of the legal liabilities involved, and the realization that hazing is not a positive way to achieve brotherhood and unity, according to some fraternity members.

Hazing is defined by the Fraternity Executives Association as "any action taken or situation created, intentionally, whether on or off fraternity premises, to produce mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment or ridicule."

The national organization has defined such activities as paddling in any form, excessive fatigue, dressing in a style which is conspicuous and not in good taste, morally degrading or humiliating games and activities, among others.

Tradition

Lee Chapin, Interfraternity Council president and member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, said tradition is the argument most often given in defense of hazing, but added the argument is a fallacy because the oldest tradition is the ceremony in which a pledge becomes an active member.

Chapin said people also argue that hazing provides a common experience which encourages brotherhood among pledges.

At least two fraternities on campus, Sigma Chi and Sigma Nu, have had ultimatums delivered from their national headquarters which have instructed them to change their pledge program or face the possibility of losing affiliation with the national organization.

Chapin said hazing was not a part of the fraternity system when it was founded, and people are beginning to realize how "stupid" it is to subject others to mental and physical humiliation.

Change difficult

Mike Phillips, former IFC president and a member of Sigma Chi, one of the houses that received the ultimatum, said change is not easy, but people are beginning to realize the uselessness of forced brotherhood and unity.

Amid talk of change, some people still claim hazing exists on the UNL campus. One disgruntled person, who asked to remain anonymous, said talk and actions are not the same thing in some houses.

He said when he pledged the fraternity he was assured there would be a minimal amount of hazing.

"They told me they hazed more than most houses but it was nothing that was degrading," he said.

He said he found that to be false, and eventually he left the house. Eight other pledges also left.

He said he left because of the attitude of the active members toward pledges. He admitted the program had positive points, but no one knew how to implement them, he said.

Mental hazing

"It wasn't so much the physical hazing, but it was the mental hazing," he said.

He decided to leave when active members of the house got him out of bed, took him down to the basement, tied him to a chair, poured a gallon of soap and cold water over him and demanded that he tell them when the pledges in the house were leaving on their traditional sneak trip.

Part of the tradition is that the trip remain a secret, he explained. If he told them, he said the other first-year members of the house would hate him, but the active members told him if he didn't say anything they would kick him out of the house.

"Either way, my life was over in that house," he said.

Phillips said people know that these things happen, but there is a concerted effort to make changes.

"It is a well-known fact that some houses haze," he said, "and nationals are breathing down their necks."

Change coming

Jayne Wade Anderson, coordinator for fraternities, sororities and cooperatives, said change is on the way, but

not everyone accepts it.

"Some people will want to make changes, but not all people," she said, "and I think that is perfectly normal."

From a perspective of national fraternity organizations, Anderson said they are beginning to "take the visors off" and realize something needs to be done.

She said national fraternities have "moved aggressively by statement and action."

On a campus level, she said it is usually the leaders in the houses who see the need for change because they are able to look beyond their individual living unit to the total picture.

When change does come, it has to be total, she said. "There is no such thing as a halfway road," she said.

Benefit actives

Mike Mullally, a senior and member of Sigma Nu, a house that was pressured by nationals, said the changes were beneficial for active members as well as for the first-year members.

"We found a lot of guys were changing for the good of the fraternity," he said.

One of the guidelines given to his house by national headquarters was that they could not force pledges to do anything actives wouldn't do.

"If we all want to swallow a piece of liver, that is fine, but the pledges can't do it by themselves," he explained.

Changes include requiring the pledges get eight hours

of sleep instead of four. The actives also got up at the same time the pledges did, Mullally said, acknowledging that as a change from the past.

He admitted that there was opposition to the progressive program, but when all the changes were made, he could "honestly say" his fraternity didn't haze.

"Every house says it, but few can live up to it," Mullally noted.

House opposition

Phillips also said there was opposition to change in his fraternity. Not only were the nationals fighting the attitudes of people in the house, they were also battling 70 to 80 years of tradition, he said.

The hardest part, according to Phillips, was finding substitutes for hazing that would fulfill the goals of brotherhood and unity.

He said fraternities also must combat the "age of legalities."

Chapin said his house has not been contacted by its national organization. But unofficial sources alerted them to changes in national policy, he said, and his house made the necessary changes.

He said UNL was "pretty much ahead of fraternities across the nation" because of the strength of the Interfraternity Council. Right now, he said the biggest problems are with small colleges where there is no one to make certain hazing doesn't occur.

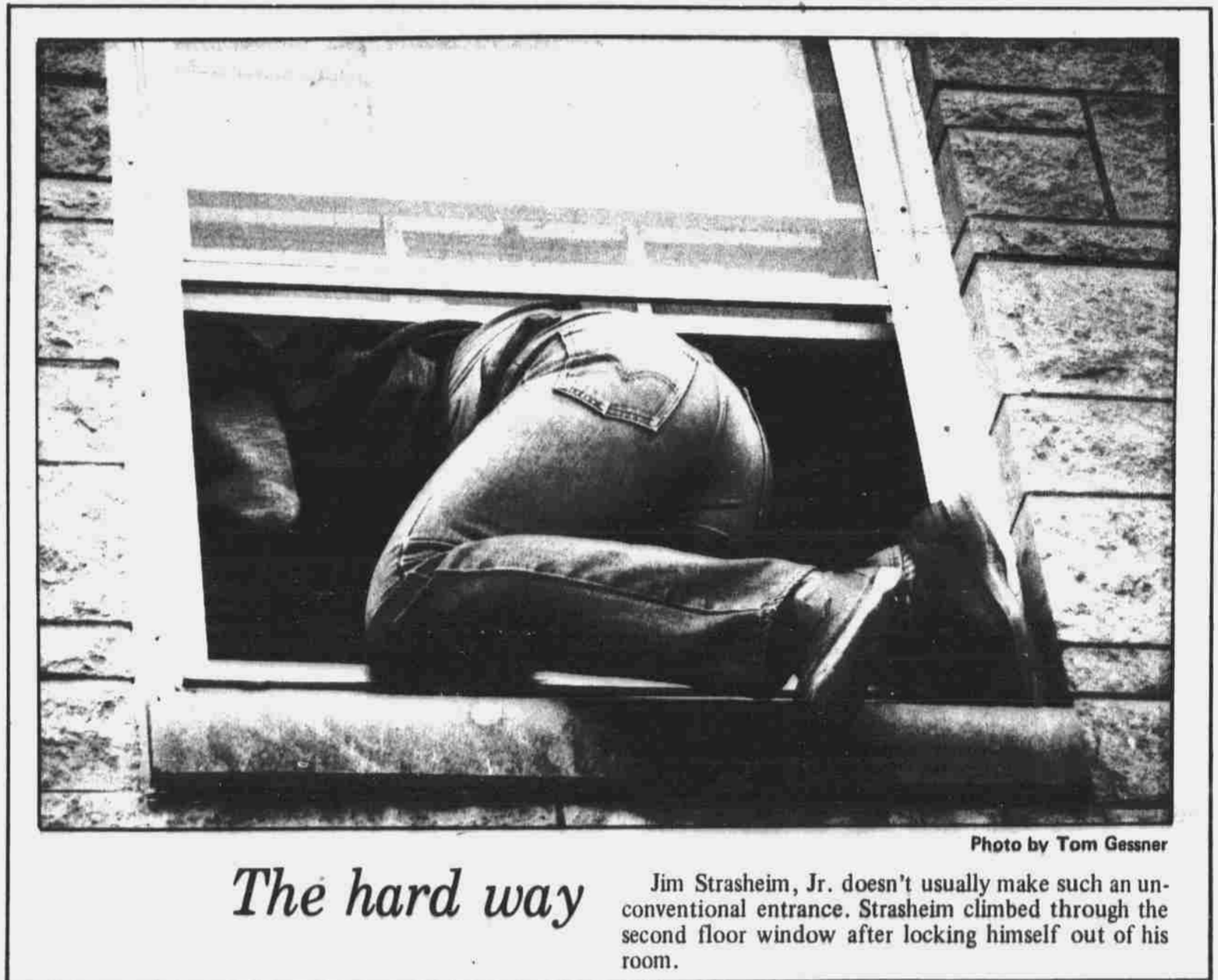


Photo by Tom Gessner

The hard way

Jim Strasheim, Jr. doesn't usually make such an unconventional entrance. Strasheim climbed through the second floor window after locking himself out of his room.

Regent proposal reactions differ

By Michelle Carr

A proposal before the NU Board of Regents to request funds to hire researchers for each regent drew criticism from two UNL political science professors and agreement from another.

The proposal, which was tabled at the March 17 regents' meeting, requested \$100,000 to create a research staff. Regent Robert Prokop of Wilber, who proposed the motion, suggested that a research staff would supply needed information that the current administration is not supplying.

Michael Steinman, a Lincoln City Council member and associate professor of political science, disagreed with the creation of a regental staff. Because of economic difficulties facing the university, he said any appropriation should be given directly to operations, like teaching and research.

Steinman, who teaches public administration courses, said the university has enough administration.

"If the regents don't trust their administrators (central administration) they should find administrators they can

trust," he said.

A regental staff would duplicate the work of the central administration, Steinman said, and too much duplication already exists between the central administration and the campus administrations.

Another professor disagreed with the regents' proposal. Louis Picard, assistant professor of political science, said a research staff is not needed.

"They would basically create their own bureaucracy on top of the systems' bureaucracy," he said.

Picard said the whole purpose of the central administration is to check the three-campus administration and report to the regents.

Picard said it was "incredible that they (the regents) were even contemplating more bureaucracy."

Robert Miewald, professor of political science, who also teaches public administration courses, agreed with the research staff proposal.

A research staff could do the "legwork" for the regents, he said.

However, Miewald questioned the need for researchers for each regent.

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