

# Broadway lights entice some from academia

By Pam George

The lure of sparkling city lights and the dream of stardom tugs many prospective actors and actresses to the crowded and competitive streets of New York City. Or Los Angeles. Or even Kansas City.

The choice of the city depends on the individual, who packs a suitcase full of dreams and belongings, but often leaves behind thoughts of obtaining a college diploma.

Many students in theater arts choose to practice

their craft in the professional world, while others diligently study the elements of theater in college.

Tice Miller, professor and graduate adviser for UNL theater arts, said he believes a degree is extremely important.

"It would be tough to say that the college degree makes a difference, but some students are finding out they need it before even getting in the door," Miller said.

He said he rarely advises students to quit school to pursue their career, because "sooner or later not having it (a bachelor's degree) catches up with them."

Miller agreed the exception would be a student who was not doing well in school, but had acting ability. "Then it would be better to get away for a while, and then come back," he said.

One such "exception" was Ann Sandin, 20, a student who left UNL for a full school year to live in New York City.

Sandin said the thrill of being in New York was counter balanced with disappointments.

"It was where I wanted to be," she said, "but the money situation was impossible."

Sandin worked as a sales clerk to support herself, and found little time or money to take acting classes.

Miller said most young people who must earn a living while pursuing a career encounter this problem.

"While in school they are free to work in many productions, but out in the world, they end up spending most of their time working as a waiter, or something," he said.

Sandin said she moved to New York because she was tired of school and not really working toward a goal. But now that she is back in school, her interests have expanded. "Now I really enjoy it," she said, "and I am shooting for the full degree, not just taking acting classes."

The experience was a good one, she concluded, because it enabled her to "get my mind together."

Another former student, John Thew, 20, still lives in New York City after attending UNL for two years. He works as a cocktail waiter, and has scheduled an audition in several weeks with an acting teacher.

Thew's basic reason for leaving school was "I have always done things my way. And I wanted to try New York, no matter what."

Thew said competition is severe, but he has made many contacts with producers and agents during the eight months he has lived there.

"It's just a matter of time, now, keeping in touch with them to be sure they know I am available for work," he said.

Not having a degree in theater arts doesn't bother him, Thew said, and his plans do not include returning to school.

"In the professional theater some people would prefer someone who has had a college education," he said. But then many don't care. They just want to know you are in touch with yourself."

Kathy Saylor, stage manager for the Nebraska Repertoire Theater Children's Company, has stayed in Lincoln since beginning her study of the theater at UNL.

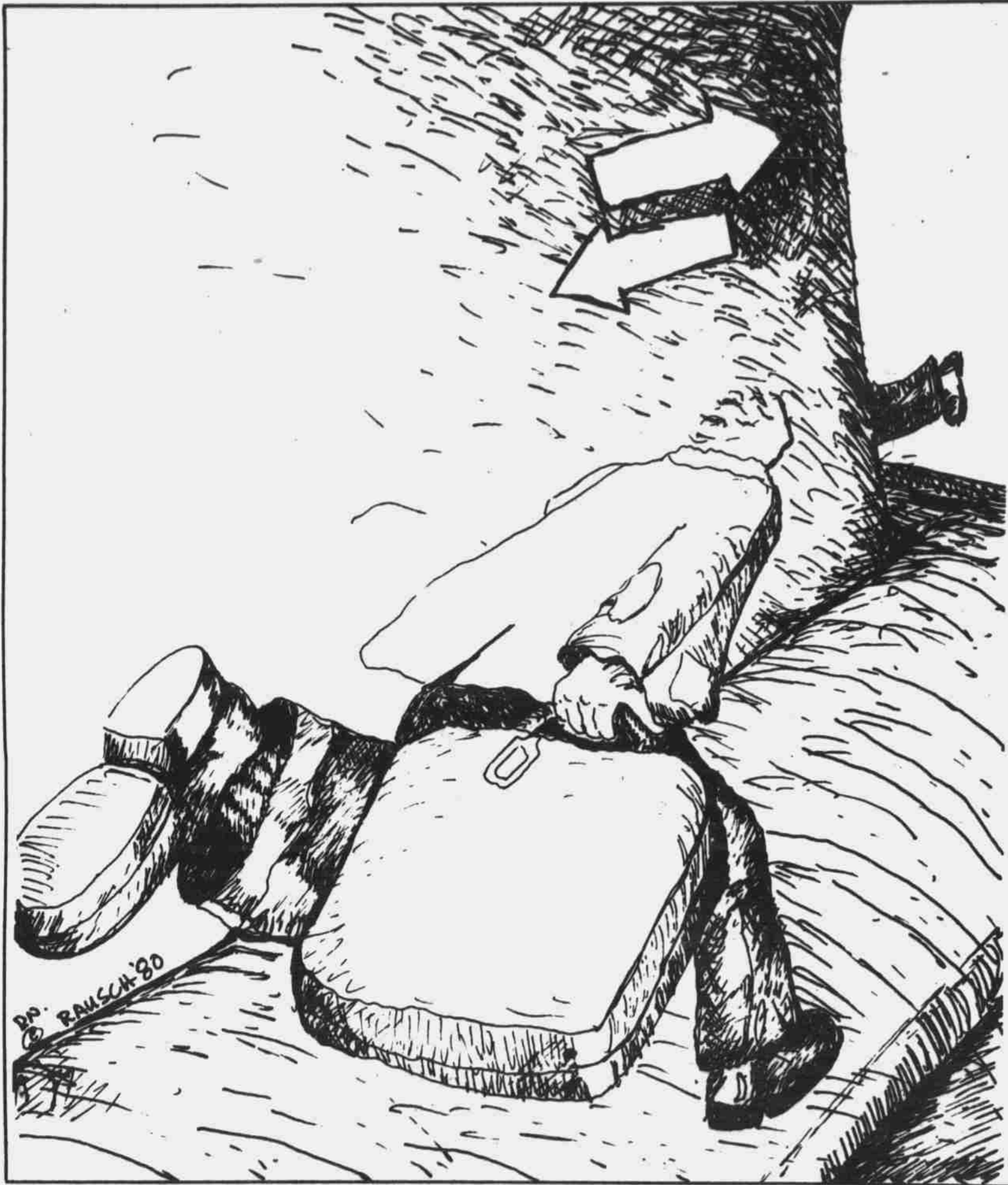
"Lincoln is highly competitive just like anywhere else," she said, "but leaving or staying in school is an individual decision."

Saylor said that requirements are difficult for those students who just want to act. But, she said, the opportunities available to aspiring performers are "fantastic" when in a university situation.

For example, the Nebraska Masques will sponsor a New York City agent April 26, who will explain techniques in commercial auditions, radio auditions, acquiring living accommodations, and other aspects of working in theater that a student should know, Saylor said.

Miller agreed the benefits of being in school should keep many students from following a path to elusive bright lights until after graduation.

"But for some students the theater is just in their mind," he said. "So they often need a chance to actually work and scrape, to make it a reality."



# Nontraditional students—return to tradition hard

By Mary Fastenau

They call them nontraditional even though they take traditional classes, study in traditional ways and graduate with degrees just like everyone else.

The only thing that separates them from every other student is that they acknowledged a change in "what they wanted to be when they grew up" after they were grown up.

Richard Rowland changed his mind after retiring from the Army Corps of Engineers and 33 years of work as an engineer. At age "56 years young" he decided he wanted to study law for the rest of his life, instead of choosing the traditional route and playing golf during his retirement years.

Rowland said his family and friends have supported his decision, although a few don't understand.

"They tell me, you could play golf the rest of your life, are you crazy?" he said.

His decision to return to school was made after years of working with lawyers since "everyone liked to sue us," Rowland explained with a laugh.

He thinks that he will specialize in water resources and will have to set up a private practice.

"I'm going to hang out the shingle and say, 'Hey world, here I am!'"

The hardest part of returning to school has been planning his evenings for studying instead of other activities, according to Rowland.

"All of a sudden I had to spend three to four hours studying. It took a couple of weeks to get into that frame of mind," he admitted.

The Socratic method of teaching has also raised a few problems, Rowland described this as when instructors

"badger you to death to get all the details out and are always asking why." He said adjusting to that method of teaching is a problem for most freshman law students, no matter what they have done or studied previously.

He has had no problems with the other "traditional students." Rowland said he joined one of the legal fraternities and has enjoyed that experience.

Although he admitted there may be some disadvantages to returning to school, he said he doesn't have the distractions other students might have.

"I got a lot of that stuff out of the way a long time ago," Rowland said, punctuating his observation with laughter.

"I guess I've never really been conscious of age. That just hasn't been a hang-up."

Although he decided to change careers, he didn't change addresses and commutes from Omaha with three other law students. He said he enjoys that and it gives him an extra two hours of study time.

Gay Crosier is also a commuting law student but her home is in Geneva. Crosier didn't wait until retirement to go back to law school she made her decision four years after graduation.

"After I'd been out of school four years, I looked at what I was doing and where I was going and I wasn't that happy in the job I was in," she said.

Crosier explained that she had worked in the area of human services serving as coordinator of what is now Hotline for the Handicapped and as a consultant and a social service worker for several counties.

The 25-year-old said her decision to come back to school was a gradual one. She said she had considered it early in her undergraduate work but then had abandoned the idea after hearing all of the "horror stories."

Although no one was vocal in opposition to her decision, she said that initially her husband was the only one who "truly supported" her.

The mother of a 3-year-old son, she said people were afraid that she would become so involved in school, she would ignore her home and family.

"When they saw that my home and family weren't falling apart they became very supportive," Crosier said.

Not abandoning her role as a parent, she said she does not study at home. She says she will stay in Lincoln with her husband's parents if she has a lot of homework.

Her experience outside the academic world has helped focus her current educational experiences, Crosier explained.

"Having been out of school for awhile and out in the job market helps."

She worried about "sticking out" when she came back to campus because she had received her undergraduate degree at Nebraska Wesleyan University where there are few nontraditional students but that hasn't been a problem.

After graduation, she said she will take a job anywhere and hope that she can support her husband, a teacher, when he goes back to earn his doctorate.

They are grouped together as nontraditional students, but Rowland, Crosier and other people who have changed their minds about "what they want to do when they grow up" after they grow up, say that they have no regrets about their change in career plans when experiences outside the academic world have given a new focus to their study.