

Sky-high, buy-bye, get me to the train on time?

Commentary By Robert Bauer

If I had to describe the Lincoln train station to someone I would probably tell them to take Memorial Stadium, put a roof over it, and turn the lights way down low—and all this when it was empty. It's the only building I've ever seen where the ceiling is so high the light can't even reach up to it.

My first memory of the station goes back to when I was 17-years-old. I was waiting at the station to catch the east-bound train to Chicago. Around midnight an interesting fellow, smelling something like a Coors recycling bin, comes in and starts talking to me. He was doing a sales pitch for South American marijuana.

Holding my nose I told him that for the time being I really wasn't interested. He persisted and continued to extol the virtues of the South American type over the native Nebraskan variety. I told him all I wanted to do was wait for my train. I also mentioned that my father, the police officer, would be dropping by to visit me soon. He suddenly remembered his friend who needed a ride home.

Some things at the train station are just beyond human resourcefulness. Take the

arrival of the train for instance. It's not enough that the train is scheduled to arrive in Lincoln at the chipper hour of 3:30 a.m., but to have it arrive at 4:30 a.m., is kind of like parking meters on campus.

To complicate matters there are the Amtrak employees. They recently reported to the Sunday *Journal-Star* that they had been on time 60 percent of the time to Lincoln. It seems that with two of five trains being late, the employees have given up telling waiting passengers when the train will arrive.

I watched an old man become part of the wooden benches as we waited for the train one day. In six years and 10 train rides, Amtrak has gotten me to my destina-

tion on time only once or twice. One morning I awoke expecting to be somewhere near McCook, Neb., and found that I was actually in Missouri.

I wouldn't want to leave anyone with a totally-bleak outlook on train travel. Somewhere in the mass of 24,000 students there is probably someone who enjoyed riding Amtrak. I would like to hear from them.

The only thing I can see running in Amtrak's favor these days is the low fares. In the mid 1970s it was possible to fly United or Frontier to Chicago for less than it cost to take the train. Now that is not the case. With United Airlines operating a complete monopoly on the Lincoln to Chicago market, the airfare is now \$139. Amtrak will get you there, eventually, for \$92 (round trip).

departures

I guess my opinion of the Lincoln train station would be a little better if anything good ever happened to me there. Unfortunately, the only reason I am ever there is to catch a train.

douglas 3
13th & P 475-2222

5:40-7:40-9:40
TERROR TRAIN
(R)

5:30-7:30-9:30
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Chevy Chase (R)

5:20-7:20-9:20
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(PG)
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