

perspectives/on UNL's past 1950/1980

magazine of the daily nebraskan

friday, december 12, 1980

Introduction

Students in the 1980s tend to view 1950 with a sense of rosy nostalgia—as a time of clean-cut kids going to sock hops in a nation full of pride in its patriotic citizens and unparalleled power in world affairs, as well as economic prosperity at home.

Fifties dances were the craze when today's college students attended high school. And now conservative politicians are rallying around the cry, "Let's make America great again"—presumably referring to a 1950s sort of greatness.

Whatever one's conceptions or misconceptions about the 1950s in general, it is certain that the lifestyle and campus at the University of Nebraska (not UNL until 1968) were very different in 1950 than they are in 1980.

In this issue of Perspectives, the Daily Nebraskan takes a look—through the eyes of old photographs, dusty

archives records and memories of alumni—at the realities of college life in Lincoln around the year 1950.

In 1950 it was the Big Seven instead of the Big Eight, and the Nebraska football team had not won the conference championship for a number of years—and would not for many more, who was the big power? Yes, it was Oklahoma.

There were no coeducational dormitories, and Greek fraternities and sorority house members were the "big wheels" in campus social events and organizations.

The campus had many fewer buildings and many more parking stalls than it does today.

All men were required to take Reserved Officer Training Corps courses. Yes, things were very different from 1980—whether better or worse depends on each individual's viewpoint.

Enjoy. Significantly, the stories focus more on fun activities and general lifestyles, on Greek houses and dorms than on the problems that doubtless existed at the university at that time.

The reasoning is that those are the parts of life that make college enjoyable in any year and are of interest to any generation.

No, the 1950s were not the trouble-free times as portrayed in the television series "Happy Days." They were important educational years for many men and women who are at the peak of their careers today. Their perspectives on the past give today's student a more accurate view of present-day UNL.

Diane Andersen
Perspectives editor



Photo courtesy of UNL Archives

In 1950, the campus had more through streets (12th and 14th) and fewer buildings. Most modern dormitories, the Administration Building and two sides of Memorial Stadium did not exist, for example.



Photo courtesy of UNL Photographic Services

This 1977 photo shows that the campus is a much more cohesive whole. It is larger, with more buildings and fewer trees.