

opinion/editorial

Twisted logic displayed in call for higher speeds

State Sen. Ernie Chambers is applying twisted logic in his attempts to justify a legislative bill he has sponsored to raise the interstate speed limit from 55 to 65 miles per hour.

Chambers contends those who favor keeping the speed limit at 55 mph because it saves lives and conserves fuel are wrong. In fact, he not only says they are wrong, but also asserts raising the legal driving speed on Interstate 80 would be safer and more fuel efficient.

The Omaha senator said lower speed limits cause constant stops and starts that waste gasoline.

This explanation for defending higher speed limits might be worth considering if traffic on Nebraska's interstate was regularly bumper to bumper. But it isn't. There are few, if any, cars forced to stop or slow down because of the current speed limit.

But even if this logic was sound, it isn't consistent with other reasons Chambers offers for raising the legal driving speed on the interstate.

A higher interstate speed limit,

according to Chambers, would encourage drivers to leave other roads and use the interstate. This would only add to the possibility that a driver would be forced to stop or slow down more frequently.

Chambers also says citing a decrease in the number of traffic fatalities as a reason for keeping the speed limit at 55 mph is erroneous. He said these figures are not restricted to interstates statistics, but include city streets and highways. However, there is no way he can refute the fact that traffic deaths have decreased since 1974, which just happens to be the year the speed limit was lowered.

Perhaps the most ridiculous and certainly the most frightening defense Chambers gives for the bill is his belief that interstates were designed for speed.

Wrong. Interstates were designed for travel hopefully safe, efficient travel.

The bottom line is this: Lower speed limits conserve fuel and may save lives. Aren't those results worth spending a few more minutes on the road?



Hunting teaches city writer about life, not death

Editor's note: This is the second article in a five-part series.

My eyes were stinging from the perspiration that poured down my face. I could hear every breath I took, and the air hurt as it filled my lungs. My legs felt as if they were attached to the ground, and sharp pains shot up into my hips. My gun grew heavier in my hand.

We had been in the woods for almost five hours. Now we were midway up a long, snow-covered hill, and I didn't think I was going to make it. My hunting companions Roy Blizzard, C.D. Duncan and Bo Griffith tromped after the three dogs, in search of grouse to kill. I thought I was going to be the one to die.

bob greene

In my notorious column on hunting, I had made the following statement:

"(Hunters) call themselves 'sportsmen.' What a joke. Unlike other sports, hunting takes little agility, no physical conditioning, no speed. Any slob with a gut full of booze can go into the woods and if his weapon is powerful enough, if his telescopic sight is strong enough stand a good chance of making a kill."

Now, on my hunting trip in the hills of West Virginia, I was learning that I had been flat-out wrong about at least one thing. Whatever else can be said about hunting, there is nothing physically easy about it and as a city-living newspaperman who is used to hailing a cab rather than walking five blocks, I was finding it out in the most stark and graphic way.

For the first three hours of our hunt, I was doing all right. We were doing much more physical work than I had tried in years—we were in the middle of a forest, lifting our legs through deep snow, plunging our feet into frozen creeks, climbing over branches and broken logs. I was so determined not to make the other hunters wait for me that for awhile I made it on pure adrenaline. But now, with that steep, snowy hill reaching toward the sky in a seemingly endless incline, I felt my strength evaporate.

What an experience it was, though. I wasn't sure how it was affecting my theoretical view of hunting. I would have to think about that when the day was over, and I was back in my hotel room—but I was seeing things so beautiful that I often wanted to stop and just stare.

The West Virginia countryside was so gorgeous it could make you cry. We were miles from civilization—other than our own breathing, and the crunching of our boots in the snow, there was not a sound to break the stillness. Each time we would come over the crest of a hill, or turn a corner in the woods, some startling new vision would present itself. The trees outlined against the snow, the valleys unmarked by human endeavors, the solitude of the deep forest for a person used to the crunch and clatter of the city, the whole thing was a joy, a gift.

Of course, it was easier for me to love it because we were having very little luck flushing grouse from the underbrush. The harsh weather had driven the birds into the sights of my gunning companions. I was secretly happy that the birds were staying put, and alive; the hunters had made no kills.

But to hear my hunting companions tell it, the actual shooting was only a part of their pleasure. The things I was enjoying—the sights I was encountering in the woods, the pleasure I was deriving from pushing myself forward up and over the hills—were what they said that they, too,

loved. We disagreed on the morality of killing animals—but they told me, as we walked together, that the grace and tranquility of being here in the middle of raw nature had a lot to do with why they hunted.

I could give them an argument about that—if the joy of the scenery and the exhilaration of the physical effort were what drew them here, then why not carry cameras instead of guns? But right now I was in no condition to argue with anyone. Just keeping up with them along the trail was all I could think about, and I checked to make sure the safety on my shotgun was in position. I wasn't so sure that, if things got any worse, I wouldn't be dropping the weapon.

And yet there was pleasure even to this. If I ever felt this full of pain in the city, all I would have to do is pick up the phone or summon a colleague for help. Here, though, if I didn't make it out of these woods, I wasn't going to get out. There was no way for a vehicle to come back here, and we could shout for days and not be heard.

There was a kind of happiness to that. I came from a world where there was always a variety of solutions to every potential problem. So did the men I was hunting with. But out here with that world left behind all we had to depend on was ourselves. My hunting companions didn't talk about it much, but I could tell they were aware of it, and honored it.

I didn't know if I was going to have to make the real decision—the decision about whether to shoot at a bird—but I was grudgingly admitting to myself that the feelings I was having out here had a lot to do with living, and not much to do with dying. I knew that could change in the flash of an instant—but now, crossing over a ridge with my three hunting companions, I was feeling the best I had in years.

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Letters to the editor

Articles criticized

I wish to make a remark regarding the reporting of the abortion controversy. It concerns Beth Headrick's "news story" on the front page of the January 23 Daily Nebraskan. Ms. Headrick wrote columns last semester in which she supported the pro-abortion position (or "pro-choice" if you like). To assign her to the task of objectively covering both sides of the question was certainly expecting too much. She ends her "news story" with this sentence: "Under the Human Life Amendment, a pregnancy caused by rape could not be terminated." This sentence a) is not related to the preceding discussion b) is not attributed to any of the people she was supposedly reporting on, and c) is not supported by any references or arguments. It is a purely editorial comment and

has no place in that story or on any page other than the editorial page.

I hope that this sort of bias will be eliminated in the future.

Terry Christlieb
Graduate College

Editor's note: The end of the original story on the abortion controversy was deleted by mistake. The reporter has included the response by the president of UNL Students for Life to the statement that appeared at the end of the story. Doug Novak had said women rarely get pregnant from rape. He added if a woman does become pregnant from rape there are various organizations that offer counseling and adoption services to help the victim understand just because the rapist committed a crime, the baby still is innocent.