

Editorial

Greeks accused of discrimination

Brotherhood, that magical, spiritual gift supposedly spreads with equal cheer throughout the fraternity system, is at a premium at Michigan State University these days.

Members of two houses located on the Lansing campus have recently embroiled themselves in situations that are far from brotherly. Specifically, the houses have fostered discrimination on the basis of race and sexual preference.

The first case involved the Michigan State chapter of Delta Sigma Phi. Last fall, John Nowak moved into the fraternity house, having been a member for about half a year.

The chapter soon after learned that Nowak is homosexual. He moved out on his own initiative and the fraternity began suspension proceedings against him.

The fraternity was bothered that Nowak's lifestyle was inconsistent with that of other members, according to James Studer, the Michigan State assistant vice president for student affairs.

After two separate considerations of the campus policy about discrimination, a campus judicial board found that, yes, John Nowak was discriminated against, and yes, he should be granted his request to regain full membership rights to Delta Sigma Phi. The fraternity appealed both decisions, leaving University President Cecil Mackey to resolve the matter.

Mackey overturned the board's decisions and said policy did not cover "sexual preference," in Nowak's case.

According to Studer, Nowak and members of the campus gay and lesbian group may seek counsel outside the university.

Although the case has severed all Nowak's friendships in the fraternity house, Studer said, he is continuing to fight the president's decisions for the "principle of the thing."

The second case was an offshoot of Greek Week. The Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic at Michigan State (with \$1,000 from the student government) sponsored a newspaper supplement promoting Greeks and their activities, complete with photos of each house's members.

In the Theta Chi picture was one additional "member," named Willie. Willie was a statue — a statue of a black boy with wide, white eyes.

Soon after the supplement was circulated on campus, President Mackey called the chapter national president and the chapter was put on "university probation."

A black faculty member then brought the case to the judicial board — the same that had considered John Nowak's petition. About four weeks ago, the national Theta Chi chapter put the Michigan State group on "indefinite probation" with specific directions on how to amend its gross display of racism. The student affairs office backed that action with a one-year probation period of its own.

Studer said some campus members were so outraged that "they wanted the chapter banned and thrown off campus."

Nowak's case was de facto discrimination. The Delta Sigma Phi house apparently accepted Nowak as a member without knowing he is gay and then blackballed for that reason.

"John got along with them quite well," Studer said. Then, "all of the sudden they found out he has this particular characteristic and they don't want to associate with him. They didn't want to be viewed as the 'gay frat.'"

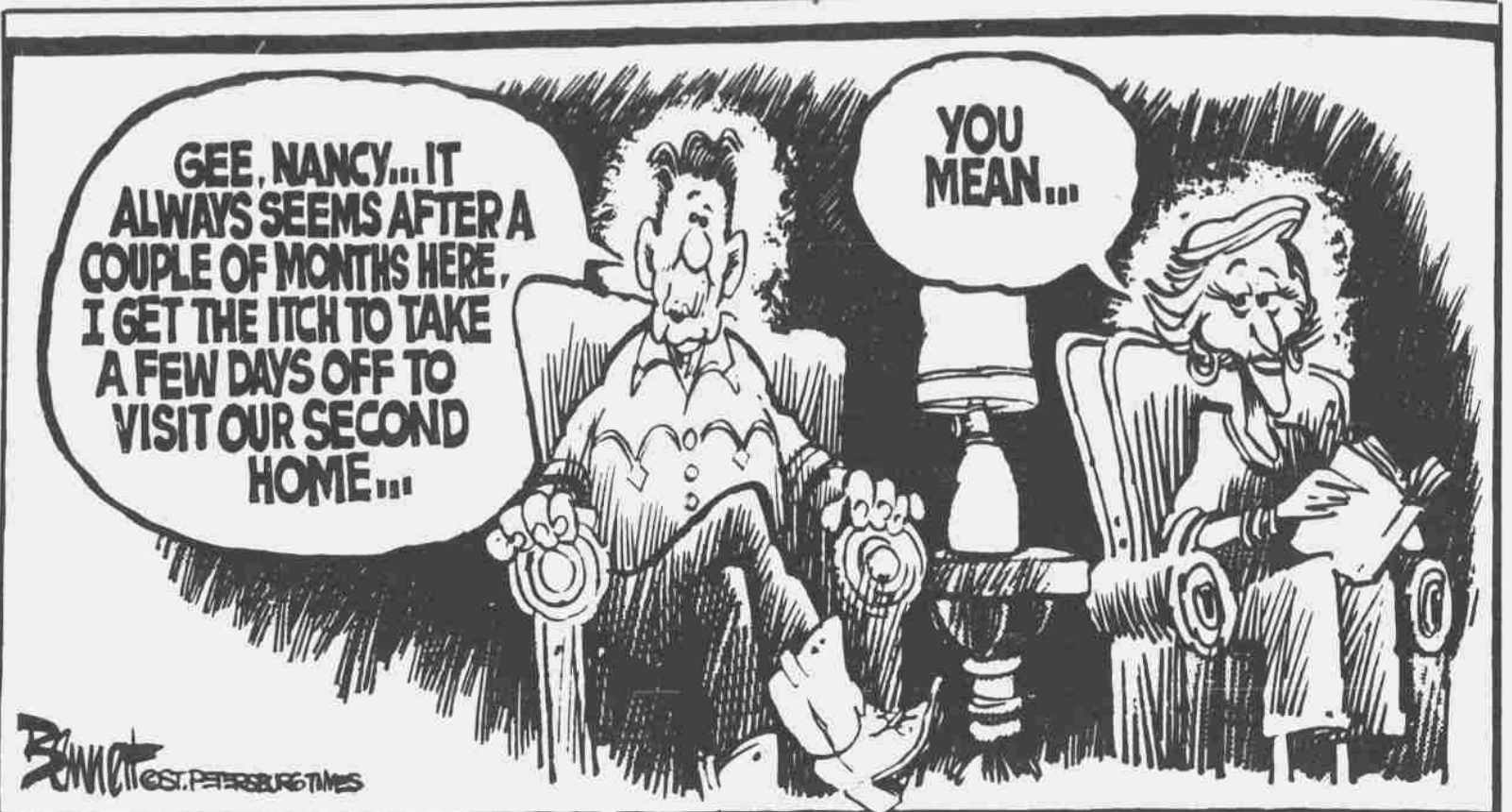
The case of "Willie" is less overt. The fraternity immediately apologized for the picture and the attitude implied by its content. While some members have maintained ignorance — that they didn't realize the statue made a racist statement — Studer said others were quite aware of the message sent.

As Studer said, the events are isolated incidents. But at Michigan State, at least, they have been happening with increasing frequency, he said.

Whether the cases are isolated or not, they don't speak well for the entire fraternity system at Michigan State or anywhere else, for that matter.

As the fraternities on this campus begin selecting which pledges they are going to activate, let's hope they display more true brotherhood than their counterparts in Lansing.

No, what happened there isn't happening here, but whenever a group actively selects and rejects who it will associate with, the opportunity for discrimination is present. The Michigan State stories should serve as an example of how Greek brotherhood ought not to be practiced.



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If it's not poetry ... what is it?

Shortly after William Kloefkorn's appointment as Nebraska's State Poet, a UNL committee, comprised of regents, alumni and administration, began a search of their own for the nation's first Campus Poet Laureate.

After days of a grueling search, they selected Jacob K. Imula. This column is proud to have been selected as the



Mike Frost

first showcase for the poetry that inspired the regents, alumni and administration, and will inspire us all.

"Golly, What a Neat Place"

Boy, oh boy, UNL is neat.
It's got neat desks, it's got neat seats;
It's got neat bikes, it's got neat cars;
It's got neat kids that drink in neat bars;
It's got neat dorms, it's got neat Greeks;
It's got neat days, it's got neat weeks.
But Oh! Alas, someday I'll graduate—
And that's a day I'll really hate.
But for now there's a smile on my face;
UNL, golly, what a neat place.

"Business College"

Oh, give me a home
Where accountants may roam
And Texas Instruments add.
Where seldom is heard
A Marxist-like word
And the boys all belong to some frat.

"Chancellor's Reply"

No, no, no, no.
No, no, no, no.
No, no, I said no.
Because, because, because, because
Because, because, because, because
Because, because, I said because.

"Greek Week"

Oh Henry Fonda died and Ingrid did too.
Forty Palestinians just killed a Jew.
But that won't bring a tear to my cheek
'Cause from Sunday to Saturday it's Greek Week.
A hundred people crashed in a plane,
Southern Japan got washed away by rain.
There's always some gripe for some to seek;
Not me, I'm smiling; it's Greek Week.

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Episcopalians disillusioned by changes

In New Orleans, the Episcopal Church is holding its 67th triennial general convention — an affair costing a cool \$50 million or so. There, about 11,000 Episcopalians have gathered (and I do not say this lightly, for I am one) to do further damage to my church. Specifically, the convention has voted to decimate the hymnal — the collection of songs authorized for placement in the pews. Having revised the Book of Common Prayer into mundane irrelevance in 1979, those who make decisions for the church now have revised some songs and excluded others from the hymnal — about 40 percent in all.

What has been happening to the Episcopal Church is symptomatic of what has been happening to other mainline churches for at least the past decade: It has been



Ross Mackenzie

losing allegiance. A Gallup Poll has concluded that the church as experienced a 33 percent drop in allegiance since the mid-1970s — with 3 percent of the population calling itself Episcopalian then, and 2 percent now.

In the Episcopal Church, as in other mainliners, there has been an undeniable drop in the enthusiasm of the parishioners. Some have left the pews — some going to other churches, some spending their Sunday mornings at gardening or golf. Others have stayed — grimly, silently,

hanging on to a faith and a love for their church in bitter defiance of the waters that would wear them down and push them out. Those waters have taken two essential forms: (1) in many churches a heightened clerical emphasis on a sociological politics that many lay persons find offensive, and (2) a rising failure of the clergy to provide the comfort that many parishioners seek for their sinning souls.

Surely the church leaders have recognized that decline in enthusiasm. Otherwise they would not have changed the Prayer Book — making it "less offensive" and "more relevant" — three years ago; otherwise they would not have changed the hymnal for the same reasons how. Yet, in meaning not to offend, the church hierarchy has offended meaning. Hear Cleanth L. Brooks, Gray Professor Emeritus at Yale and a lifelong Episcopalian, on the reasons for the decline in Episcopal enthusiasm:

Another cause for "disaffection was the adoption in 1979 of a revision of the Book of Common Prayer, a revision so thorough that it is properly not a revision at all but in fact constitutes a new book. I am inclined to think that the new Prayer Book has proved the worst irritant of all, a weekly mortification of the spirit Sunday after Sunday."

The revamping of the hymnal will run a close second. The hierarchy set up a commission to examine the hymnal. Because "sexist," many favorites were approved for being vaporized down the Episcopal memory hole.

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