

Arts & Entertainment

Guerrilla 'vidiots' use Nielsen in fight against American TV

By Pat Clark

Robert Nielsen, don of the influential television-viewing Nielsen family, merely was slipping out of his three-bedroom, split-level suburban Americana house to get the mail when it happened; the glint of knife, the rustle of blanket, and he knew not what happened next. He thinks he was knocked out, but may have merely fainted.

"Where am I?" he said, the words sloshing out of his groggy head. The sound of his own voice started to bring him back to his senses. "Never mind where I am," he said slowly, "is 'Hill Street Blues' on yet?"

A youngman's face appeared in front of his "Hill Street Blues." Maybe you think Captain Furillo has an APB out for you. Is that it?"

Nielsen looked at the taunting visage

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that hung over him. A Mohawk haircut defined a line halving his head. One could extend the line down mentally to also divide the eyes and the glazed, bloodshot stare of the veteran television addict that fell blankly from them. Interesting that he should have acquired the eyes of a classic nonstop viewer so young, Nielsen thought. Silver antennae in the form of a "V" were tied to the back of the young man's head by a length of black coaxial cable. Clearly Nielsen was in the hands of one of the growing gangs of television punks to which the country had turned so strongly. "Vidiots," the local news broadcaster had called them in a scorching editorial last week.

"What do you want with me?" Nielsen said.

"You'll get the answer to that in due time," said the young man, whom other members of the gang addressed only as Antenna. "In the meantime, it is enough that we have you. You are enough to advance the cause. Your name will make the Video Nostra the most feared guerrilla television organization in the world."

"Guerrilla television?" said Nielsen, asking the obvious.

"Yes," Antenna sneered. "You were expecting perhaps that we were just another gang of TV punks, I suppose." He spit on Nielsen's shirt. "I spit on them," he said. "We are terrorists, as surely as the Red Brigades or the Baader-Mienhoff gang."

"Who are they?" Nielsen said. "I'm afraid I don't see a lot of news. I have Julie in charge of that."

"Never mind," Antenna said. "I should have figured as much. It's not important.

What is important is that television is the last untapped battleground for the revolution, and we are going to tap it. And you are just the man we need."

"Revolution?" said Nielsen, never one for the deep question.

"Yes, cotton-minded one, revolution," said Antenna with a face that bespoke a self-conscious and withering patience. "A revolution against everything that is hackneyed and stale in America. And nothing, NOTHING I tell you, is more hackneyed and stale than American television. Sitcoms full of mother-in-law jokes beget spin-offs that retell the mother-in-law jokes. Cops with day-glo teeth burst scratchless through plate glass windows to nab every conceivable menace to society.

"Well, welcome to the world, Mr. Nielsen," Antenna continued. "Matt Houston is not going to come here and save you. But you can save yourself, and what remains of the mind of America, by working with us." Antenna chuckled to himself. "Of course, you have no choice."

"Will I be able to watch television?" he said, a little more panic than he had wanted slipping into his voice.

"Until your eyes bleed," Antenna said. "Not only can you watch television, but you must. You would be no good to us if you didn't. We want you to watch all the television you can stand. It's what you say about the shows you watch that matters. You are the most powerful television mogul in America; networks bow to you, advertisers funnel millions of dollars into time slots on shows that you bless. That kind of power cannot be allowed to grow untended if the revolution is to succeed."

"What am I to say about the shows?" Nielsen asked, confused.

"You'll discover that soon enough," Antenna sneered. "In the meantime, you have some viewing to do. It's almost prime time. The network officials will already be wondering where you are. Well, you are right here, leading America out of the video wilderness. Come with me to the viewing room." Antenna said.

Antenna turned and shouted into the next room, and a young cohort dressed in similar garb, sans antennae, appeared.

"Prepare a place in the viewing room," Antenna said. "We have a guest; a very honored guest. And he should be fed. Instruct Static to pop a TV dinner into the oven for our guest. Nothing but the finest; Swanson Hungry Man Salisbury steak."

"That's my favorite," Nielsen said suddenly.

Next Week: Nielsen sympathizes with his captors.



Staff photo by Craig Anderson

Brian Hull, half-owner of the patent on blinking lights hats seen around town, models the Herbie Husker version of the cap.

Now everyone gets chance to see their name in lights

By Ward W. Triplett III

It's the same Herbie Husker who graces the baseball cap worn by thousands of Nebraska fans to every Husker football game. Only this Herbie has two blinking red lights where his eyes should be and he's surrounded by four more blinking lights.

"We're going to put a switch on it soon," said Brian Hull, closing up the mini-golf section of the downtown Sluggo's where he works. "That way, you'll be able to turn it on and off whenever you like and not have to disconnect the whole thing."

Hull, 21, owns half the patent on the Herbie hats with blinking lights. Since starting a basically mail-order business in late November, Hull said Allen's Custom Electronics, based in Texas, has sold about 800 of the hats.

"I can't sleep at night," Hull said. "My friend and I think they're the hottest thing since the hula-hoop."

The electric hat idea sprang from a conversation between Hull and Willie Allen last year.

"He had seen an ad in Rolling Stone that said, 'Jog at Night.' It had a visor of sorts with a beacon on it," Hull said. "We went up to Omaha once, and lo and behold, a guy was there selling a visor that had a white 'N' in lights on it."

While Allen sold a few hats with two lights in them late last year, Hull checked around to see if anyone had a patent on the lights-in-the-hat business. Finding none, Allen's Custom Electronics was born.

The success, says Hull, still has him shaking. A former business major at UNL, Hull stayed out of school this semester to work and sell the hats instead.

"Currently, you can only get a hat through the mail here (2530 N St.),"

Hull said. "We're still getting financial backing from around Lincoln, but in a few months, they should be on sale at most of the bars."

The hats can hold between six to 36 lights, which operate on a 9-volt battery sewn into the hat's crown. The hats and the lights are available in almost any color, Hull said. The Herbie hat sells for \$14.95.

"We do a lot of special order," Hull said, pointing out that each additional six lights costs \$2 more. Names of favorite rock bands, couples and teams are the most popular. A Dallas Cowboy star hat sold for \$30 last week, he said.

Hull said the cost of the hats is due largely to the shipping costs from Texas, where the hats are hand-made by a staff of eight people. Allen lives in Texas and handles sales in that area, Hull said.

Around Lincoln, he said, the hats have slowly been gaining attention.

"I wear mine all the time I'm down here, and 50 percent of the people going into Chesterfields ask about it," Hull said.

They were also popular at the Orange Bowl among Nebraska fans, he said.

"Husker Bob Rowe wore one down to Miami. A cabby offered him \$30 for it. It was beat up and some of the lights were coming off, but the guy offered him \$30 and more for it several times," Hull said.

In the future, Hull envisions lighted T-shirts and jogging shorts. But first, hawking the hats is the top priority. A commercial featuring Husker Bob is scheduled, and more advertisements nationwide are hoped for.

"I know we're not going to quit on these until we have them in every town with a major university," Hull said. "The way I see it, who can't afford to have their name in lights?"

English recipe for fish and chips sets apart Lincoln's oldest cafe

By Eric Peterson

"People tell me 'If you change it, you're crazy,'" says Mildred Weiler about the Greenwich Cafe. "We keep it the same because people like it that way."

The Greenwich Cafe, 1917 O St., has never changed its authentic '30s and '40s

batter and wanted us to try it, so we did," she said.

It's been a favorite ever since. The fish is very distinctive, especially with the vinegar at each table. A regular fish dinner is \$2, and the jumbo fish and chips dinner has five pieces of that wonderful fish for \$2.90.

Fried chicken is another specialty at the Greenwich Cafe. A regular chicken dinner is \$3.

There are also apple, pear, or banana fritters. Small pieces of the fruit are fried and sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon.

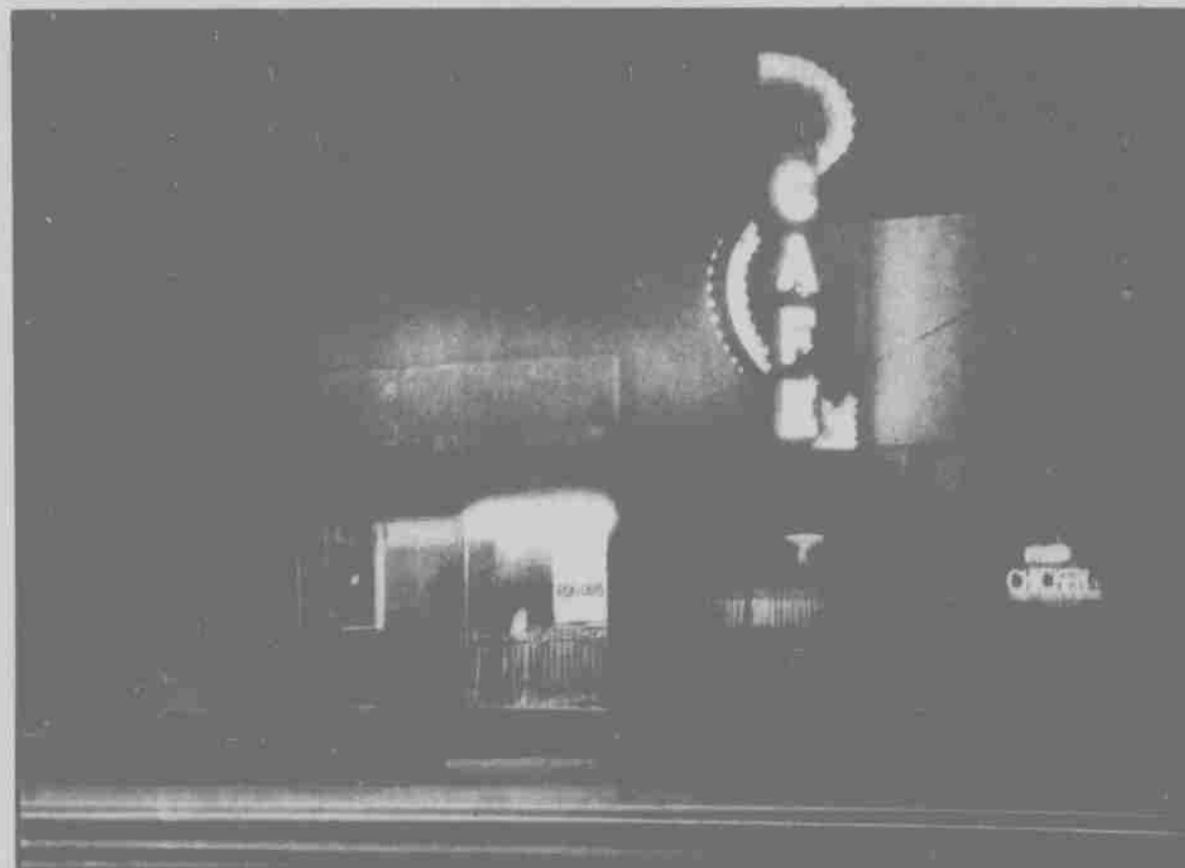
Weiler manages the Greenwich Cafe for her husband, whose father started the restaurant in 1934 during the Depression. "It boomed immediately," she said. "We were about the only people downtown who had good food and good beer."

Weiler said the cafe is known as the oldest one in Lincoln, and owns the city's first beer license.

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cafe feeling. There are dark pine booths, red and green linoleum tiles and an old pressed design ceiling.

The best thing about the place, though, is the fish. The Greenwich Cafe has specialized in fish and chips since 1973. Weiler said that a former UNL botany professor from England, named John Davidson, gave the cafe his recipe for fish batter. "This professor said he had a fish



Staff photo by Jane Knapp

The Greenwich Cafe, seen here at night from the corner of 19th and O streets, offers Lincoln diners a distinctive fish and chips dinner.