



Kaleidoscope



Fair invites us to become children at heart

Analysis by Kema Soderberg

The Pied Piper calls all "children" to the Nebraska State Fair, but only those young enough at heart to hear and brave enough to respond fall into step.

Mystery beckons marching feet of all ages through the grounds and into the company of other playing, tired, excited and questioning "children."

Some treat themselves right away to corndogs, funnel cakes, nachos or ice cream from the concession stands. Others wait for "ofenfreische" (oven fresh) pizza, garnished potatoes or Greek gyros. Fair food is a treat, a change from dinner fare.

There is something for almost everyone at the fair. Animal lovers can stop at the Nebraska Fish and Game Commission's exhibit or view farm animals in 4-H competitions. Companies introduce new machinery to farmers and ranchers. Health exhibits inform the public. Art exhibits catch wandering eyes. Businessmen display their wares.

Talent is displayed as well. Sheep shearers demonstrate their art. Horses are shown in the arena. Marching bands from Nebraska towns perform

on the streets while swing choirs entertain in the pavilion. Professional entertainers give nightly performances throughout the week.

Some of the "talent is questionable, however, and is difficult to watch. "Freak shows" seem to stifle human dignity. People become objects gawked at because they're "socially unacceptable." Barkers boast of "wild, homeless women," people with deformed limbs, a man who can pop out his eyes or a man on drugs.

"Dr. Ruesben" lures customers to see his drug addict. A sign above his patient's cage reads, "Due to the unstable psychological and physiological factors of B. Reed's condition — we ask that you do not talk to him or attempt, in any way, to engage him in conversation."

Games and rides appeal to the "children," who are often easily hooked by jeers from operators or the loud music of the Octopus, bumper cars, ferris wheel or merry-go-round.

To the child in everyone, no ride is the same. In the same token, no two visits to the State Fair are the same. Something big is happening that can't be missed.



Counterclockwise from top left: The bright lights of the Nebraska State Fair light the midway long after midnight; Coleen Hohlen of Hastings fishes for prizes at one of the many games on the midway; Stephanie Shafer 3 and Mike Shafer 4 ride the Merry-Go-Round with their Uncle Dave Shafer; Karen Anderson and Sur Fyre prepare for the horse show; Jeff Losee and his wife Sylvia take time to eat a potato at curbside.

Photos by
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