

# Editorial

## Concept of 'Miss America' understood only by winners

Last year, in the hours before the Miss America Pageant, I talked with the woman who was about to become the former Miss America, and with the woman who — although she did not know it — was about to become the new Miss America.

The outgoing Miss America — Elizabeth Ward, of Arkansas — seemed tired, distracted, almost brittle. She seemed, in short, to have had enough. I asked her if winning the title the pre-

vious year had been a dream come true. She said no, that was not it at all.



**Bob Greene**

"It was more of a relief," she said. "It was never so much of a dream for me. It was a goal I set for myself, and I did everything in my power to achieve that goal. So when I got it, I was relieved that I had reached the goal. But dreaming had nothing to do with it."

The Miss-America-to-be — she was Debra Sue Maffett, Miss California — provided the most vivid of contrasts. She was clearly so thrilled to be in Atlantic City that she could hardly sit still in her chair. I asked her why she wanted to win so badly.

"I think a person's life is like a tabula rasa (clean slate)," she said. "All the things you do and all the people you meet are added to your tabula rasa. And the woman who wins the pageant... just think of all the experiences she'll be able to add to her old tabula rasa."

It is September again, the season for the shifting of Miss Americas, and I find myself wondering about Debra Sue Maffett. Has she changed her viewpoint in the year since she won the title?

The concept of Miss America is strange enough as it is; a staggering television audience — always one of the year's biggest — watches the Saturday night festivities, and for that fleeting period of time when the

winner walks down the runway, it is fair to say that she is the most famous person in the country. But that goes away so quickly. Within a week of that Saturday night — certainly within a month — you could be hard-pressed to find many Americans outside the winner's home state who remember her name. By the end of her reign even that number has dwindled. Miss America — the concept — is famous, and always will be. Miss America — the person — is not.

There are so many attractive people in this country; if the reigning Miss America were to walk unannounced into an airport or a shopping mall — without a sash across her chest, without a retinue of chaperones — there really is a good chance she would not be recognized. Certainly heads would turn because she is pretty, but whether many people would be able to figure out that she was officially the fairest of the fair — "your ideal," as the song goes — is open to question.

The question does not come up much during the winner's year as Miss America. Almost every day she is traveling to this Indiana shopping center opening, or that New Mexico Rotary meeting. Strangers who see her for the first time are seldom given the luxury to wonder; the whole point of her national tour is to announce to all within her sight: This is Miss America.

But does the impression stick? I don't know. When I was introduced to Elizabeth Ward it was in a room with the 50 new Miss America contestants; and even though I had watched the pageant on TV the year before, I had no idea which one she was. If I had been told to pick her out, I could not have done it.

And now it is Debra Sue Maffett's turn to figure out the meaning of it all. I don't know if she still speaks of her "tabula rasa"; I don't know if she even remembers that the term once meant something to her. You get to be Miss America for one year and one year only.

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## Diplomats should replace "peacekeepers" in Lebanon

The word "peace" has gone through some violent twists during President Reagan's administration.

First, there was "peacekeeper" (or was it "peacemaker?") — the deadly and powerful MX missile system.

Now we have "peacekeepers" stationed in Lebanon.

Four peacekeepers now are dead. Twenty-five peacekeepers have been wounded. And, according to wire service reports, our peacekeepers have been shelling the hills of Lebanon.

Of course, the bombing is only to protect our peacekeeping Marines. Of course, our shells have killed both soldiers and civilians in the hills of Lebanon. Their brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers will retaliate. And so will we.

Our peacekeepers probably are going to be spending quite some time in Lebanon. The Sept. 26 issue of Newsweek says we have about 14,000 servicemen committed to the area near Lebanon, in ships and on shore.

The Associated Press says Reagan and congressional leaders have reached an agreement that eliminates the constitutional controversy over the War Powers Act, and allows the President to keep the troops there for

18 months. The proposal still must be passed by both the House and Senate.

My guess is, the number of dead Marines will increase on an upward curve as those 18 months go by. So far, they haven't been able to keep the peace. They haven't been able to hold Lebanon together. By increasing the number of servicemen deployed near Lebanon, and by increasing the time they spend there, we only increase the chances that more of them will die.

Our interest in Lebanon is not worth the lives of our men. If the presence of the Marines was doing anything but getting them killed, then I would agree: It is worthwhile to help hold Lebanon together. But Lebanon is falling apart. Diplomatic help is the most we can do.

The time of peacekeepers has come and gone in Lebanon. Now it is time for diplomacy. Economic pressures, negotiations and talking may get us somewhere. Right now, we are headed toward war in Lebanon.

I don't want my draft-age blood spilled on the sand of Lebanon, nor the blood of any more Marines. Diplomacy just might get us somewhere. For as fruitless as diplomacy can be, no one dies of it.

— Chris Welch

## Campus Quotes

Do you think athletics is given too much attention at UNL?



**Patti Gallagher**  
senior  
journalism

"Yes. While I realize that the dollars gathered by athletics is by donations from private citizens and not by state funds, I think that perhaps they should be used for other things."



**Richard Ferdue**  
professor  
Teachers College

"Definitely. It's a function of the Nebraska culture. But Nebraska is no different than other universities. I came from Texas A&M where the football coach gets a lot of attention."



**Janel Ullman**  
freshman  
undeclared

"It seems like everyone lives for the Big Red football. It's all we live for it seems like. I think we deserve the attention because we're so good, but it just gets a little old."



**Doug DuBois**  
sophomore  
public relations

"I don't think the athletic department is given too much attention — I don't think the athletic department is given enough attention. Playing ball here at Nebraska we get more time in our schedules than to live here than a day with classes at home school."



**Jill Langhart**  
senior  
English

"Yes, I do. I think the attention is too attention. While athletics are fun and good to look up to, I think that athletics should be the last thing we should do."