

Editorial

Officials' silence, secrecy lead to distrust

The university's handling of a sexual discrimination suit filed against the UNL Police Department in August has done little more than add to the distrust many people already feel toward the administration.

The suit was filed by parking control officers Barbara Houlihan and Susan Feiler, who claim they were treated unfairly by their male supervisors.

As a result of the action, UNL Affirmative Action Officer Martin Bradley Munn recommended to Chancellor Martin Massengale that Police Chief Gail Gade be suspended for five days without pay and that Lt. John Burke, supervisor of the two women, be suspended for three days without pay.

The Lincoln Journal reported Thursday that Munn's recommendation has been resolved, but both Gade and John Goebel, vice chancellor for business and finance, refused to say what action, if any,

was taken.

With that kind of response, it is no wonder that many people are suspicious of the way UNL is handling the case.

Houlihan last week told the Daily Nebraskan about one incident of alleged discrimination. She said she was placed on probation for 30 days for reporting to work two minutes late Aug. 18. Both Houlihan and Feiler received counseling because of tardiness.

Dorothy Thompson, affirmative action director at Kansas State University, was called in to review the case. She told The Associated Press that no such action was taken against two male security guards who were occasionally tardy.

Both Burke and Gade have declined commendation on the suit.

We would not begin to judge the merits of this

case; that's for the courts to decide. But UNL's keep-quiet policy is leading most people to believe it is guilty of the charges.

Perhaps the university officials involved in the matter need to be reminded for whom they work. As employees of a state institution, their salaries are paid by the public. That means they should be accountable to Nebraska's citizens.

When UNL is charged with something as serious as sexual discrimination, the tax-paying public has a right to know what is going on. The people should be informed of any action taken by the university on the matter. Unfortunately, they haven't been in this case.

Nebraskans long have been wary about how their taxes are spent to run the university. To keep a case of alleged sexual discrimination secret only adds to that distrust.

Longer life span should force understanding of aging

It appears that, if we manage to avoid blowing each other off the face of the earth, Americans are headed for an even longer and older age. Last week, the National Center for Health Statistics added yet another year to the average life span. Those born in this country in 1982, can expect to live 74 1/2 years.



Ellen Goodman

It seems to me that our life span is expanding far more rapidly than our understanding of how to live it. We don't quite know how to be or become old.

At times we seem stuck between images. We have a favorite fantasy of the perfect ending. Like Emerson's famous one — horse shay, we would live to a ripe old age with our faculties intact — though perhaps we would have to cut back to running three miles a day — and then mercifully and gracefully die in our sleep.

We also have a nightmare of poverty, illness and loneliness. A portrait of this nightmare appeared in my own paper just this morning in a United Way plea, captioned: "When you're older you'll know what it's like. The countless hours alone. The phone that never rings. The children who are so busy with their own lives."

It's no wonder that we get so trapped between fears and fantasies that

we are unable to deal rationally with aging. We either deny it or surrender to it.

For that reason, I am grateful that B.F. Skinner has gotten old before I have. I am grateful that the behavioral psychologist who created the Skinner Box for children has come out of the closet of the aged.

"I'm an old man," says the 79-year-old man, "I am old, old, old."

What Skinner has done with his old-old-old-ness is to write a book about it with Harvard associate Margaret Vaughan. The book, from its large print to its main points, is as direct as the title: "Enjoy Old Age, A Program of Self-Management." He doesn't rage against his years, nor does he extoll their wonders. He quite simply suggests that we "attack old age as a problem to be solved."

Skinner names the problems as only an old person writing to his contemporaries can do comfortably. Old people (he dislikes such phrases as "older" and "elderly" because they are evasive) are likely to have trouble seeing, hearing, tasting, moving and remembering as well as they used to.

As a good behaviorist, a man who believes in the power of the environment to shape people, he and his co-author set about solving problems by changing the environment: "It has been said that if you are not enjoying your life, something must be wrong with you. More often, something is wrong with the world in which you live."

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Airline woes threaten safety

Something needs to be said about "the airline thing." It's an unpleasant warning, but it's needed — before it gets written in blood.

First, some background on how we got into this mess. When the federal government regulated the airlines, it decreed which airline could fly where and how much it could charge for tickets.



Paul Harvey

Airlines prospered.

For one thing, every time a union demanded a wage raise, all the airline had to do was to run to Washington and open the books. "See," the airline would say, "our costs have gone up, our fares must go up."

With no real incentive to hold costs down, the airlines awakened one day to find that pilots earn as much as \$150,000 a year. Flight attendants average \$33,400 a year for a three- or four-day week. Even airline agents, who issue tickets and such, earn \$28,800; baggage attendants earn \$27,900.

Five years ago, the airlines were deregulated. Government decreed that any airline could fly anywhere and charge whatever it pleased.

Soon, many fledgling airlines were taking over the fat routes with the most consistent traffic, while the biggies, stuck with all those inflated salaries, simply were unable to compete.

Five years ago airlines profited a billion dollars.

Last year they flew backward a billion dollars.

If we re-regulated airlines, the wage spiral would start all over again.

But if we leave things as they are, airlines — to cut costs — may compromise safety.

Already one airline allows one less preflight line check.

In most any day's news — I think it is safe to say in every day's news — we hear or read some symptom of somebody's negligence.

While wiser persons than I are contemplating what to do about "the airline thing" — how to restore profitability without destroying competition — they also must consider another negative byproduct of government regulation: government-dictated employment practices.

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Western Nebraska heart of 'the simple life'

I'm so sick of people making fun of Western Nebraska.

This past summer, working as a Nebraska Vacation Guide, I got to experience some of this territorial ignorance firsthand.



Bill Allen

Working out of North Platte, right in the heart of Western Nebraska, I repeatedly heard the following comments from travelers from other states:

"Are there any wild Indians around here?" I kid you not.

"It's so flat. This is the most boring state I've ever driven through."

And my favorite, "Is there anything do to around here?"

Of course, many of these out-of-staters had heard of our national powerhouse football team, but even it didn't escape derision because of the Cornhusker mascot.

At that time I was working for the state, and therefore smiled politely and tried to interest these people in some of the things Western Nebraska does have to offer. Many, not most, times they weren't really interested in that.

I'm not working for the state now, so I can express my opinions on a few of these matters.

In the first place, agriculture is the state's No. 1 industry. Nebraska belongs to the Corn Belt which feeds a good part of this nation, and others as well.

As a Nebraskan, I'm proud of this fact and yet I know nothing about farming or agriculture.

If all those people who ridicule Nebraska's farmers had stayed awake in fifth grade geography they would know these things, too. Perhaps they were

too busy doing things to learn anything.

In addition, guess what, folks, there is nothing to do in Western Nebraska. At least not the kind of doing you demand.

There is no Disneyland, or Broadway, and the closest thing we have to an ocean is the beautiful beach along Lake McConaughy near Ogallala, but that's not much use in the winter.

Western Nebraska is rich in historical significance, with everything from the home of Buffalo Bill in North Platte to ruts of the Oregon Trail which trace the westward expansion of our country.

There are several excellent museums which show the struggles of the prairie pioneers who shaped and formed these vast plains into Nebraska.

And about the only recreation is hunting or canoeing along some of the beautiful waterways, such as the Niobrara River. And no, you can't ski in Western Nebraska.

But you're probably not interested in anything like that. I can read it in your eyes. You're part of a society and culture that always insists on doing something. You have to be constantly entertained. Thoughts of relaxing and letting life happen once in awhile don't come to you.

And I'm not saying that is wrong either. To each his own, someone said once.

So why do people insist on berating the people of Western Nebraska for what they are, or Western Nebraska for what it is?

It seems to me they would envy living without pollution, or mass murders, or constant fear of burglary. And if there is a nuclear war, who are they going to hit first; Chicago or Maxwell, Nebraska?

Western Nebraska does lead a simpler lifestyle. So what.