

Controversy, or so the Intruder writes

In last week's edition, Celeste stole Jesse Jackson's thunder by releasing 30 prisoners in Podunk, Neb. The repercussions still are being felt around the country. For a more complete report, we now turn to the National Intruder office, where the full story is being concocted.

Harley Davidson, a bottle in one hand, a cigar in the other, lifted the finished paper from his desk

Mary Louise Knapp

and sighed with relief.

"It's done, Otis," he said. "This ought to get us a Pulitzer, at the very least."

"Read it," Otis said.

"In a political coup of staggering proportions, Presidential candidate Celeste Underwood brought about the release of 30 inmates of the Podunk County Jail last week," Harley read.

The prisoners were being held on charges of riding bicycles while intoxicated. While Celeste's courageous deed was almost universally applauded,

her political opponents were not pleased.

"Will you get out of the passive voice, Harley?" Otis said.

"When notified of the incident, President Reagan accused Celeste of being a slave to special-interest groups. 'Miss Underwood's close ties to underage drinkers are well known,' Reagan said. 'The release of the inmates also indicates a disregard for law and order and definite Communist tendencies on the part of this candidate.'"

"Jesse Jackson seemed unperturbed about Celeste's action, saying simply, 'Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.' Walter Mondale shook his gray locks and murmured, 'Those kids. When will they ever learn,' while Gary Hart exhibited unrestrained admiration."

"Sheriff John Brown of Podunk, who allegedly assisted in the release, had this to say: 'Now, ordinarily I don't hold with letting drunks out before they've served their time. But those fine ladies convinced me that I've been too soft on criminals.'"

"From now on, anybody we pick up in Podunk goes right back on the street where they belong. I ain't providing a cheap hotel for low life no more!"

"I bet the taxpayers are happy," Otis said.

"But Podunk's chapter of MADDDD Majority

Against Drunks, Deadbeats, Derelicts and Demerolts, disagreed with Brown.

"Hanging is too good for a man who refuses to protect our young people from violent death. As decent, moral citizens, we should stone him, at least."

"Wow, this is going to be some controversy," Otis said.

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HOTSPOTS

On Television

It's Olympics time, and, like every Olympic year, it's time to remember Jesse Owens, the American who won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics. This year, however, the tribute to Jesse takes a different angle. "The Jesse Owens Story," a two-part four-hour miniseries, tells the tale of the ultimate Olympian's life after the glory of the gold.

"The Jesse Owens Story" airs at 8 tonight and Wednesday on KOLN-KGIN Channels 10-11, and at 8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday on KSHB, which is Channel 2 on your Lincoln Cablevision dial.

Theatre

The Nebraska Repertory Theatre's "Crimes of the Heart" ends its run with three performances this week, tonight, Wednesday and Thursday, all at 8 p.m. and all at the Temple Studio Theatre.

"A Toby Show," also a Nebraska Rep production, continues with a 10:30 a.m. show Thursday at the Folsom Children's Zoo.

"Camelot" is the 1984 installment of the Pine-wood Bowl annual summer musicals. Richard Harris won't be there, but lots of other noble lords and ladies fair will be; besides, it's free (although free-will donations will be accepted). "Camelot" will be staged at 8 nightly, Thursday through Sunday, at the Pine-wood Bowl Amphitheatre in Pioneers Park.

Around Town

A four-night seminar on rock 'n' roll begins tonight at 7 and continues nightly at that time

through Friday. Tonight's topic is "The History of Rock and Roll," Wednesday's is "Seven Scriptural Reasons not to Rock," Thursday's is "Rockin' the Gospel" and Friday's is "Talking Rock to Young People." The meetings will be at Plains Baptist Church, 2902 Randolph St. and will feature Pastor Stanley Gustafson as speaker. Gustafson is himself a 14-year veteran rock musician.



Artwork by Billy Schaffer

'Winter's Tale'...

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Along the way we are introduced to a cast of characters and situations straight out of Dickens, the tales of Arthur, the Bible, and just about any other work of similar nature you want to name. There are good guys and bad guys, paupers and millionaires, seekers, dreamers, lovers and murderers, all intertwined in a highly textured and complex novel.

"It is the sort of book which will appeal to those who believe that words can change the world..."

There is Beverly, whose death it is that spurs Peter on in his quest to "stop time and bring back the dead." There is Jackson Mead, the time-skipping architect who dreams of building a bridge to the stars. There are the countless abandoned children of the city, whose fate it is to die in dark hallways and to be buried, forgotten and unnamed, in Potter's field. There is Athansor the flying horse who, with Peter as his sword-bearing rider, struggles against the dark forces of evil. These are but a few of the numerous characters in a novel stuffed with diverse personalities.

Everything — or almost everything — in the story is symbolic. The city's newspapers are just two examples. The Sun, published by the Penn family, is a paragon of truth. During the final chapters, as Manhattan is plunged into darkness, the building where the Sun is printed remains the lone lighted building. The Ghost, on the other hand, is a muck-raking tabloid published by the contemptible, self-centered Craig Binky. So indifferent is the Ghost to reportorial accuracy that headlines agree with their articles only on rare occasions. There is plenty more

of this sort of thing for the reader who enjoys tracking down elusive allusions.

For all of its promise and hype, however, "Winter's Tale" never quite achieves its potential. Part of the problem is that it is needlessly long. It brings to mind Moby Dick in length (the paperback edition of "Winter's Tale" will run more than 700 pages) and in its metaphysical themes of good and evil and man's struggle with his own darker self. But Helprin does not have Melville's easy ability to write at great length without wearying. The novel would have been much more effective had it been half as long. Whereas the tale of the whale was long because it could not be otherwise, "Winter's Tale" is lengthy largely as a result of the author's excessive use of description and metaphor.

It often seems that much of the description serves only to satisfy Helprin's urge to think up clever and unnecessary ways of outdoing his own previous metaphor. Also, for a story that encompasses as much as "Winter's Tale," there is very little that arouses interest in the reader. This, I think, can be attributed again to Helprin's elusiveness, for by the time the final chapters roll around, the reader has endured too much self-serving prose to really care any longer what happens to Peter, to Athansor, or to anyone.

Still, there are nuggets of satisfaction in "Winter's Tale." Some of Helprin's insights into the human spirit ring true. He writes with obvious passion for his subject, and his concern for the burden of being human, especially when he is writing of children, is unabashed.

The comment has been made that "Winter's Tale" is sophomoric, and that is probably a fair evaluation. It is the sort of book that will appeal to those who believe that words can change the world, that faith alone will conquer, or at least put a sizeable dent in, evil. In this sense "Winter's Tale" is sophomoric. But Helprin should not be faulted for refusing to abandon hope, or for looking for virtue in what is as often cruel human nature.

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