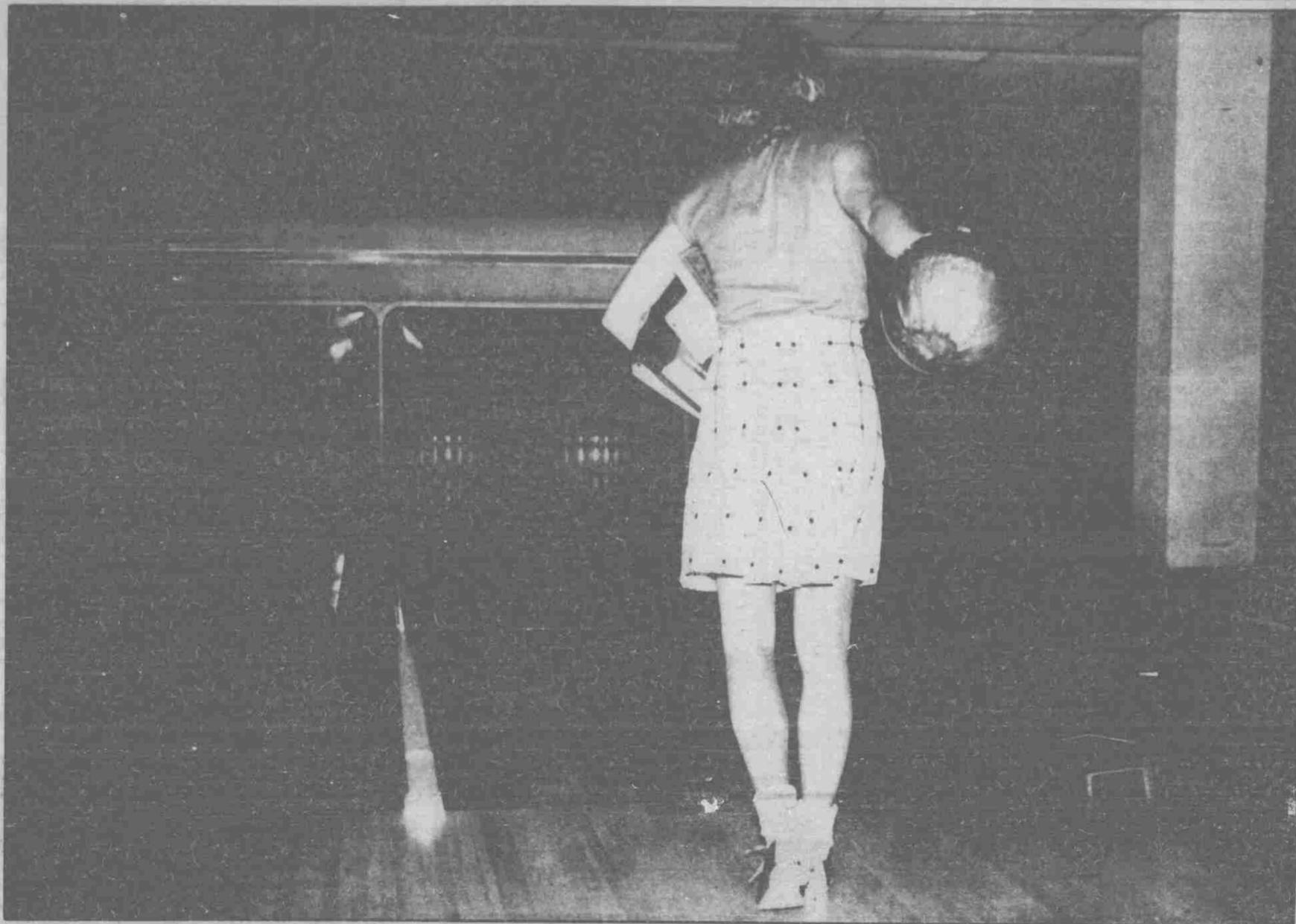


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Tennyson and tenpins

Craig Andresen/Daily Nebraskan

As freshmen, you're only beginning your roll down the lane towards the tenpins, graduations. Between those points, there's a lot of ground to cover. Between those points, most students learn how to balance their studies with their leisure time, or their business before pleasure.

UNL freshmen share common problems

By Meiling Liu

Can 3,000 new UNL students have something in common? Yes, more or less, according to the director of the UNL Counseling Center.

From his 20 years of experience, Vernon Williams said he can draw six problem areas that most UNL freshmen go through.

Homesickness is the first problem many students face, Williams said. Homesickness is especially acute the first week of classes, when freshmen don't know the campus or many people, he said.

Because many freshmen come from small towns, Lincoln is the biggest city many freshmen have ever seen, Williams said.

"Some of them may feel lost and don't know where to go," he said.

Roommates pose the second problem, Williams said. Although most people have had conflicts at home, freshmen may have conflicts with roommates that create new feelings of resentment and alienation, he said.

The third area, academic problems, can happen to both students who had good grades in high school and those who did poorly, Williams said. Freshmen who still do poorly in college may become depressed, he said. Those who did well in high school may find it difficult to live with a worse college

performance, and also become depressed.

Although most students don't have academic problems, a significant number do, Williams said.

A fourth concern for freshmen is when they associate their new social life in college with their experience back home, Williams said. While most students usually appreciate what social skills their parents taught them, some still feel ill-prepared for college social life, he said.

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In that sense, "old feelings about parents may come back in a negative way," Williams said. Usually students like this think they have a hindered social life.

Decisions about college majors and future careers are the fifth most common freshmen problems, Williams said. Some students, who did not decide on a major in high school, keep searching during their first year. Sometimes freshmen who chose a college major in high school become unhappy with that choice after they get to college, Williams said.

The sixth most common problem

comes from breaking up with hometown boyfriends or girlfriends, Williams said.

"Perhaps these difficulties may not be as depressive as others," he said, "but they are still disturbing and painful for freshmen."

To solve their problems, freshmen usually will talk to friends or counselors, Williams said. But it can take time for people to get over their problems.

Some freshmen don't solve their problems during their first year and come back to college with the same problems, Williams said.

Yet, the rate of students who have problems decreases 10 to 20 percent as students complete each year, he said.

Douglas Neitzel, assistant director of Admissions and Advising, said most freshmen come from families and high schools that have more structure than the university.

When they come to UNL, he said, they have to adjust to a new environment of varied activities, opportunities and freedom.

Yet, students may ignore available resources at UNL, Neitzel said. Thus, they create social and psychological problems for themselves.

Students should act as higher education consumers and be assertive enough to get the best they can from UNL, Neitzel said.

Looking back on their freshman years, older students have advice for freshmen:

Carolyn Rudasill, a 1984 graduate from McCool Junction, said freshmen should try new things and meet new people. They should not fear changing majors, though she said she did not, staying instead with her original major, elementary education, until graduation.

Quyen Conroy, a sophomore business major from Omaha, said freshmen should remember financial aid deadlines. He said freshmen should seek help and "keep knocking" at the door of the financial aid office.

Lue Jones, an undeclared home economics sophomore from Seward, said she still remembers the hassle of buying textbooks. Jones also said it took her a semester to get used to the campus.

Incoming freshmen should prepare themselves for college with good study habits and efficient time management, Jones said.