

Editorial

UNL can learn from examples set by Greeks

Fraternities and sororities on the UNL campus have received much criticism and bad press in the past. Much of the criticism was deserved. However, as part of Greek Week, fraternity and sorority members are doing something from which organizations on campus can learn.

The Greek Week philanthropy project involves renovating parts of Lincoln's old city hall. Jayne Anderson, director of the Panhellenic Association, said the Greek Week philanthropy project is aimed every year at benefiting the community.

Past projects include raising money for the Blood Drive and for a climate control system for Morrill Hall.

"This is their community too," Anderson said. "When they have so much man and woman power, Greek Week is a good time to benefit the community."

The fraternity and sorority members are doing basic preliminary work such as sanding and cleaning on the second and third floors, Anderson said. The work began Monday and will continue through Thursday with 80 to 40 members working each of two shifts a day.

The city plans to use the building for office space after the renovation is complete.

Anderson said excitement about the project seems to be running high because "it's something they do as a total system."

"You feel good about it and you feel like you've given something back to the community in which you live," she said.

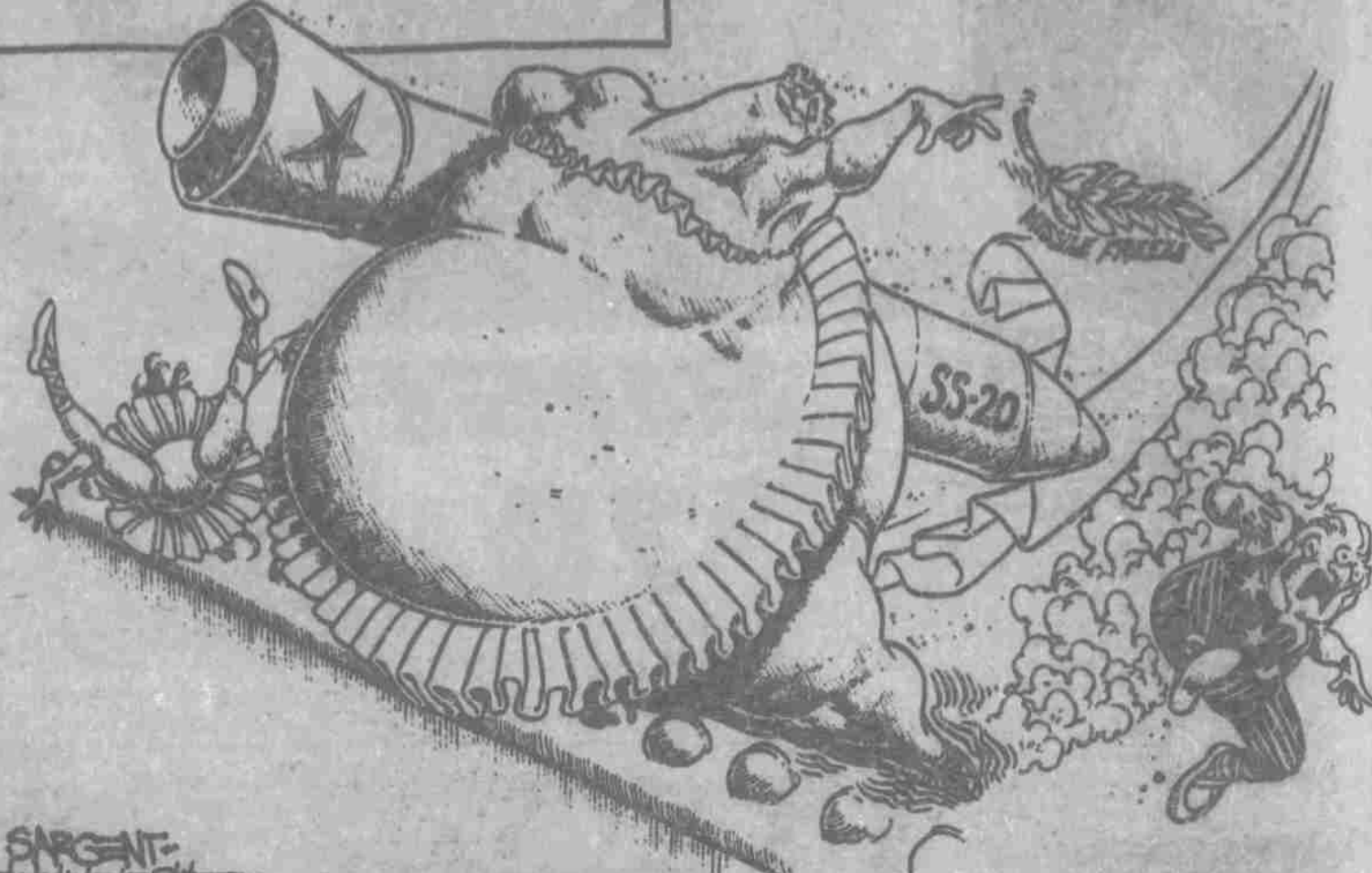
The Daily Nebraskan reported Monday that the city could save about \$32,000 through this project.

It is difficult to get excited about Greek Week or the fraternity and sorority system in general, especially when other Greek Week activities include such trivialities as eating pudding pops by Brookhill Fountain and going to each others' houses for dinner. But this particular project proves that fraternities and sororities can use their time, energy and number to work on something worthwhile.

Fraternities and sororities also work on national philanthropy projects throughout the year. Activities such as pole-sitting and tricycle-racing may seem silly, but the funds they raise benefit many worthy causes such as the Cancer Society, children's hospitals and the National Kidney Foundation.

Philanthropic projects shouldn't be limited to the fraternity and sorority system. Fraternity and sorority members are a minority on this campus. If all the organizations on campus followed their lead and formed one project per year to benefit our community, the manpower and result would be tremendous. In addition, if all students were as active and enthusiastic in the campus community, UNL would be a much better and more balanced place to live, work and study.

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BEN SARGENT
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Court 'rapes' press, public Judges find Post guilty — of being a newspaper

In the old days, it was routine in rape trials to exonerate the defendant by convicting the victim. Was she, perhaps, wearing too much makeup? How about her walk — modest as becoming a lady or as bawdy as a tramp? If the answers painted a picture of someone other than Mother Teresa, you had your perfect rape defense: The woman was looking for it.

Since the president of Mobil is legally considered a "public figure," something called "actual malice" had to be proved. Judge George E. MacKinnon, searching real hard, found it in among other things the Post's penchant for "sensational exposes." That sort of thing gets rewarded at the Post.

were the fruits of the journalistic ethic the court now deplores; as are stories about rip-offs in government contracts and rape in the jails. These stories do not come from sitting back and waiting for press releases in the afternoon mail. They come from "hard hitting investigative" efforts of the very type the court now holds against the Post.



Richard Cohen

It is along those now discredited lines that two judges of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals found the Washington Post guilty of being — brace yourself — a newspaper. The Post, the court found, "is a newspaper which seeks, among other things, hard-hitting investigative stories." The penalty for this is an approximately \$2 million libel judgment and — until a further appeal — the censorious hand of future suits.

To be perfectly fair, the judge cited more than the Post's alleged weakness for investigative stories. And he did, in a footnote, say that the last thing he wanted to do was discourage investigative reporting. There then followed a sentence of required boilerplate on the importance of the press in our society — a goose cooked by the decision itself.

If the court thinks that it can have the sort of investigative stories it likes and not the ones it doesn't, then it knows nothing about either journalism or human nature. By imposing a punishment, it — and the public — will get none whatsoever. The Post already has spent over \$1 million on legal fees and now may face paying about \$2 million more in judgments. Is there a story worth that much? Certainly not the one about Tavoulares. But if the press flinches from that one, why not others? Nursing homes can sue, too. Even ones that let old people rot.

The instant case, as the lawyers like to say, involves a 1979 Post story that Mobil Oil's then president, William Tavoulares, had "set up" his son in business — to wit, a shipping company that did business through an intermediary with Mobil. Tavoulares sued for libel, won with the jury, but lost when the District Court judge threw out the verdict. He appealed.

Still, like the woman who's held responsible (guilty) for being a woman, the Post was found guilty for being what it ought to be — a newspaper. To a whole lot of people, anything worthy of that title practices investigative reporting. If you get what amounts to a franchise — the First Amendment and, often, a monopoly market — then you also have an obligation to make a pest of yourself. That means poking around nursing homes and jails, insane asylums and schools, statehouses and firehouses and, yes, publicly held corporations of enormous power and wealth.

The inescapable conclusion is that the court's conservative majority — a porridge of Nixon and Reagan appointees — knows full well the import of its decision. Its lofty Jeffersonian paens to a vigorous press notwithstanding, the panel sat, as dissenting Judge Shelly Wright noted, "as some kind of journalism seminar," and dealt investigative reporting a serious blow. Like a rape victim, the press is condemned for being what it is. But you only can take analogies so far. In this case, it's not the press that was raped. The real victim is the public's constitutional right to be informed.

By a margin of 2 to 1, the appeals court reinstated the jury verdict. The Post, the court said, had indeed libeled Tavoulares.

Now maybe you disagree. Maybe you think no newspaper ought to go poking around Mobil, or to respond to a tip about it. But that is a judgment call, as valid, say, as Richard Nixon's conviction that the press should have taken him at his word on Watergate and left well enough alone. The revelations of Watergate, after all,

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Association disputes image of non-Greeks

We read with interest Todd Knobel's column (Daily Nebraskan, April 15) regarding the invalidity of Greek stereotypes. We agree that there are many unfortunate Greek stereotypes. We were shocked and dismayed, however, to see the perpetuation of an old residence hall stereotype in his column. Knobel wrote, "No one denies residence hall or off-campus students the

right to vote or run for office. They simply did not show as much interest in the election." This is blatantly untrue.

In last month's ASUN election, 1,240 residence hall students voted, as opposed to 1,181 students living in the Greek houses. In addition, 629 off-campus students voted in the election. Compared to the 1984 ASUN election, residence hall turnout was up by over 50 percent, off-campus turnout increased by 20 percent, and Greek turnout was up by only 10 per-

cent. The statement that residence hall and off-campus students "simply did not show as much interest in the election" is most definitely not borne out by the facts.

Doug Weems
residence hall/Greek Commission
Dave Edwards
RHA president
John Danforth
RHA president-elect
Signed by 12 other RHA members
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Letters