

Living within means makes life better for all

I hear on the news report the other night that a family in America today making \$30,000 a year cannot afford to buy a new car.



Bill Allen

For some reason that didn't seem quite right. I mean, I believe that the family can't afford the car, but it seems to me that they *should* be able to.

There are two aspects to this. The first is that in our society today a car is a necessity. There was a time perhaps where this wasn't true and I'm sure it is possible to get by without a car, but to fully appreciate and function simply in today's world most people would think that a car is, at least, a necessary evil.

And when I say this I'm not talking about the new car. I'll get to that later. I'm talking about basic transportation, something that runs. Most people can afford "something that runs."

The second aspect is that someone that makes \$30,000 a year should be able to do a little better than "something that runs."

I don't have exact figures but \$30,000 a

year is more than most people make. School teachers make half that. Many laborers make much less than that. I work around a bunch of journalists so I'll use them for an example. Let's say two little journalists grow up, graduate from college, get newspaper jobs, have two kids and make about \$30,000 a year combined (that's about the norm). These two people have worked through the system and reached a level where they should be able to start enjoying some of the benefits of that system, yet they can't afford to buy a new car. I won't even go into the financial troubles associated with buying a home.

Car manufacturers are a major part of the problem, but not all of it. For one thing American car manufacturers can't, or won't, compete with foreign manufacturers so in order to make money they sell fewer cars at a much higher price. The foreign manufacturers can keep the price of their cars as high as they want as long as they sell for less than American competition. Still, according to the report, I heard not being able to afford a new car includes not being able to afford a new foreign car.

The big factor in all this is people continue to buy new cars even though they can't afford them. A shoe salesman that makes \$10,000 a year and wears suits to work feels he has to have a new car to "keep up that yuppie image." People right out

of high school on their first job have to prove to the world that they've made it, so they buy a new car, even though they can barely afford rent.

This is part of a mass sickness that perpetuates high prices. It is a status symbol to own a new car. The only thing is the status symbol is false and people are sacrificing what could be a much better life so they can make car payments, other payments. Car manufacturers aren't the only evil in this mass neurosis. People that should be saving or investing money for worthwhile things buy the \$50 pair of jeans and then complain because they have no money to pay the light bill.

Jeans are a necessity. \$50-a-pair jeans are not a necessity. A car is a necessity. A new car is not a necessity. I myself would be perfectly content to drive "something that runs," instead of going into a debt that would be hard for me to pay off.

We have a president that tries to stimulate the economy by saying "buy, buy, buy." Too bad he doesn't remind us also to "pay, pay, pay."

This same president talks about a return to traditional American values. What about those values of hard work, living within your means and being proud of what you can accomplish?

How can you be proud of that new car or new home if you are still paying for it and will be

into the foreseeable future?

How can you be proud of that new car when you and your wife are screaming at each other because you can't pay the bills?

What of these traditional family values when you don't have time to toss a ball with your kid or go far a walk with your spouse on a summer evening because you have to put in overtime to pay for that new car?

And guess what? As long as we are willing to put in that overtime and go into debt, the prices of cars are not going to become reasonable.

It is really frustrating for those who try to live a life based on personal values when no one else cooperates. I think the healthiest people are those that go at life with all they've got, love themselves and the ones close to them, and accept gracefully and gladly all that they are able to accomplish.

In the meantime, those of you driving new cars you can't afford, remember that it's you and others like you that keep someone that has worked to make \$30,000 a year from being able to afford a car, too.

But then, you don't care. As a matter of fact, that person making \$30,000 probably has a new car anyway, even though he can't afford it. "Buy, buy, buy."



Letter

Reader displeased over buffalo grass

One of the things that I enjoy most about UNL City Campus is walking through on a nice spring day. As I come up between Andrews and Burnett, I notice that the trees are in bloom. Walking further still (as if I were going to Sheldon Art Gallery) I am amazed at the random clutter of humans lying in the rich grass. Yet as I pass the library, I realize that the Willa Cather Garden is nothing more than a patch of dead grass, with no appeal whatsoever.

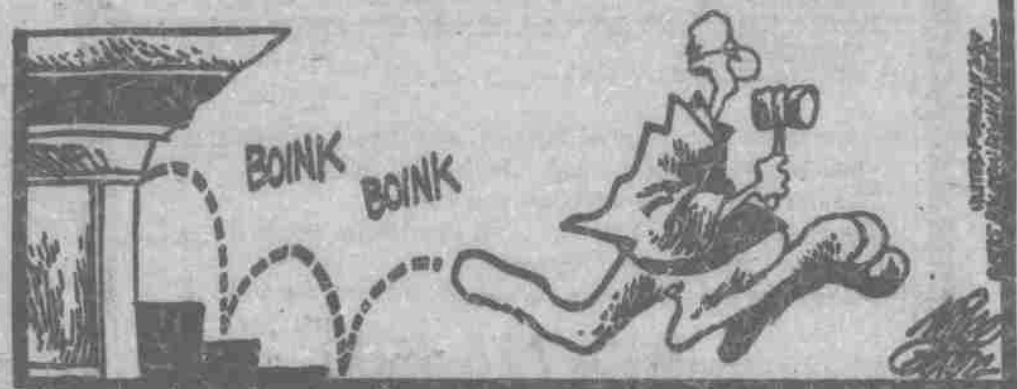
Is this an accurate memorial to a woman who gave so much to Nebraskan culture and literature in general? The stories she told were about hard-working Nebraskans who relished their accomplishments as well as taking pride in them. I find nothing enjoyable about a patch of dead grass dedicated to Willa Cather. The spirit she demonstrated in her literature would never have allowed it to come to this.


I suppose I'm less mad than just displeased. Is there something that can be done about this? On a campus where the Grounds Department is so eager to plant several trees and generally renew the life of the Harper

Schramm-Smith lawn area, I find the destruction of the Willa Cather Garden practically inexcusable.

Thomas Sullivan
senior
English

Editor's note: What appears to be a patch of dead grass in really the beginning of a buffalo grass lawn, in keeping with the theme of native plants for the Willa Cather Garden, according to UNL grounds department director Wilbur Dassenbrock.





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