

# The Tourist Information Center: A good place to discover Lincoln

By Ken DiMaggio  
Staff Reporter

The Tourist Information Center, on the corner of Ninth and O streets, is a good place to find out about Lincoln. Prior to visiting there, I knew that Lincoln had a university, a state capitol, and the world's largest tractor-testing laboratory. After talking to Ivan "Ike" Hoag at the Tourist Information Center, I found out that Lincoln had a national roller-skating museum, the fourth architectural wonder of the world, and a famous TV personality living in a zoo.

A nationwide poll of architects voted the Nebraska State Capitol as the fourth architectural wonder of the world. Ben the Bear from the TV show, "Grizzly Adams," lives at the Folsom Children's Zoo.

Since 1979, the Tourist Information Center has provided information and hospitality to visitors to Lincoln. Sponsored by the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, the Tourist Information Center is open from May 18 to Sept. 7. The center's hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day. Five people work there. Hoag has worked at the center for six years.

Hoag said that the center is understocked presently because it will soon be closing for the season. But the center still had plenty of red sweat shirts, Frisbees and buttons with the logo, "Lincoln, The Star City," printed on them.

On the wall of the booth that Hoag sits behind is a map of the United States speckled with dots. Visitors to the center are encouraged to mark their home city with a red magic marker. Above the map is a sign that reads, "Someone from every state visited us except Vermont."

The center has post cards on a rack. Below a picture of the Governor's Mansion was a postcard called, "Dinner Time at the Farm," which showed a large multiple-breasted sow being suckled by half a dozen piglets. But what got my quarter was "The Star City Fun Book," a coloring book for kids.

The book has different points of interest in Lincoln arranged in alphabetical order for kids to color. Under the letter "s" you can color tall vases that look like furniture legs, representing the 20th century collection of American art at the Sheldon Art Gallery.

Under the letter "z" you can color in a boy throwing "Screaming Yellow Zon-

kers," made in Lincoln, into his mouth. And under "y," you can draw yourself at your favorite place in Lincoln. (Lincoln has no special points of interests that begin with the letter Y.

Hoag recalls talking and meeting with many visitors at Pershing Municipal Auditorium. But Hoag said his most memorable visitor was the famous band-leader, musician and inventor of a blender that bears his name, Fred Waring.

"When Fred tried to call a taxi from Pershing Auditorium, he decided to walk to his hotel which wasn't too far away," Hoag said.

"There were no panhandlers, no drunks, and no one molested me. I walked peacefully," Waring said to him later.

And until next May 18, when the Tourist Information Center reopens, Hoag will wax his '54 T-Bird, add to his matchbox toy car collection and see more of his wife.

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