

Editorial

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Jeff Korbek, Editor, 472-1766
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Big deception

Own claims foil televangelists

In spite of the protest to the contrary, Americans are impressed with bigness: big dams, big buildings, big business, big government, big unions. And when the big fall, America loves it all the more: the money, power and sex shock (and titillate) the American public. This unquestionably applies also to big religion. The Jimmy Bakker sex scandal (with all the accoutrements) goes to show that big religion shares the same weaknesses of the flesh as other biggies.

Hollywood scandal sheets document the ins and outs of sex, ego and money of secular entertainers. But religious entertainers are supposed to be somewhat different. No, not different because of the image the public foists upon unwilling evangelists, but because they claim an image that includes heightened moral behavior. Televangelists robe themselves in the mysteries of the sacred; they claim to be representative of something purer than what is revealed in the Hollywood scandal sheets.

Yet the actions of so many televangelists belie their words. Their attempts to build huge (and profitable) empires demonstrate a deep regard for this world, under the guise of showing the way to the world beyond.

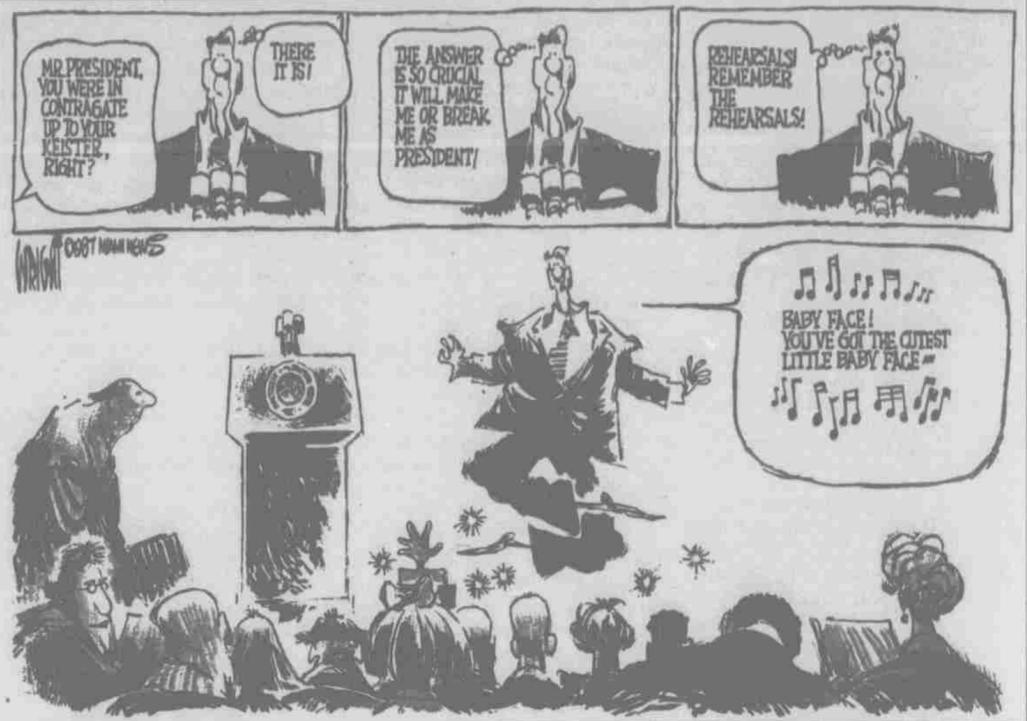
It's not only Bakker's adultery; it's an entire system that reeks of personal ambition while its participants claim to be pursuing the divine: the lack of financial accountability, the shady bait-and-switch "humanitarian" promotions, religious claims that stretch credibility and the factual fudging. Bakker claimed "blackmail." There is no blackmail. Bakker claimed "hostile takeover." There was no such attempt. The preachers preach love yet their kingdoms have gone to war. There is no civility: questions are evaded more profoundly than even a scurrilous politician would dare.

Few people today require religious leaders to live at a level of bare subsistence. Yet even ignoring the question of vows of poverty, there is at least the expectation that religious leaders (and followers) will live modestly. But in the realm of the televangelist, even a proper modesty does not exist.

Editorial Policy

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What we need, what we can get

Balancing priorities among funds, fun and the edifice complex

Recent controversy over the new student recreation center and indoor practice field has stirred up old wounds for me. Since my first days of college some 14 years ago, I have never been able to understand why schools seldom have difficulty churning up funds for more and better buildings while student scholarship and aid programs scrap for all they're worth to keep deserving students within close proximity of a decent education. Actually, I do understand, but I don't understand what I understand. Know what I mean?

I understand that you can't hang a plaque on a student. I understand that you can't take your friends to the local college, point to a student and say, "I helped build that." I understand that money spent helping a student be a student probably will never be acknowledged publicly and certainly will never get your name anywhere prominent. Sure, you can have a scholarship tattooed with your moniker, but when immortality is the name of the game, bricks beat sheepskin any day. I even understand that such thinking has great motivational power for most people with the money to build a university. What I don't understand is why such motivation is present.

So, at base, it is hard for me to get excited about the student recreation center. While its memorial status is far less conspicuous than, say, the Lied and Wick centers, it is nonetheless the latest manifestation on this campus of the phenomenon that fund-raisers refer to as "the edifice complex." Even if no one's name ever hangs on any part of this building, the money will be raised with comparatively little difficulty, and many large and small contributors will take pride for years to come in saying, "I'm a part of that."

It is also hard for me to get excited about the student center from the student's perspective. I just don't believe that this university "needs" a recreation center. In fact, I think the football team "needs" an indoor prac-

tice field more than the students "need" a recreation center. The football team is in fact the largest single source of good publicity and fund raising that we have ever known and ever will know. From a purely fiscal standpoint, it is important that the team be as stinkin' good as possible, and that means protecting it from the unpredictable whims and fancies of Great Plains weather. Who knows when, for example, the start of spring practice might be delayed due to a freak late March snowstorm?

James Sennett



College athletics is big business. University politics is big business. When the two intertwine, it is bigger business. And one of the first rules in big business is the protection of interests. The marriage of the recreation center and the indoor practice field was to ensure the building for the former, not the latter. The practice field would have come, were the rec center never built. So, playing the game, we do "need" that indoor facility. Without it, our ability to compete in the world of high finance that is higher education is severely hampered.

But do we "need" a rec center? We may want it. It would be awfully nice. In fact, it would be downright convenient and would make this school a heck of a lot better place to attend. But "need" is a strong word. It has survival implications. I just can't believe that the survival of the university — as big business or an educational institution — depends on a state-of-the-art student recreation center.

The first eight years of my college career were spent at very small private colleges, where our idea of adequate student recreation facilities was two

foosball tables in the dorm and open gym on Friday nights. We had an interesting formula for recreation and fun — we created our own. And we did it without breaking any laws, without hassling any administrator and without demanding anything from anybody. We had this odd idea that the fulfillment of our lives was up to us, and we set out to do it in ways that were fun, enlightening and (mostly) responsible. We gave up winning when we gave up babysitters.

Now, I do not think that my generation of college student had a thing on the present one, except that few people told us that our lack of recreational opportunity was anyone's responsibility but our own. We never knew we were deprived — we were too busy having fun. UNL has more recreational opportunities than students at my two almaters will ever even dream of. So, talk about how nice a rec center would be. Talk about how enthusiastically it would be welcomed. Even talk about how much we want one. But don't talk about need, please.

With all this said, I actually do support the building of the rec center. Why? Well, because the two points above make it clear to me that our option is not between more buildings and flashiness or better financial programs for students. Our choice is between flashiness that doesn't do anybody any good and flashiness that will genuinely contribute to the quality of life on this campus. A student recreation center would certainly make life better here. Maybe we don't "need" this, but if people are bent on mixing their money with mortar rather than with gray matter, let's at least let them indirectly help students by giving us clean locker rooms and more open courts.

Sennett is a graduate student in philosophy and campus minister with College-Career Christian Fellowship who also finds time to use the existing recreation facilities about four times a week.



Howard Vosika/Special to the Daily Nebraskan

Letter

Sculptures at Sheldon are not chairs

I am calling your attention to the photograph showing Joyce Welsch sitting on the Gaston Lachaise sculpture "Floating Woman" (Daily Nebraskan, March 16). Although a few of Sheldon's outdoor sculptures are designed to be safely accessible to the public, most are not. "Floating Woman," which is in the middle of a fountain (usually surrounded by water in the spring and summer) in particular is a heavy sculpture on a very narrow base and could easily be tipped and damaged.

My concern is that your photograph may give the public the wrong impression about the accessibility of our sculptures in general and "Floating Woman" in particular. It is not too difficult to imagine what might happen if people began imitating the model in the photograph, either on "Floating

Woman" or on other sculptures. As you may know, these are very expensive works of art and are very expensive and difficult to repair. Some are easily damaged beyond repair, not to mention the safety risks involved to climbers, models, etc. Understandably, Sheldon does not want anyone to be injured. We are not responsible for these individuals who choose to take such risks.

Though we do appreciate that Sheldon's sculpture and entire collection receive publicity, I request that in the future you exercise extreme caution and discretion with material of this kind. For our part, we are in the process of replacing the "DO NOT TOUCH" signs that disappeared recently.

Michael Shaw
chief security guard
Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery

U.S. press hyperextends its arm of government past necessary role

Sometimes press modesty about its own powers is unseemly. Barbara Walters transmitted a message to President Reagan from Manucher Ghorbanifar after she interviewed him on television. That set journalistic ethicists to scratching their heads about whether this was proper journalistic behavior.

But why should the Walters story even have been a story? The Tower commission apparently found her memo of so little interest that it did not make its way into the 240-page commission

report. A genteel shock was registered by the press when the Walters story

Charles Krauthammer



broke. Why? A journalist had made it a little too obvious how much a player in

the political process the press really is.

How much a player was brought home later that week by the hoopla surrounding the president's news conference. After the event, much was made of the press hype. Hype there was. But the news conference was indeed a crucial event. Another trip up the Pacific Coast Highway that Reagan had visited during the first Mondale debate — and Reagan seemed more than once headed that way before turning back

See KRAUTHAMMER on 5