

# Editorial

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## UNSTA safe? Fate now lies in Legislature

The NU School of Technical Agriculture at Curtis may have been granted another chance at continuing its existence. At least its fate lies in the hands of the Legislature.

The Legislature's Education Committee amended the bill, LB656, that would have given the Board of Regents the authority to close the school.

An amendment offered by Indianola Sen. Owen Elmer, would require that the legislature provide \$1.3 million to keep the school operating for two years. The school then would separate from the university and be governed by its own board. The amendment needs 25 votes from the Legislature to be attached to the bill.

NU President Ronald Roskens has recommended the closing of UNSTA to help reduce the NU operating budget by \$3.1 million for 1987-88 as mandated by the Legislature. He said the school did not fulfill the NU mission because it is a two-year and not a four-year program.

Sen. Elmer's amendment obviously is advantageous to UNSTA and is a good idea. The Curtis school is the only one of its kind in the state. But Roskens and others have got to be asking the question: If not UNSTA, then what do we cut?

Although Roskens seemed to make the proper choices in finding cuts, he really may have not. What we find is a vicious circle. Popular programs statewide like intercollegiate athletics, the Division of Continuing Studies and UNSTA probably will not find themselves on the chopping block April 11.

Several of these programs have been threatened by cuts before, but public sentiment has won out.

Where does that leave the university? Most likely with more horizontal cuts that diminish the quality of education all the way around. The DN has supported vertical cuts and still stands behind its position. It's time the state also takes a stand, one for quality education.

## Humanistic bias in texts misrepresents culture

Few activities these days are undertaken with less responsibility than the criticism of judges. Judges seldom respond to media criticism, so their decisions are usually easy targets, requiring neither serious research nor consideration of the evidence presented to the court.

An example is the recent Alabama District Court decision written by Judge Brevard Hand, which ordered that 52 textbooks widely used in the state's public schools be withdrawn from use. The text of the opinion runs in excess of 100 pages, and deals with the evidence presented by numerous expert witnesses. The case basically presented two issues: 1) Is secular humanism a religion? and 2) Do the Alabama public-school textbooks in question promote secular humanism?

### Guest Opinion

There were several named defendants in the case, some of whom were willing to agree that secular humanism is a religion and that it would be a violation if the textbooks promoted it. The Mobile County School Board took this position, apparently relying on the Supreme Court's declaration in the 1961 case of *Roy R. Torcaso*, a humanist who sued the state of Maryland, that "among religions in this country which do not teach what would generally be considered a belief in the existence of God are Buddhism, Taoism, Ethical Culture, Secular Humanism and others."

Leading humanists themselves admit in many of their writings that theirs is a religious belief system. The Humanist Manifesto, published by the American Humanist Association (AHA) in 1933, refers to its belief system as "religious humanism." The Humanist Manifesto II, an updated version published by the AHA in 1973, refers to itself as "an expression of a living and growing faith."

Judge Hand rightly ruled in favor of the plaintiffs on the first issue. "For purposes of the First Amendment, secular humanism is a religious belief system, entitled to the protections of,

and subject to the prohibitions of, the religion clauses."

Once the first issue is decided, the battleground moves from theory to evidence. Both sides are forced to deal with material that is both included and excluded from the textbooks. One of the experts, Dr. Paul Vitz, a professor at New York University, recently completed a study of public-school texts funded by the Department of Education. His study, entitled "Religion and Traditional Values in Public School Textbooks," revealed systematic exclusion of religion and especially contemporary Protestantism. Vitz, a Roman Catholic, was especially surprised that Judaism and Catholicism received more sensitive and frequent treatment than Protestantism. In a recent speech at Doane College, Vitz noted that the lack of treatment of this country's Protestant heritage actually gave a distorted picture of history and would be unthinkable if the omissions were racially or sexually oriented.

Scott Houser, spokesman for the plaintiffs and their attorneys, maintains that the textbooks "not only advance the tenets of secular humanism, but also systematically exclude mention of our rich Christian heritage." The bias against Christianity is so pronounced, says Houser, "that we have such bizarre things as a history text that devotes 32 pages to the Pilgrims and Thanksgiving without any mention of God, religion or prayer."

After viewing the evidence presented by the experts for both sides, Judge Hand ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

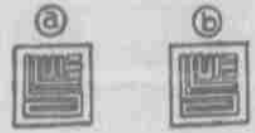
Anyone can second-guess a judge when the evidence can be avoided. For anyone serious about understanding why Judge Hand ruled as he did, I would recommend either of two sources. The text of Judge Hand's opinion will be available at the Law College library early this summer. Alternatively, Vitz has published a book containing the results of his study, "Religion and Traditional Values in Your Children's Public School Textbooks."

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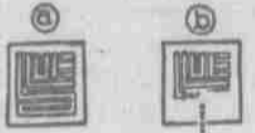
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## At home in the auto nest

Car slob transforms new vehicle into lived-in mobile home

I have just moved into a new car. I used the word "moved" advisedly. I did not really hire a transcontinental truck for this. There were no massive crates to pack and unpack. Indeed, I was determined to travel lightly into this four-wheeler. All anyone actually needs to move into a new car, I said to myself primly, is the keys.

I have a history as a car slob. This I admit. But as I unloaded my old car of its burdensome past — five years worth of sweatpants, sneakers, T-shirts, umbrellas, coffee cups, hats, tapes, pens, parking tickets, receipts, magazines, notebooks, assorted pennies, plastic forks and window scrapers in various stages of disrepair — I believed that I could unload myself of old habits.

This motor vehicle would be pristine. A clean slate. Passengers would be able to eat off my floor mats. People who peered into my windows would assume that my last name was Hertz.

For the first month, I did deal with the car as if I were renting it. I felt like a guest in a hotel who wasn't quite sure how the shower handles worked. I was incapable of driving and turning on the rear-window wiper at the same time. I had trouble distinguishing the heater push-button from the radio push-button. I did everything but sign the register when I entered from the car. And (this is crucial) when I checked out each day, I left nothing behind.

But, as I began to feel at home, I did in fact move in. With all my belongings. The sneakers, the sweatpants, the hat . . .

Now, I have come to the rationalization that my car functions in life as my mobile home. And I am one of those people who like things homey.

I say this defensively because my husband has a different attitude and, fortunately, a different car. I have, however, consulted with any number of friends on this subject. For a surprisingly large number of us, the car is the modern equivalent of what Virginia Woolf once described as a room of her own. To mess up.

My car goes to work and comes home with me, and waits in the parking lot like Mary's little lamb. It tags along for errands and other assorted pit stops. Sooner or later anything that can't fit into a pocket or pocketbook takes semipermanent residence inside its doors and trunk. Because you never know when you'll need it, you take it with you.

Inevitably it begins to serve as a knapsack, a locker room, a laundry, workspace and a closet. It's a repository for boots going to the shoemaker, shirts coming back, sunglasses waiting for the sunny day, umbrellas for a rainy day and an assortment of Russian-language tapes. You never know when you'll go back to Moscow.

In my defense, I am not without restraint. I did not put bumper stickers on my mobile home anymore than I would add psychedelic posters to my living room. I have pledged to remove litter semiannually and empty the pennies out of the ashtray on Arbor Day.

But quite frankly I have given up on keeping the new car a showroom. The people who have immaculate cars are people who buy aerosol cans with new-car-smell spray. They are people who prefer to live in showrooms.

I am a nester, and I have the twigs in the trunk to prove it. So, I have moved in. I feel more comfortable with my mobile home each day. It's got a real look to it, you know. The lived-in look.

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Goodman is a Pulitzer prize-winning candidate for the Boston Globe.

### Ellen Goodman

A nutritionist I know told me how many of her clients, especially women, kept food in the car. I do not mean cookies for the kids. The car, she figured, was the one place in which many people are actually, from time to time, alone. In this mobile room of our own, some people do their best thinking — not to mention singing, not to mention eating. Here we rehearse or rerun the conversations of the day and make them come out right.

## Nebraskans use imagination, humor in continuing battle against boredom

When a freelance writer for Rolling Stone magazine jetted in to Lincoln from New York City last Thanksgiving to meet the founder of Cliff's Notes, he found just what he expected: boredom, Nebraska-style.

In his March 25 article, Norman Atkins described Lincoln as "a lackluster spick and span cow town of 175,000." He figured no one in Lincoln was cool enough to read Rolling Stone anyway.

He also compared Lincoln's night life to a visit to a pet store. Surprisingly, he never even made it to the Zoo Bar.

But in a phone conversation a few months after his Thanksgiving visit, the 25-year-old Brown University graduate tells a little different story about his Lincoln experience. He claims he actually enjoyed it. And as he recounts details of the trip he took nearly six months ago, it's clear "The Star City" made some kind of impression on him. First, Atkins rented a car from

National at the airport and was amazed at how quickly he arrived downtown. He said he immediately realized he was dealing with a "different dimension" than he was accustomed to. He checked into the Cornhusker Hotel and took a gander out of his window at the Back to the Bible Broadcast building.



Lise Olsen

Later, relaxing in his room, he checked out the local TV news for more entertainment. He remembers a spot on Lincoln's homeless that featured so few people that the problem seemed almost ridiculously small to Atkins. Hundreds of homeless live within a few blocks of his apartment in New York

City. Sometimes he steps over them on the sidewalks. He began to like Lincoln.

The tourist office was closed for the season. On his own, Atkins toured the capitol, ate celebrity sandwiches at Barrymore's and sampled Arby's roast beef.

He asked the inevitable questions of Nebraskans he saw: "Did you see Bob Kerrey and Debra Winger getting it on?" And "What do you do for fun in Lincoln?"

Atkins joked that he looked for Playboys at 7-Eleven (he didn't know about the Citizens Against Pornography campaign) and spotted churches at 1/2 block intervals.

Although his writing didn't reflect it, Atkins said he appreciated Lincoln's fresh air, clear water and open space. He described it as a place where kids can have swingsets in the back yard and not be attacked by "slimes on the subway."

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