

# Chicago: An insider's view

Analysis by Charles Lieurance  
Arts & Entertainment Editor

Chicago is the most incestuous of American melting pots — a place not intended for strangers, it is where people who are already Americans go to celebrate the hopelessness of being American. There is no lamp raised in dubious welcome beside a golden door. There are stockyards, warehouses and packing plants. The *work* of America goes on here.

Instead of being indoctrinated into the heartless maze of bureaucracy, the treadmill of forms and assignments and the metamorphosis from adults in one culture to the children of this one; the souls who flocked to Chicago around the turn-of-the-century brought their grudges with them, not their dreams. They came to be hoods and mobsters, to play the deep blues with electric frankness, to beat America's ruthless game and beat it soundly.

Their optimism, when they had any, was the optimism of action. It was the optimism of brutally honest expressions of desire. An optimism represented by worker's strikes, whiskey raids, gangland killings, blues stoicism and the plaintive platitude, "things gonna sure

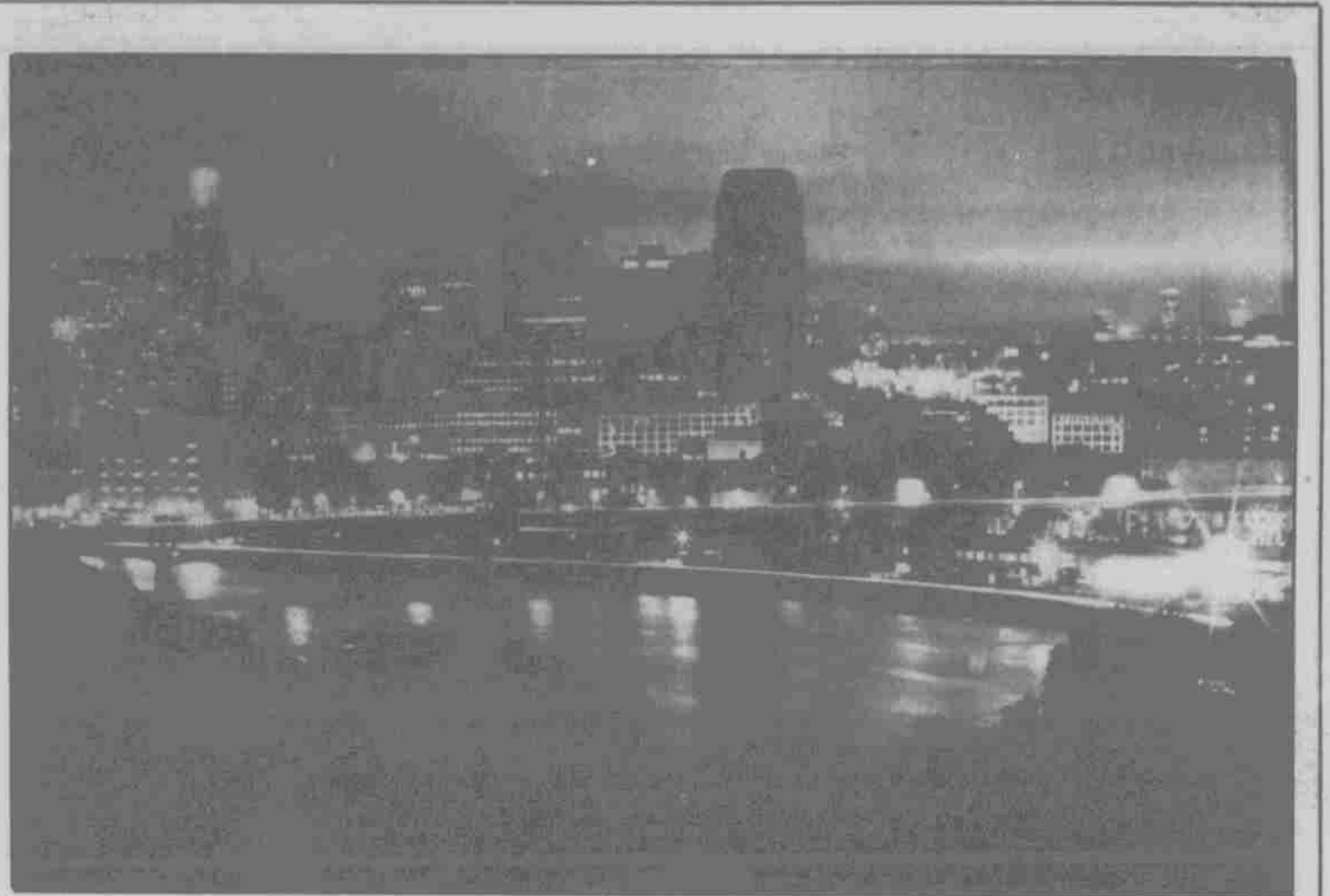
get better, because they sure can't get no worse."

And Chicago is of the Midwest, cut from the same oak as our own state. (It's an eight hour drive away.) It is a city of high culture but its sophistication is not pretentious. There's a lot to do but you'll look good doing it in jeans. Here people go to a Cubs game at Wrigley Field, have a few beers and then, without blinking an eye, go on to a play by Chicago's own David Mamet.

Downtown there is the Lexington Hotel, where Al Capone lived like a king before his downfall at the hands of Eliot Ness and the T-men. Geraldo Rivera, working his way back to the journalistic mailroom, ran amok through the labyrinthine basement of the hotel in hopes of finding money, bootleg muscatel or improvised morgues, and came out of the catacombs empty handed, as most of the very level-headed population of Chicago knew he would.

There's a huge baboon in the Mayor Daley plaza, a mall that commemorates the most corrupt and bestial mayor on earth (Philadelphia's Mayor Rizzo comes in a close second). The baboon is Picasso's. Among the Chicago left

See CHICAGO on 8



Eric Gregory/Daily Nebraskan

View of downtown St. Paul, Minnesota from Mounds Park

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