

Editorial

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Thone's DN days

1950s ambivalence, to 1980s reality

Editor's note: Hundreds of former Daily Nebraskan staff members gathered this weekend to reminisce about their days as student journalists. Today the DN editorial board turns over its column to Ruth Thone, former DN staff member and former first lady of Nebraska, who writes about her memories of her days spent in Nebraska Union 34.

Thirty-five years ago, I spent a good part of my days and nights working at the DN in the basement of the Nebraska Union.

It was the best life I knew. My fellow staffers and I thought there would always be a place in the world for our energy, our abilities, our superior intelligence. We worked hard and we were sure that our ideas and efforts mattered. We ate most of our meals in The Crib, and partied on North 14th Street on Friday afternoons.

We were a world unto ourselves. These memories aren't random — as I learned this weekend at a reunion of Daily Nebraskan and Cornhusker staff members sponsored by the College of Journalism. The memories — little episodes, aging anecdotes and other tales — illustrate and illuminate my life both then and now.

Renowned Nebraska-born scientist and author Loren Eiseley reminds us that "the teachers are not always to be found in school or in great laboratories... what we learn depends upon our own powers of insight... our teachers may be hidden." What we remember has power to teach us.

For instance: I remember riding the old Burlington passenger train from Scottsbluff to Lincoln, terribly proud of my newspaper-person's badge of cynicism won during my first reporting job, one of several summers of taking the swing shift and filling in for vacationing reporters on the Scottsbluff Star-Herald. I also carried with me a bottle of bourbon, a gift from the guys in the newsroom. I was glad to be one of them, a member of a wise-cracking, hard-drinking, stereotypical fraternity.

That memory connects strongly with my life today. Some years ago I gave up drinking and today I wonder how to exorcise the cynicism.

In those days, I had too much to do and too little time in which to do it. I was forever running late, burdened with the awkwardness of never being ready, pulled together. I doubt that I made lists as religiously as I do today; perhaps there was no time between the full-time job on "The Rag" and the full-time job of going to school. Little time was left for going slowly, for play-

ing any way other than hard and thoughtlessly, for nurturing ourselves and our relationships. We thought such things took care of themselves by osmosis.

Today I take care of myself and value my relationships much more highly than back then. I still think, though, that a day or a week or a season has enough time for everything I want to do, keeping me on the treadmill of "When I get the next thing done, then I'll..."

I dated the editor during my first year at "The Rag." He did not recommend me to the Publications Board for a staff position but the board advanced me anyway. Yet I continued to think, like most women of my generation, that my success depended on hitching my wagon to a star. We hardly gave it a thought, so deeply was it ingrained in us to project our hopes and dreams on a man. The myth dies hard for women, even today, and it takes a lifetime to learn that we are responsible for ourselves.

There came a time when I had to choose between lots of activities and concentrating solely on my main love, the Daily Nebraskan. Today I am still bewildered to find little time for writing, while I am busy teaching classes, giving talks, doing peace and justice work, studying Spanish, helping at a soup kitchen, visiting my grown daughters and my mother and sisters, and finding time to be with my husband and other friends.

Back then, I set my mind to my heart's desire of becoming editor of the Daily Nebraskan and reluctantly accepted that I would not become a Mortar Board. There are days now when I think I am still trying to become a Mortar Board. One semester's low grades also did not help my scholastic average. Then I spent disproportionate amounts of time being a Delta Gamma and dating. That amorphous feeling that I can have it all by simply wanting it instead of making choices plagues me less today but is still around.

One final story: I remember being interviewed by the Seacrest scholarship committee for graduate study at the Columbia School of Journalism. I was engaged to Charley Thone, rising young lawyer and politician, well known to the civic leaders of the Seacrest Committee. I did not recognize my own ambivalence. I was applying for the scholarship to graduate school while declaring loudly that I was to be married and join my life to a life already committed to politics.

Willy Loman's wife in "Death of a Salesman" says, "So attention must be paid... attention must be finally paid..."

If I was not paying attention 35 years ago, you may be sure that in the intensity of middle age that gift has been given to me today.

A conservative or a liberal?

Bork's 'neutral-principled' approach shuns both philosophies

With all the hysteria over Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court, public confusion run rampant. Many wonder what the controversy is all about and why people either adamantly support or oppose his nomination.

Liberals will tell you that Bork is a Neanderthal monster who would force women into back-alley abortions and allow the police the right to break down your door in the middle of the night for no reason at all.

Conservatives will tell you that Bork is the champion of unborn babies and will do whatever he can to ensure their right to life.

Both are wrong and for good reason. For it is reason that should rule over result. What both groups fear or favor is a result-oriented Bork.

Far from being ideologically partisan, Bork holds fast to a "neutral-principled" approach irrespective of whose ox is being gored. Bork has said: "The sin of wanting judges to do good things simply because the electorate won't do them is not confined to liberalism. Conservatives have been known to be infected with that desire, too."

What is the difference between being result-oriented and neutral-principled?

Being neutral-principled or practicing "judicial restraint" means believing that judges should interpret the Constitution and the laws according to neutral principles, without reference to their personal views as to desirable social and legislative policy, insofar as this is humanly practicable. This is based on the belief that policy making is best left to elected representatives as opposed to judges who are not elected.

Being result-oriented means believing that laws are "living" and should be amendable to adapt to changing cir-

cumstances and values. This theory gives judges a lot of discretion to change laws to fit their views of society.

Both judicial philosophies should be followed. A judge cannot be just one way or the other. Public policy is so important to judicial decisions that a judge cannot always wait for Congress to determine public opinion. Yet, a judge is prohibited from "legislating" with

well-intentioned judges. Daniel Webster once warned "that the Constitution was made to guard against the dangers of good intentions." He noted that there "are men in all ages who mean to govern well, but they mean to govern. They promise to be good masters, but they mean to be masters."

Bork represents a growing sentiment that the judiciary has become the "master" branch of government. In Bork's words: "When the judiciary imposes upon democracy limits not to be found in the Constitution, it deprives Americans of a right that is found there, the right to make the laws to govern themselves. As courts intervene more frequently, they teach the lesson that democratic processes are suspect essentially unprincipled and untrustworthy."

Bork does not carry an "agenda" with him. He has criticized those who have. This includes the right-wing activism of the pre-1937 Supreme Court that struck down much of the social legislation of President Roosevelt. On the liberal front, he has called into question the controversial Roe vs. Wade case that created a right to privacy out of thin air.

Unfortunately, the liberals are resisting his confirmation. Sen. Joe Biden, chairman of the Judiciary Committee and presidential hopeful, has reversed his earlier support for Bork. At the time of his earlier support, Biden said: "I'd have to vote for him, and if the (special interest) groups tear me apart, that's the medicine I'll have to take."

The liberals think that opposing Bork will win them the White House. My advice to Biden: Swallow hard. Mondale's prescription of special-interest Quaaludes killed him in 49 states.

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Joel Carlson

his decisions because only Congress has the power to legislate.

Both philosophies are needed, yet the Supreme Court has been dominated for many years by result-oriented justices. As a result, liberals have turned to the courts as a forum to achieve their social agendas that could not gain popular support in Congress.

In a year in which we celebrate the bicentennial of our Constitution, it is appropriate to allow the original framers a chance to comment. Alexander Hamilton wrote that the judiciary was the "least dangerous" branch, because it had neither "force nor will, but merely judgement" and because it could take "no active resolution whatever" in policy matters when that would require a choice among competing legitimate social values.

Our system of justice was designed to resolve disputes and not reshape society according to the whims of even

Submarine's pothole glance yields Titanic artifacts, insight

It was unmistakably a man's outdoor walking shoe, and it appeared as if being exhibited by Abercrombie & Fitch from a painting by Salvador Dali. Beneath the shoe and surrounding it was bright yellow sand. A few feet to the right, a teacup, glistening white; no saucer. And sprinkled here and there, as if to keep a tablecloth from being buffeted by the wind, chunks of black rock formations, about the size of a human wrist. Coal. And all of this I was seeing through a foot-thick glass porthole the size of a kitchen's electric clock.

We were gliding over the target area — a few acres of ocean floor into which the sinking vessel had disgorged a small part of the paraphernalia of the 2,200 people traveling exuberantly on the maiden voyage of the Titanic across the Atlantic Ocean.

I wondered: Was that shoe I saw covering a human foot on the night of April 15, 1912? The answer can't be known certainly because the men and women who died when the Titanic went down were on the surface of the water, frozen to death. The exception was the engineers who fought bravely below to maintain electric power on the great decks above them.

We stopped to fetch the teacup. By common agreement, the entrepreneurs have agreed not to excavate personal articles. But if you pick up (as we did) a pocketbook, open it and find inside a woman's wristwatch, we do not toss the wristwatch out.

The foraging resumed. We (the little, \$20 million French submarine Nautille) were looking for three specific objects, previously photographed, one of them a man's valise, the second a part of a leaded window missing from the larger window now reconstructed, and the

third, the loose-lying control levers that had fallen from the bridge from which Capt. Edward Smith had ordered the engines to shut down after the iceberg was hit.

"Turn to 130 degrees, then go for 60 meters," the voice from the radio came in, giving the instructions of the navigating coordinator aboard the mother ship, the French Nadir, 2 1/2 miles above us. Georges, the senior pilot, lying on his chest, reoriented the little sub in the indicated direction and we crept noiselessly forward, one meter above the yellow sand. The co-pilot, Pierrot, sat on his little chair. He looked through his porthole, the top of an isosceles triangle at the base of which are the other two portholes. And beyond the porthole, Pierrot has two screens giving him a remote video view of what lies immediately ahead. To his left are two more little video screens, one of them indicating the full-view action of the prosthetic arm, the manipulation of which permits the Nautille to recover artifacts as dainty as a brooch, done with the precision of a surgeon's scalpel, and inserted either into the submarine's marsupial or, if too bulky, identified with a floating flasher, to be brought up later in a basket made buoyant by huge plastic corks.

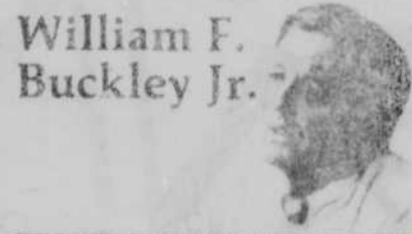
My job, as "observer," was constantly

to strain my eyes to the right, lest we glide by the objective, and to direct the attention of Georges to any object I thought especially interesting. My problem is that I found everything especially interesting.

It is all being carefully husbanded, scrubbed and put back in saltwater tanks for preservation. A French national laboratory will take it from there. They will have, to exhibit in museums, more than 100 articles taken from the ocean floor, including the doctor's satchel we spotted and the gentleman's gold cuff-link case.

The Nautille is a technological miracle, but if ever they decide at Disney World to imitate it for public consumption, they will need to make generous alterations. On climbing out of the Nautille 9 1/2 hours after entering it, I reached for a description to satisfy the curiosity of a young American associate of the sponsoring firm, who wanted to know what it was like. It is, I said, something like hiring John Kenneth Galbraith, Haystack Calhoun and Jackie Gleason to move into a 1950 Volkswagen and play jointly a Bach toccata on a two-console organ. No one larger than 5-foot-6 can — ever — stretch out his legs. A cold aluminum bar bisects the stomach if you are lying down peering out of the porthole (there were 6 1/2 non-stop hours of that), and it does the same to your back if you try to lie down (you will) on the 90-minute trip down, and the 100-minute trip up. You can sit with your knees bent, but must not lean back. You might push one of those thousand toggle switches — who knows, the one that will add your watch and shoes to the collection on the ocean floor.

It is one hell of an enterprise. ©1987 Universal Press Syndicate



William F. Buckley Jr.