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# Role of Civil Defense has broadened to include nuclear attacks and disasters

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crisis was in the public eye and civil defense was a popular issue.

Since then, the building has taken on a new meaning; civil defense has extended far beyond the idea of nuclear survival.

The Civil Defense Agency uses the Underground Capitol for its offices.

"That is why I have the pleasure of having a sink in my office -- as this room (and the other offices) double as the infirmary," Johnston explained. Many day-to-day activities go on in the civil defense offices such as global communications. The communications center will play an important role in case of a disaster or national emergency.

The radios, computers, telephones and other communications systems in the room are so quick that the book "War and Peace" can be printed within seven minutes, said Barb Gadwood, communications assistant for the Civil Defense Agency.

The department maintains a hotline with both of the nuclear power plants in the state, in case there are any leaks or other problems with the plants. If catastrophe struck, the office would know in seconds and

could dispatch new information about the situation. Every year, federal regulation requires the plants to have a test to give the civil defense people a practice run.

Another important communications system in the underground capitol is "the icebox" -- a room with a radio connected to the Emergency Broadcast System. The room is built with thick walls and insulated with copper. In case of a nuclear explosion, this insulation would keep out electromagnetic pulses that cause the breakdown of communications systems.

National communications, called NAWAS or the National Warning System, warns the civil defense of "an attack on the United States," according to a Civil Defense pamphlet.

Yet another system is called the National News and Broadcast.

"If I talk into this microphone, the whole country can hear me," Gadwood said. "For what it's worth, I've sent information to the Pentagon before."

The military and the FBI have their own communications systems in the room. One, the Stew 2, a scramblephone, can turn conversations into "gibberish," Gadwood said.

Next to the communications room is the operations room. In the event of disaster, the legislature would carry out its business here.

This room was used when Grand Island was devastated by tornados a few years ago. People coordinating the "what to do and how to do it" used the room to direct communication around the state.

When civil defense was first developed, the idea was to protect citizens from nuclear attacks or accidents that could happen at the power plants.

"Theories in civil defense have vacillated from nuclear attack/powerplants to natural disasters," Johnston said. Now, the philosophy balances both sides of the civil defense issue, she said. For instance, the civil defense coordinated relief efforts after the Grand Island tornados.

In fact, only 5 percent of the civil defense's activities are related to the military, Gadwood said. The remaining 95 percent is civilian activities.

Tours of the Underground Capitol are given by appointment, Johnston said. Tourist information packets are also available.

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**CHESTERFIELD'S**

# 'Quilters' sews poignant stories together with women and music

By Trevor McArthur  
 Staff Reporter

In the myths of how this nation was forged from the wilderness, the best roles have been given to men.

Their brave deeds of conquering and taming the prairie for civilization have been immortalized in words and song.

## theater REVIEW

"Quilters," this season's first production for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Theater Arts and Dance, changes this by featuring only actresses. It's being presented in the Howell Theater of the Temple Theater Building tonight through Saturday at 8 p.m.

For the descendants of the Great Plains settlers, the play is a scrapbag of our forebears' lives, but the stories of growing up, growing old, the world of children and getting along with

others can hold meaning for everyone.

The play presents the stories of frontier women, their lives in joy and tragedy. It doesn't ignore the men but focuses on women. They did less taming but certainly were responsible for most of the civilizing.

The story opens with Sarah (played by Marya Lucca-Thyberg) writing a letter to her six daughters. Sarah believes she doesn't have much time left on earth and is going to set about creating her greatest work.

She asserts that "most women's work is the kind that fades with the using" and that her quilts will probably be the only thing to outlast her. The progress on her quilt is a recurring theme, although it disappears at times as the plays becomes a series of vignettes.

Saying the plot is weak is perhaps accurate as far as the construction of the script, but misleading on its ultimate impact. The main story fades out to other characters unrelated to Sarah, but then constantly resurfaces to introduce the new segments.

The progress on the quilt is an often invisible thread (and good quilters make tiny stitches) which

holds the bits together. While the play digresses and seems to wander, in the end, the pieces form a warming whole.

The idea and form of the quilt pervades everything about this play. The story itself is a quilt, gleaned from the diaries of pioneer women, an anthology of memories. A quilt is also an anthology of fabric taken from a bag of pieces, each piece a memory: A piece of white from a wedding dress, blue calico from a Sunday best.

Or perhaps it should be said the other way -- life is a quilt of memories. Each segment is introduced with a beautiful panel from Sarah's legacy quilt, then moves off into stories about those memories.

The quilt is not just a symbol of life's memories, but the common element of those memories. The stories include nights in terrible blizzards huddled under mountains of blankets, nights spent in log cabins and the quilting bees where quilts were made (and which were one of the prime social events of the frontier). The stories start to sneak away from quilts but eventually have to mention them somehow.

The play slips so naturally into

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