

VENDING

The Washington Sisters

with Melanie Monsur

East Campus Union, Great Plains Room

Friday, March 3

8:00p.m.

Tickets at the door only.

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By Mark Lage
Senior Reporter

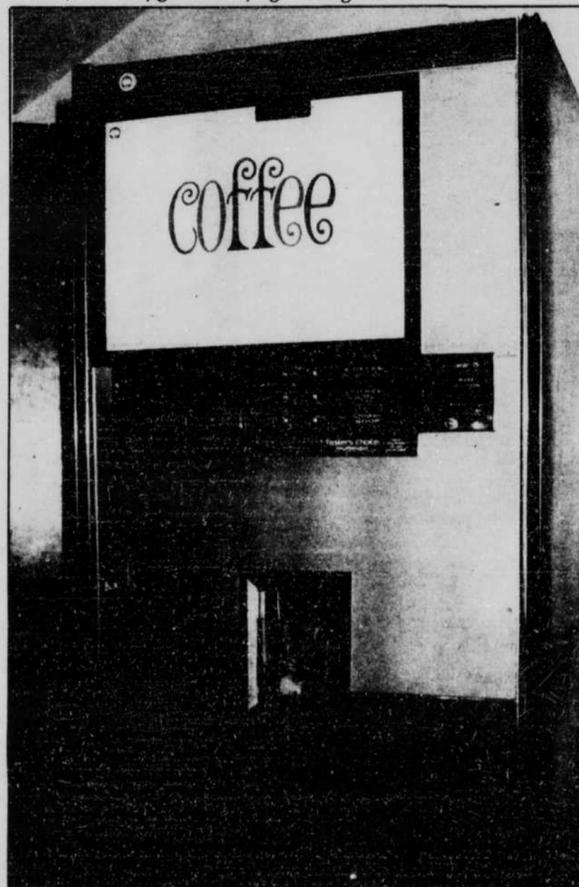
There is no such thing as good coffee. Good coffee is a myth perpetuated by the large numbers of people who have developed a tolerance for its taste, due to its reassuring warmth, and the lift of a pleasant caffeine buzz.

Students tend to be prominent entries into this group of coffee drinkers, owing to things like 8 a.m. classes, all-night study sessions, and heavy alcohol consumption. With this in mind, here is my guide to buying

coffee on and around the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus.

A couple of things need to be said first. Since we've already decided that coffee is not in fact ever good, and since I'm concerned here with coffee as student fuel, taste will not necessarily be the primary issue. Quantity and availability will be important.

Also, although some of the places below serve a variety of flavored coffees, that stuff is for wimps and we're going to ignore it here, and concentrate on the straight brown muck.



David Frana/Daily Nebraskan

First floor coffee machine in the College of Business Administration.

Vending machine items to avoid

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logical enough. However, the machines are also tucked back in a narrow little crevice the size of a kitchen in an efficiency apartment. Besides that, someone might see you there and think you're a nerd. Whoops. But where else can you eat a Fergie burger on its home turf?

Well, there it is, a highly selective guide to vending on campus. Before I leave you to your

own quests for food, I offer the following advice.

If it's in the 25 cent row and looks too much of a bargain to be true, it is.

No one eats Cheese Smackers and smiles.

Buy a packet of Life Savers after you eat those nacho chips.

The vending machine people are very nice souls who will give you change if you ask politely.

As Andy Griffith would say, "Good eatin'!"

1. Vending Machines.

There may not be any such thing as good coffee, but there are definitely such things as bad coffee and worse coffee. Vending machine coffee is worse coffee, except when the mix gets watery, at which point it is the worst coffee. But it's there when you need it.

Most UNL coffee vending machines have an added bonus -- Poker Draw cups. The little paper cups come with five card stud hands printed on the side -- four cards up, and one card down with its identity revealed on the bottom. Fun! Place your bets on full cups, drink your coffee, then reveal the winner. Boy, I could tell you some stories about the good times my friend and I have had with those cups.

One other nice thing about coffee vending machines in general -- they all offer chicken noodle soup in a cup as well. So no matter how bad it feels to be buying coffee from a big machine, you always have the consolation that at least you're not buying chicken noodle soup from a big machine.

These are a few of the machines on campus which I am familiar with:

Andrews Hall, basement. Don't let the Juan Valdez sticker on this one fool you. This is not the place to go for the world's finest coffee. The coffee here is terrible.

Oldfather Hall 1st Floor Vending Machine Playland. Just one of 10 vending machines in this lounge, the most notable feature of this one is the digital read-out. The coffee here is terrible.

Avery Hall, 2nd floor. This is a special machine for me, as it was the first place where I experienced what I like to call Night Class Break-Coffee Vending Machine-Student Bonding.

At the midpoint of night classes, a line of bleary-eyed from boredom students forms in front of the machine. Somebody chuckles and says "Terrific stuff, huh?" and everyone in line murmurs sympathetic assent. Someone could say "Yeah, almost as good as Geography 101 in a two and one half hour burst," but it's not necessary, because there is an unspoken understanding among the members of this "ne."

None of them are going to make it through the rest of night class alive, but for a moment, they have the warm feeling that they're not going down alone.

But the coffee here is terrible. CBA. I tried this one out just for the purposes of this story, and it immediately racked up about four strikes against it. To start with, it refused my quarter three times in a row. Very self-consciously aware that I was in the CBA building, I feared that the machine was attempting to drive a hard bargain.

It took the quarter the fourth time, though, which immediately led to my next disappointment -- no Poker Draw. Just two-tone brown cups with "Coffee" printed on the side.

Then, it took the machine about twice as long as normal to fill the cup, and it left some debris floating on the top. I drank it anyway.

The coffee here is terrible, but I have to admit that it is noticeably better than any of the other machines.

2. Near Campus.

The two entries in this category seem to me like great places to go for standard college memories. If you feel like you've been shorted on memories, go to these places.

The Hole Works. Go here with your friends when you skip class, listen to classic rock and roll, eat pizza that gets you all greasy, enjoy the nice light from the red "N" lamps, relax and be obnoxious. And have some coffee. It's pretty good although maybe a little weak, and the refills are cheap. They also have a flavor of the day, but we're ignoring that.

The Coffee House. Go here at night with a fine piece of literature under your arm, check out some art, discuss eternal paradoxes and contradictions with your companions, and have some coffee. As the name would suggest, this place has the best coffee around, and you don't have to drink it out of styrofoam or paper. They have lots of different flavors too, so come here if you really must have that sort of thing.

3. The Nebraska Union.

The union houses the undisputed coffee champion of on or near campus, and it may be a surprise to some -- Burger King. There are two main reasons for this -- they give free refills, and they are open all day. If you're a student, quality and availability have to be at least as important as taste.

The Bakery on the corner has additional flavors, but I keep forgetting that I'm supposedly ignoring that.

If you're only looking for one cupful, the Harvest Room is pretty good, but be wary. The large coffee pots in there create some interesting problems. For one thing, if you go in at about 1:30 p.m., just before they close, you're liable to come up with a pretty interesting mixture.

And anyone who has spent much time in the Harvest Room knows that its only a matter of time before one of those big pots blows. They periodically strike up an awful, frightening, clanging racket, and have to be subdued regularly. So if you're drinking coffee in there, be careful.

If you're looking to do some serious coffee drinking, go to Burger King.

Coffee, cigarettes

Student dissolves into muck from bad habits

Coffee and cigarettes are extremely poor substitutes for sleep and food.

That's what I was thinking early one morning in the Harvest Room last week. I had been up all night studying for a mid-term, and was taking a brief study break by enjoying the warmth of my tenth cup of coffee for that day, and savoring the rich tobacco flavor of my 23rd cigarette.

humor

As I mashed out the cigarette, I realized that I was drooling all over myself. I shut my mouth and went to wipe off my lips, but in doing so, I realized that the drool wasn't coming out of my mouth at all, but instead from a small hole which had rotted through my right cheek.

Before I could even clamp it up, a smallish chunk of cheek slid right out of this hole, landing on my sweatshirt.

Acting on pure reflex, I quickly palmed the chunk and frantically scrubbed at the trail of slime it had left on my clothes. If someone saw me with a chunk of cheek on my sweatshirt, they might think that I wasn't cool.

I had little time to worry about this though, as my right bicuspid slid out of my gums and plunked right down on my table. Things picked up after that, as everything began to dissolve in my mouth area.

A strange, even pleasant, drafty feeling had developed in my mid-section. Looking down, I discovered that my sweatshirt was soaked with a grainy, brownish-gray sludge.

Further investigation revealed that it was issuing from a hole which had punched itself right through my belly. Incredibly large amounts of this sludge were sliding right out of it. I noticed the remains of various Burger King items, an amazingly well-preserved Pizza Shuttle pepperoni, and (gasp!) a cigarette butt. I couldn't remember having eaten any cigarette butts the day before.

The smell of this flow quickly became so detestable that I felt as if I would puke, and then I did -- all over myself and my immediate surroundings. I was amazed at the amount of grainy, brownish-gray sludge that poured out of what had previously been my mouth, considering how much had already leaked out of my stomach.

A sudden, urgent need to urinate precluded these thoughts. I had to get to the

men's room, quick, or I was going to wet my pants. I got up and staggered towards the exit of the Harvest Room. Somewhat surprisingly I was able to walk, but my complete and total disintegration was becoming more imminent with each step.

I made it as far as the Information Kiosk before I completely melted. I was now a chunky, steaming puddle of slime and bile. Onlookers were horrified and repulsed -- several were inspired to puke up their own chunky, steaming puddles of slime and bile. I was the big pile.

One brave onlooker spotted my wallet amidst the mess, and gingerly picked it out. He handed it to the Union official who had just arrived on the scene. From my ID, they were able to learn my name and address. University janitors and police officers were summoned immediately.

The janitors began the unenviable task of mopping me and my clothes up and depositing the whole mess into several five-gallon buckets. They were careful not to get any onlooker puke mixed in with me. After getting the main puddle, they followed the trail back to my table in the Harvest Room, in hopes of retrieving as much of me as possible. They were forced to use stain remover on the parts of me which had soaked into the carpet.

Once I was all mopped up, the filled buckets were turned over to two campus police officers, who drove me home.

At the door of my house, they turned the buckets over to my roommate, who was surprised to see me home so early. The officers were deeply troubled by the sadness of my condition. My roommate assured them that he had seen me look worse. He attempted to lighten up the scene by asking their opinion as to whether I should be eaten with a fork or a spoon.

My roommate thanked them for returning me, and wished them a good day. He then carried the buckets into my bedroom, where he carefully poured me into bed, making sure to get every drop possible. The he covered me up and shut off my light.

I woke up about six hours later, looking and feeling much better. I was upset that I had missed my test, but felt as though I had a pretty good test. I lit up a cigarette as I tried to call my professor. She wasn't home, so I headed into the kitchen to brew up a pot of coffee. I had a lot of studying to do.

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