

Daily
Nebraskan
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Progress made

Some exceptions mark 20th Earth Day

Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote that the earth has a skin and that skin has diseases; one of its diseases is called man.

And Paul Goodman described American society as an "interlocking system of semi-monopolies notoriously venal, an electorate notoriously unenlightened, misled by a mass media notoriously phony."

In the last few weeks, the American public has been treated with an epic three-ring circus starring corporate America, the U.S. media and our elected officials. A bandwagon of sorts, the size and safety of which has not been seen since July 4, 1976.

It's Earth Day, fellow Americans, and by now you've been bombarded with the names of every business and every politician that ever made "this land a better place for our children." One way or another, it seems, the American powers-that-be find ways to rape Mother Nature. It can make a cynic or a misanthrope of the most pious soul.

But underneath the half-truths and blatant lies of the recent deluge of self-heralding, there is a little something of which to be proud.

According to U.S. News and World Report, the last 20 years have seen some major environmental improvements. Since 1970, federal parklands in the continental United States have jumped from 24 million to 26 million acres. In Alaska, 45 million additional acres have been protected. Also, the extent of waterways included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers has increased by more than 12 times.

According to the Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Administration, 47,000 miles of rivers and streams and almost 400,000 lake acres are substantially cleaner than they were in 1970. Since that time, lead emissions by automobiles has decreased 96 percent and airborne dirt has dropped by about 63 percent.

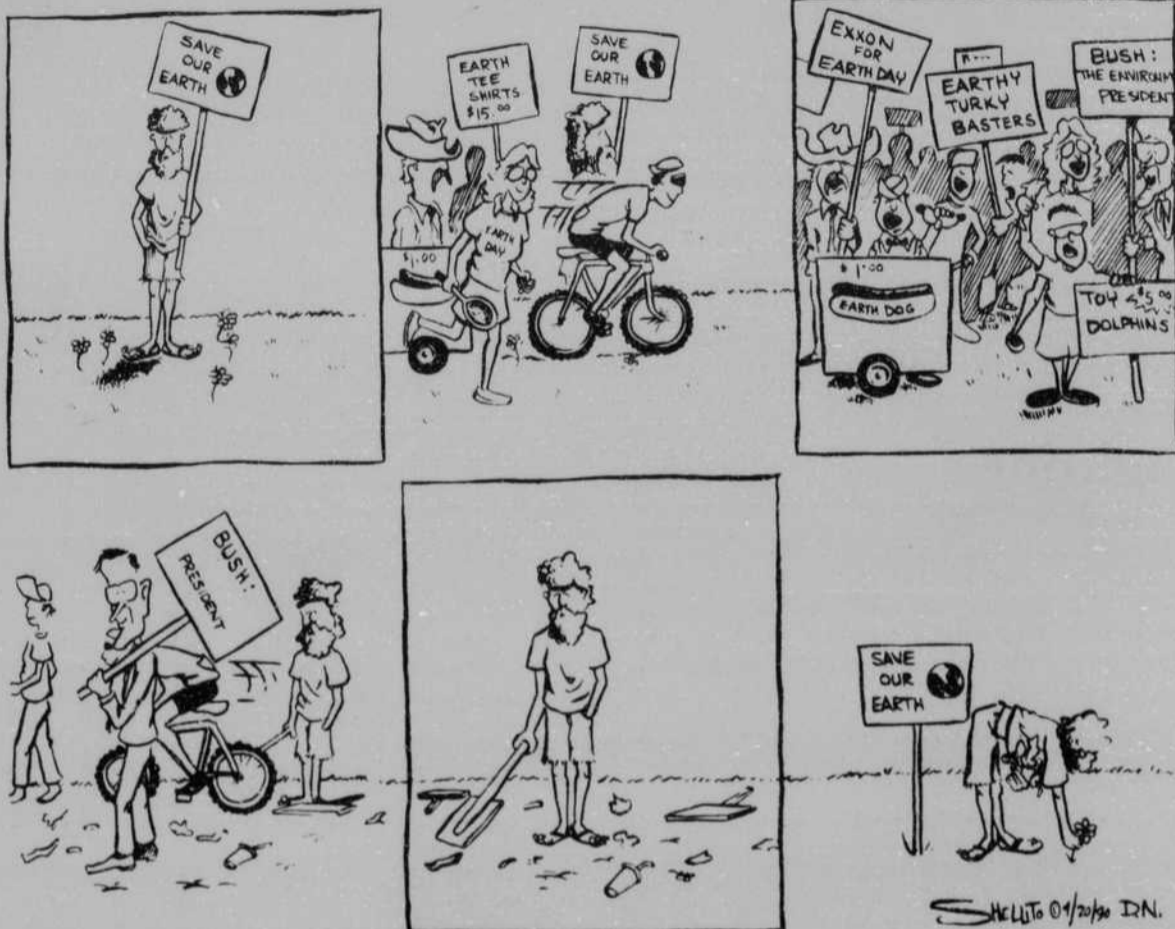
And both General Motors and Isuzu announced this year that they have developed electric automobiles capable of the acceleration and speeds necessary to function in city traffic. One GM engineer believes that within 10 years, one of the major auto dealers will market an electric car.

Especially of concern to Nebraskans, the nation's leading cause of water pollution, agricultural chemicals, soon may be a thing of the past. Alternative agricultural methods, which have been proven to produce yields equal to those gained using chemicals, are beginning to take root in the Midwest. As consumers demand more natural products, the supply of naturally produced crops surely will increase. The 1990 farm bill also will help make natural farming financially possible.

It seems that beneath the hoopla, Nietzsche's disease actually is beginning to cure itself. Man's historical weapon against nature -- technology -- is now being used to heal the wounds. The "notoriously unenlightened" American public is using the "notoriously phony" media to make environmentally sound decisions.

Certainly, the cynic or misanthrope still has the clearest view of America and mankind. But the 20 years of Earth Day has proven that exceptions -- even to human nature -- can grow to be the rule. For that reason, Sunday is a day worthy of worldwide celebration. Happy 20th anniversary, Earth Day.

-- Bob Nelson
for the Daily Nebraskan



College too mature for name-calling

Former John Denver look-alike now ignores derogatory names

"Hey, shorty!!!, Yea you, the one with the dwarf-like hands, get over here."

Way back when I was in fourth grade, I had a big problem -- I was short. Not just short, but I was small, puny, waif-like, and wore wire-rim glasses. Actually, I looked something like a miniature John Denver, way before I approached the stud-like proportions I possess today.

Anyway, I was known around Stewart Elementary as "shorty." How humbling. All day long I was addressed as shorty. Not Kurt, or buddy, or pal, or any of those "Leave it to Beaver" friendship names, just "shorty."

I'd lie in bed at night and cry. I hated the world. I hated my dad. "Why do I have to be so short?" The world is so unfair, I thought.

My parents would reassure me that things weren't so bad, that I'd grow, and soon I'd be taller than everyone else. With my mind at ease, I'd sleep and dream of being taller and not having to look like John Denver. Some day I'd be big.

Yet, as soon as I got to school, it started again. "Hey shorty, hey midget, hey dwarf, hey stubby, etc."

One big bully in particular, that I remember, was named Mike. He was in the fourth grade, but you wouldn't know it. He was tall, big, had biceps and did not wear glasses. Obviously, he hated miniature John Denvers.

He called me every derogatory short name in the book and a few more he invented. I hated him. I hated his clone friends who all chimed in, "Hey shorty."

Every recess I heard, "Hey runt, worm, stumpy, pony keg."

Enough was enough. I told my teacher, but she said to just ignore them, and they'd quit. Didn't work. So I went over my teacher's head and told my principal that Mike and his friends called me shorty, that I was scared of them, that I did not like being called shorty, etc. The princi-

pal assured me that Mike would be spoken to.

Mike and I both were brought into the office. The principal asked Mike what names he'd been calling me. "Just shorty," Mike replied, "I don't mean anything by it, just calling him a nickname." The principal took all this in, and instructed Mike not to call me names on the playground anymore.

After school, on the way home, Mike was waiting for me. As he beat



Kurt Krugerud

me up, his friends cheered and repeatedly called me shorty, stubby, dwarf, etc. Mike told me it would be best not to say anything or I'd get what for.

My dad was not pleased with my black eye and told me to fight back. "Hit him back. What the hell's wrong with you? Call him a few names."

"That's against the rules of the playground."

"Well just hit him when no teachers are around," dad said.

I had it all planned. Before school I'd call Mike a lummo and then hit him in the stomach and run. I just hated that guy, and in my dreams I repeatedly beat him within an inch of his life, and made him beg for mercy, kiss my shoes and give me money. All his bully friends would hold me in reverence. I would be the leader of the playground.

The next morning, I called Mike a brute, a loser and tried to hit him. He hit back, and the fight began. Teachers broke us up and took us to the principal's office. He yelled at us. We had to stay after school one day, and if we ever were caught calling each other names we would get three days

after school. Ouch.

For the rest of the year, we never uttered a word to each other. Yet, if one could read minds, the things they'd learn.

The years flew by, and I now find myself at the university. I'm still short. No one (except our glorious Cornhuskers) are perfect, so I live with being short. I don't like it much, but at least no one calls me names reminding me of the fact.

My friends sometimes tease me, and yes, there have been a few times when strangers like some drunk athlete, will tell me, "Move, shorty." And depending on his size, I might mouth off some lewd comment, or just sneer at him. But for the most part, "shorty" seldom is heard.

College students no longer are in elementary school. We don't need playground rules. I'm sure college students are conscious, educated and caring enough not to bother with name-calling. People may entertain the thought that, "Man, there's that stubby columnist, what a jerk." And there is not much I can do to stop one's thoughts.

And even if I was called some shortish name, I really wouldn't care. The name-caller has the problem, not the person being named.

Currently, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is trying to institute a "fighting words" policy. The minds behind this think that a playground rule will eliminate name-calling of a lewd, obscene, vulgar, profane, defamatory, insulting or fighting nature. Could be, but the minds behind this policy think that absence of name-calling eventually will eliminate racist, sexist and prejudice thought. I doubt it.

Mature minds do not resort to name-calling.

I don't call people names, but if you call me shorty I wish you could read my mind.

Krugerud is a senior secondary education major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

editorial

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a letter or guest opinion, or not to run, is left to the editor's discretion.

Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Letters should be typewritten.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

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