

Daily
Nebraskan

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Quibbles 'n' Bits

Save bikers, bucks, Dead Week policy

Earth Day celebrations at Pioneers Park drew thousands of people last week, clogging the two-lane highway between Lincoln and the park.

Many people, attempting to celebrate Earth Day by not polluting the earth, decided to ride their bikes to the celebration.

This was not easy. The highway to Pioneers Park -- a favorite ride of recreational bikers -- has no shoulder. Bikers usually are less than 5 feet from even the most courteous automobile drivers. The margin for error diminishes greatly with oncoming traffic or with half-crazed weekend warriors partying with loose steering columns. Insurance is a must.

Considering distance and destination, Pioneers Park is one of the best rides in Lincoln for the average biker. To celebrate both Earth Day and National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, a bike path to the park should be built immediately if not sooner.

A healthy lifestyle includes not being run over. Please. Save the bikers.

- As of Tuesday, only 10 Dead Week policy complaints had been filed by students to the ASUN office. In past years, the offices of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and the ombudsman have received as many as 40 complaints.

At this rate, there will be only 25 complaints by the end of the week. This is 15 fewer than in past years.

The Daily Nebraskan urges students to educate themselves on Dead Week policy and to fight the acts of oppression against them. With an educated and active student body, we still can reach our goal of 40 complaints. Think globally, act colloquially.

- The U.S. Postal Service has bought a \$4 billion mail-sorting system that can read ZIP codes but can't tell a 1-cent stamp from a 25-cent stamp.

Postal authorities admit the chance of getting a letter sent for 1 cent is pretty good. There are just too many letters for too few people to check.

The Daily Nebraskan in no way supports mail fraud. We would like only to remind financially strapped students that Mother's Day is nearing and that a penny for your thoughts is all a parent needs.

-- Bob Nelson
for the Daily Nebraskan

ROTC ban won't end prejudice

Rodney Bell's letter (DN, April 30) has prompted me to express my views on the situation of gays/lesbians and the ROTC program on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus.

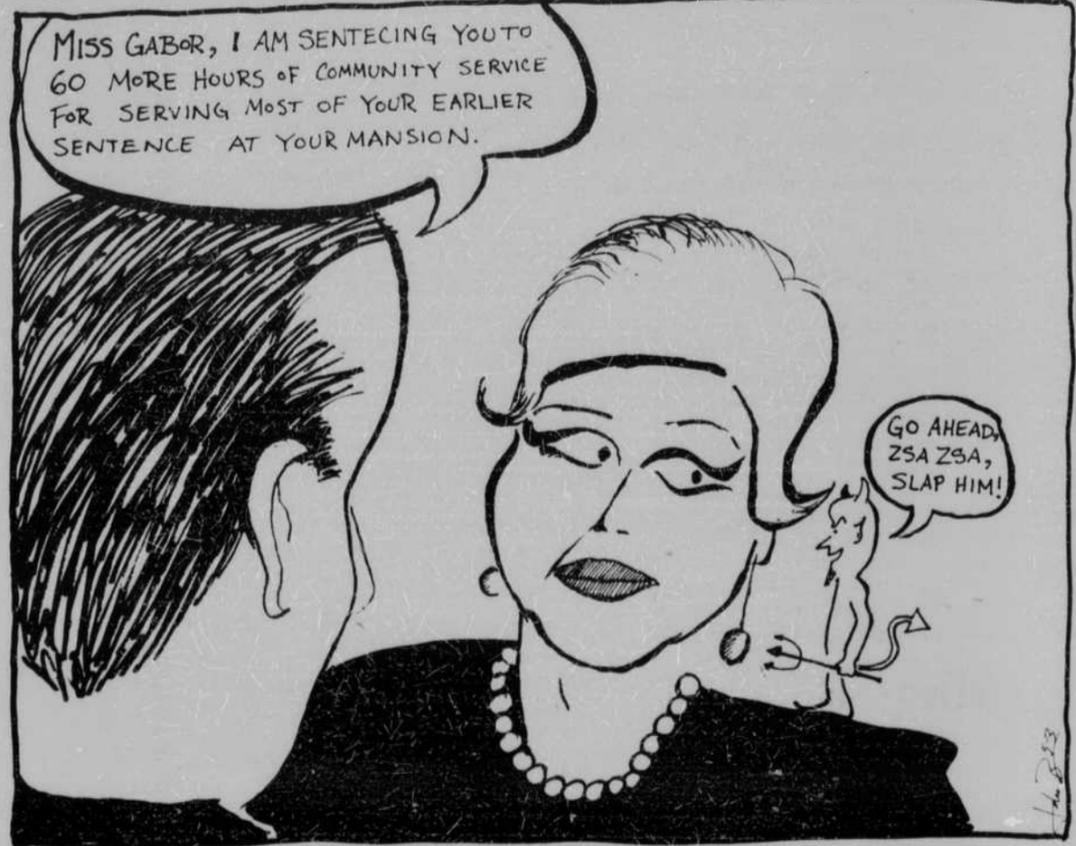
I also disagree with having gays/lesbians barred from ROTC programs on campuses across the country. However, I feel that it is the United States' military institutions that should have the deciding factor as to allowing gays/lesbians in the armed forces. This would give a uniform set of rules for each and every campus across the country to follow. College ROTC programs are not allowed to make up all their own rules; they do have set guidelines to follow, just like any other major club or organization.

I also feel that the gay ROTC cadet from another campus shouldn't have to pay back his scholarship on the basis of his admitting his homosexuality to his commander. Fortunately, this situation has not presented itself on the UNL campus. Unfortunately, due to the AIDS scare of the 1980s and 1990s and the underlying conservative attitude of the United States in regard to sexual preference, gays/lesbians are taking a risk admitting they are gays/lesbians. What Mr. Bell

needs to realize is that the ROTC program is not the only program, club or institution in the United States that has homophobia. The "coming out of the closet" decision is one each gay/lesbian has to weigh for his/herself and decide what course of action to take.

It is sad that in this day and age, homosexuality still has to remain hidden from society, but I do not feel that banning the ROTC program from the UNL campus will change the attitude of millions. The ROTC programs here at UNL have proven to be extremely beneficial to the many students involved. ROTC provides scholarships for needy students and exceptional students alike. It also provides leadership training, discipline and a sense of patriotism to the United States. Any attitudes on sexuality that a cadet may have is an attitude he or she had before joining ROTC. Yes, the rule to ban gays/lesbians from ROTC is a very discriminatory one, but banning ROTC won't change it. Why change the rules when the organization is no longer a functioning one?

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Execution far from cost effective

Death penalty does not deter criminals from breaking laws

I am not graduating so I will spare you the sentimental retrospective. It is hard to be sentimental over two years of partying followed by three years of Ramen noodles in rundown apartments struggling to rebuild my GPA.

I have had a television those five years. It is a little black-and-white portable job with a stylish clothes-hanger antenna and a screen so small Godzilla looks like he is fighting a fly instead Mothra, that huge, radioactive bug menace.

Good thing, though. Because my screen is so small I don't watch much television.

A report this week said Americans spend seven years of their lives in front of the tube. Television is a boring, mindless activity taking as much energy as sleep, as they would have it; a new opiate for the masses.

This story fit nicely with new reports linking Agent Orange to several diseases. Studies, studies, studies.

Big studies always are good at pinpointing, defining and establishing the obvious.

It took years to produce studies linking cancer to smoking cigarettes. The addicted disbelieved smoking is unsafe. Others who thought a little bit about what it means to suck warm air filled with burning plants into our moist lungs for hours a day figured it was a safe bet smoking is self-destructive. It should have been an obvious cause and effect relationship -- like chewing on glass and expecting your tongue to bleed.

Still, the scientific side of me knows we must observe and record the effects of smoking, Agent Orange and television in order to combat their ill effects.

Know the enemy. Make megabucks in research grants.

The government has yet to help the victims of Vietnam defoliant spraying. The attitude at the Pentagon must

be that in time the problem will go away.

Of course it will. The veterans and others affected by Agent Orange eventually will die out and the callous, money devourers at the Penta-



Henry Battistoni

gon won't have to foot their medical bill.

We shelved dioxin knowing it causes too great a health risk. But the military cannot admit it destroyed its own people with chemicals.

The military is virtually a law unto itself.

But then, we also produce chemicals for export that we have banned in our own country. A kind of "poison others as they would poison you if they had the means and profit motive" attitude exists.

All this death and statistics comes together in the case of capital punishment.

I used to be a supporter of the death penalty. It did not bother me that the state was frying, shooting, hanging, poisoning or gassing murderers. I felt that some people are too dangerous to live. That their transgressions against society must be repaid in kind. That it would be cheaper to snuff them out than house them in prison for life.

There are many reasons given to end the death penalty. Racial and economic bias is one. Eighty-six percent of the more than 100 executions in the past 12 years involved convicted murderers whose victims were white. While murder is committed by people from all social and economic

strata, the poor lack funds to adequately defend themselves. More than 75 percent of those on death row could not afford to hire an attorney for their trial.

The main defense of the death penalty is that it deters further murders. But 1986 FBI crime statistics show that states without the death penalty had fewer murders than those with it.

There are other, moral considerations against the death penalty such as the execution of retarded people, the mentally ill and children. There have been six retarded people executed since 1984. Limited contact with defendants and possible conflicts between prosecution-appointed psychiatrists and the defendant's interests leave the possibility that misdiagnosis will occur and that the mentally incompetent will be executed. More than 30 death-row inmates committed crimes before they were 18.

Some oppose execution on any grounds for religious reasons.

Perhaps I am jaded by callousness like that of the military's, but the biggest consideration to me, and I suspect at least privately in many legislatures, is money.

The New York Public Defenders Office and the Kansas Legislature have done studies to find the cost effectiveness of killing criminals. It would seem that clothing, feeding and guarding someone for 20 to 60 years couldn't be less expensive than rerouting a few jillion volts from the local subdivision. But what the figures show is taxpayers paying around \$25,000 per year to house an inmate vs. several million per execution.

Execution is not cost effective, does not deter crime and is biased. Does society's desire for revenge support its continuation?

Battistoni is a senior English major and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

letter

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 sub-

mit 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.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.