

## End run

Ethical problems not solved by money

State Sen. Ernie Chambers should have learned from the USFL. Semi-pro football leagues don't make it. Once again, the Omaha senator has introduced a bill to pay Nebraska football players. In previous years, the Legislature threw out similar bills. The main objection was that they would put Nebraska in violation of NCAA rules prohibiting players from receiving financial aid not related to sports. Now the bill includes an end run around those rules. It wouldn't go into effect until states with at least four other Big Eight schools passed similar legislation. At that point, payments could start because the NCAA probably wouldn't punish half of one of its most lucrative conferences.

Even if Chambers has found a way to keep the bill in bounds, its purpose still goes against the grain. It is unethical and unfair. Rules — even the NCAA's — can be changed. Ethical principles and fairness, however, cannot.

Chambers' legislation would affect only football players. All other athletes, even in other big-ticket sports such as basketball, would watch the football players get special favors.

Football, the bill says, is different from the other sports. According to the bill:

- Scandals are common in college football.
- UNL employs a large coaching staff, in part to "generate the largest possible income."
- "Maintaining a winning football team has become an important aspect of the overall business or occupation of UNL."
- Recruiting is expensive.
- Many players spend more time on football than on academics.

Because "a sound academic program for players may be difficult to develop due to the demands of the sport," the bill says, players should get a "tangible return" from their time at UNL.

In other words, the university should become a football factory, if it isn't already. Academics wouldn't really matter, as long as players could walk away from Nebraska with a hefty professional contract and some pocket money.

Instead of doing something about the problems with college football, the bill would legitimize them. Because college football players already get paid under the table by boosters, the bill seems to say, "Make such payments legal, and the ethical problems will go away."

The NCAA has a better idea for reform. At its January convention, members voted in rules to eliminate some of the time demands and money causing the problems listed in Chambers' bill.

The NCAA needs to do more. It needs to let athletes who receive no athletic scholarships accept ordinary financial aid.

But at least the NCAA is trying to change the causes of the encroachment on academics and ethics. Chambers' bill would only make the effects legal. That would be an unfortunate way of penalizing football's fouls.

—E.F.P.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Hanna earns praise

Bravo, such spirited words!!!

I'm referring to the recently published letters (DN, Jan. 29) by that all-American band of sophomore chemical engineers as well as the other letters written that effectively rip that coward Gary Hanna to shreds.

I know the dissenter personally, as I'm sure everyone else who took the time to write in does. Who cares if Mr. Hanna had a change of heart concerning his naive decision to be a part of the U.S. Army (defender of liberty and justice)? Who cares if he has acquired more of a respect for human life than is held by 84 percent of the United States (where everyone has a right to disagree)? He should have known that years after graduating from high school, the United States (We, the People) might perhaps be involved in a controversial international conflict that he might or might not choose to support. He (a citizen of this great nation) signed a piece of paper on a dotted line when he was 17 and therefore should not be allowed to have deeply held morals concerning war and peace.

Let's face it — when you join the Army you can't have a conscience. Maybe our friend Gary Hanna should run away to some country where he is allowed have morals and is allowed to differ from the majority. Does he actually think he lives in a democracy?

I know Gary Hanna personally; I

know that he is a man (and I use the term with the utmost sincerity, Blaine Spady) with a deeply held commitment to what he feels is right and what is wrong. Kelly S. Tipton says that "a man of courage is a man of his word." Gary Hanna's word is not a contract that he signed three years ago. Gary Hanna's word is his commitment to peace. Edward C. Selig tells me that "Gary wasn't complaining about his obligation in peace time," but yes, yes he was. As long as I have known him, he has made abundantly clear to me his feeling toward the military and toward the U.S.'s action in the gulf. Mr. Selig goes on to say he wants his tax money returned. If he could, Mr. Hanna would return it. Everyone who wrote in referred to Gary Hanna as a coward. But when you look at what he is trying to do and trying to say, and the amount of public ridicule he is undergoing to stand up for what he believes, he is anything but a coward. As long as I have known him, he has never said anything about a fear of dying, but rather he has spoken openly about his fear of killing.

I support the U.S. military action in the Middle East 100 percent. I support Gary Hanna in his brave decision equally so.

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STATE OF THE UNION PEP RALLY

PAT DINSLAGE

## Job holds false appearance

Ever apply for a job, do everything the job-hunting experts said, emphasize that you had all the credentials, knowledge and experience?

Then, when you got it — when you held the "golden fleece" in your hand — find that it's made of fool's gold? It's not as easy or as fun as you thought it would be.

Maybe you haven't. I have, and it's this columnist job.

Imagine: The chance to expound on my views, have thousands of people read what I write and get paid for it, too. What more could an inveterate letters-to-the-editor writer and sometime philosopher ask?

When columnists for this semester were being chosen, I campaigned, sent copies of my work to the editor and checked with him at least three times a week to see if the list of "the chosen" had been posted yet.

After three weeks of this "networking," the list was out and I was on it — probably as self-defense on the editor's part.

I now had my chance to air my views, have people on campus come up to me and say things like, "That was a really thoughtful, insightful column, and it changed my views completely."

On top of that, the United States obligingly got into a war, providing me with fodder for my writing cannon. The Nebraska Legislature also helped by re-introducing an abortion notification bill, cigarette tax re-apportionment legislation and about 830 other bills. In addition, there was the squabble over whether a bill's sponsor should know what was in the bill before or after introducing it in the Legislature. What a banquet.

But, just to be safe, I asked my editor, "What can I write about?"

"Anything you want to," he said. That was all I needed to hear — the light turned green, my engine was in first gear and the tire rubber burned.

I figured I'd write about the abortion bill for openers. The morning of the day my first column was due — why get excited too far in advance — I sat down at the computer to slam out the column, just like I've seen the hardened, gruff, cigarette-smoking reporters do in 30 minutes on old television movies.

Well, I didn't exactly complete it in 30 minutes — more like four hours. I guess I haven't gotten to the hardened stage yet.



***Is the full storm  
fury of righteous indignation only for  
those to whom issues come in black  
and white? Have muted shades of  
gray taken over my  
mental wardrobe?***

As for cigarette smoking, that's not allowed in University of Nebraska buildings, except for obscure corners. I stood in 3-below-zero weather outside.

But after hours of being thoughtful, if not insightful, and sweating mental drops of blood on the stained keyboard, I had reached the gruff stage.

Despite the agony, I took a minute to read over my newly computed masterpiece. It fairly oozed a balance between righteous indignation and a cool voice of reason. I nearly sprained my arm patting myself on the back.

I told my editor that my column was complete and ready for editing. I stood by, not expecting any but minor punctuation changes, waiting for the words of praise on my coherence, talent and clarity to pour forth.

Then he told me to get some lunch. Twenty minutes later, after a Burger King special, I returned and pecked in his office. I saw him just sitting there, staring at the computer screen.

"Ah," I thought. "He's completely in awe. He's searched and searched and just can't find anything wrong."

I asked — just for appearances' sake — if there was anything I could

change or explain for him.

"Well," he said, "you have the beginnings of a good idea here."

Beginnings?

"But most of this has all been said many times before. Here at the end is the new news, but you haven't really developed it."

"Developed it? I feel like I've been through nine months of agony and have given birth."

So much for that idea. I figured I'd write about the war. After all, everybody's writing about the war, and there's so much to write about. I decided to check out some of what had been said previously, just in case some columnist or commentator had the nerve to share my views and talk about it.

They had. Every point of view, every issue on which I could work up some consternation, fury or sense of tragedy had been done. I felt like I was holding 50-yard-line Super Bowl tickets and had arrived 10 minutes after the game was over.

As I stood there in a newsroom full of people furiously pounding on the keyboards, imbued with a sense of mission to bring the fast-breaking news to all the readers, I could think of nothing to say.

Had I been mainstreamed? Pasteurized? Sanitized? Establishmentized?

Will I soon begin to nod my head in agreement when President Bush says we have no choice but to fight "Hitler" Hussein to the end? Will my world soon narrow to a love for warm puppies and watermelon wine and a deep suspicion of anyone who doesn't think like I do?

I questioned: Is the full storm fury of righteous indignation only for those to whom issues come in black and white? Have muted shades of gray taken over my mental wardrobe? Am I on my way to becoming like a deer caught at night in a car's headlights — frozen in place until I get run over?

There's hope — maybe the war, abortion and all the other issues will continue for a long time. Maybe our elected leaders will finally act so outrageously that those of us caught in the headlights will blink and jump to one side.

Who knows, maybe I'll be the first to jump — or write a column on how a deer's last moments feel.

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