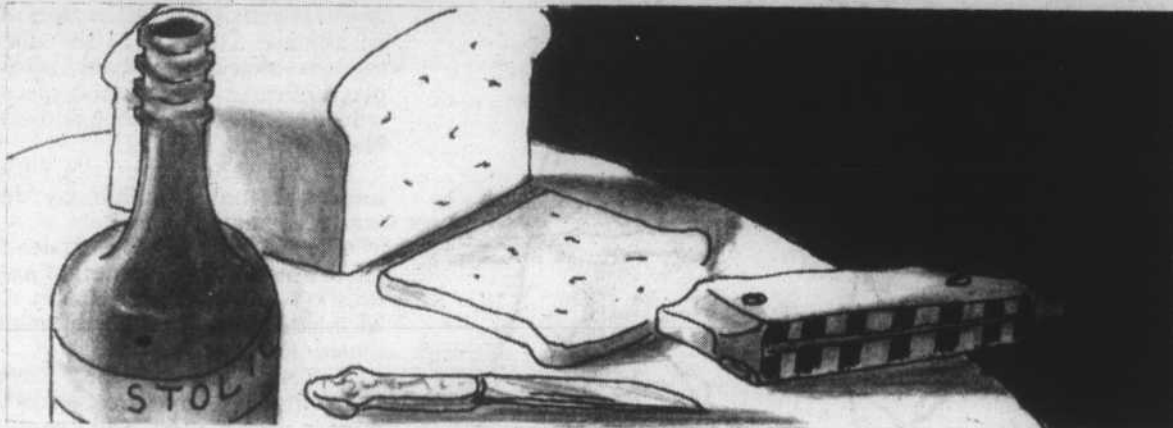


Poem showed human potential

# Creativity, harmonica holes among stifled tools

Ted poured himself another shot of Stolichnaya, had a swig and took a deep whiff of his rye bread. He had been to Russia several months ago, and learned to chase vodka with pickles and rye bread. In lean times, he was told, they only smell the bread, so they can eat it at the next meal.



Michael Weixel/DN



**Gary Longsine**

He picked up his harmonica. Made in Czechoslovakia, it didn't seem to have as many holes as the manual said it should.

The picture on the box matched the number in the text, and the harmonica fell short by a count of two. We guessed that it must have been made under Communist rule.

If you don't have enough raw materials and your production quota is measured in numbers of harmonicas, what do you do? Shorten the harmonica.

Since none of us knew how many holes a harmonica was supposed to have, it didn't really matter, except that it made the task of reproducing a known melody from

the instructions more difficult. The vodka probably didn't do much for known melodies either.

Ted threw the question of how to interpret the instructions — in absence of two holes — to the room. Which two were missing? One from each end? Two from one end?

Janice said that Ted was too goal oriented, and that he should try to make his own music, without following some arbitrary directions.

I said that Janice was too psycho-analytical, but that she was probably right.

I added, "Directionless music sounds like more fun than trying to figure out how many holes a har-

monica is supposed to have."

Ted put down the instructions, gazed across the room for several seconds, and began to play. Tentatively at first, then with growing confidence, he played some notes on his harmonica.

Janice joined in with her harmonica. Very soon they had settled into a comfortable, rhythmic and melodious improvisation. The harmonies they produced were more than a little reminiscent of the lonesome prairie cowpoke, lulling the cows to sleep.

It worked for me and as I fell. Some moments later, when they apparently had grown tired of making music in attempted har-

monization with my snoring, I awoke to mocking imitations of a long-horn steer — mmmMOOOO!

Highly unbelievable, I know. But so is most of my life. The probability that any one of my life events would happen at all is nearly zero. That they all happened, and happened to me, is nearly impossible, I'm sure.

This was one of those rare moments when people let their guard down and just be, together. It doesn't happen often, because there is tremendous bias against expressing creativity in our culture. It is viewed as uncivilized.

Individual expression of creative impulses is stifled. It's barely

acceptable to sing along to consumer pop fare, and singing a tune of your own improvisation is out.

Alternative music is, among other things, an outlet for this pent-up frustration. People like to listen to music that is new and different, but sometimes they seem to get more satisfaction from listening to music that nobody else is listening to than from the music itself.

More people should let themselves enjoy making their own artistic experience.

I remember when I first figured this out. It wasn't on my own, to be sure. I was led carefully down the path of creative expression by a few good people.

One assaulted my senses with a constant bombardment of new images, sounds and ideas. He drug me out on a cold October night in search of a black-light and magic markers.

We came back to the small party with creative tools in hand. With paper and markers, we began a group poem, passing around a paper and each adding a few lines.

In the best psychedelic tradition, he scrawled a creative seed in glowing black-lit marker: Cosmic Poppies, spotted puppies.

Longsine is a senior international affairs and economics major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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