

People need religion

Church attendance necessary for values

Webster's defines religion as a specific system of belief and worship.

According to that definition, only 50 percent of Nebraskans and 40 percent of Americans are practicing a religion.

A recent survey asked 1,200 Nebraskans "Have you attended a religious service in the past week?"

Bill Sterns, a graduate student in sociology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, compared the answers of people in the state to nationwide results determined by the Gallup Organization.

On the national level, 40 percent of the people surveyed reported attending a church service weekly. Nebraskans reported in slightly higher at 50 percent.

Sterns also compared several demographic characteristics of church attendance by age, sex, denomination and marital status.

Only Christian religions were analyzed because, according to Sterns, responses from other religions were too small to be scientifically analyzed.

So, if only half of the American population is going to church on Sunday or Saturday, what is everyone else doing?

Washing cars?

What happened to morning walks to church hand-in-hand with Mom? What about sitting in Sunday school watching, enthralled, as the teacher put paper heroes on a felt board? Or how about sitting in "big" church with a torn open offering envelope and a pencil, drawing pictures and passing notes back and forth?

Sterns said Nebraskans carried strong beliefs because religious behavior was a part of their life they passed on to their children.

He attributed this to the conservative nature of Nebraskans and their religious traditions.

Churches have always been strong initiators and pillars of traditional values. If half of America isn't attending church at least once a week, not to mention what they do throughout the rest of the week, where are they getting their values from?

Friends, television, music?

Children should be getting their values from their parents. It is the parents responsibility to instill high moral values in their children. If children grow up with a skewed sense of values, it is not completely their fault. Granted, children must mature and make their own decisions, but they should be provided with a high set of qualities and rules to judge by.

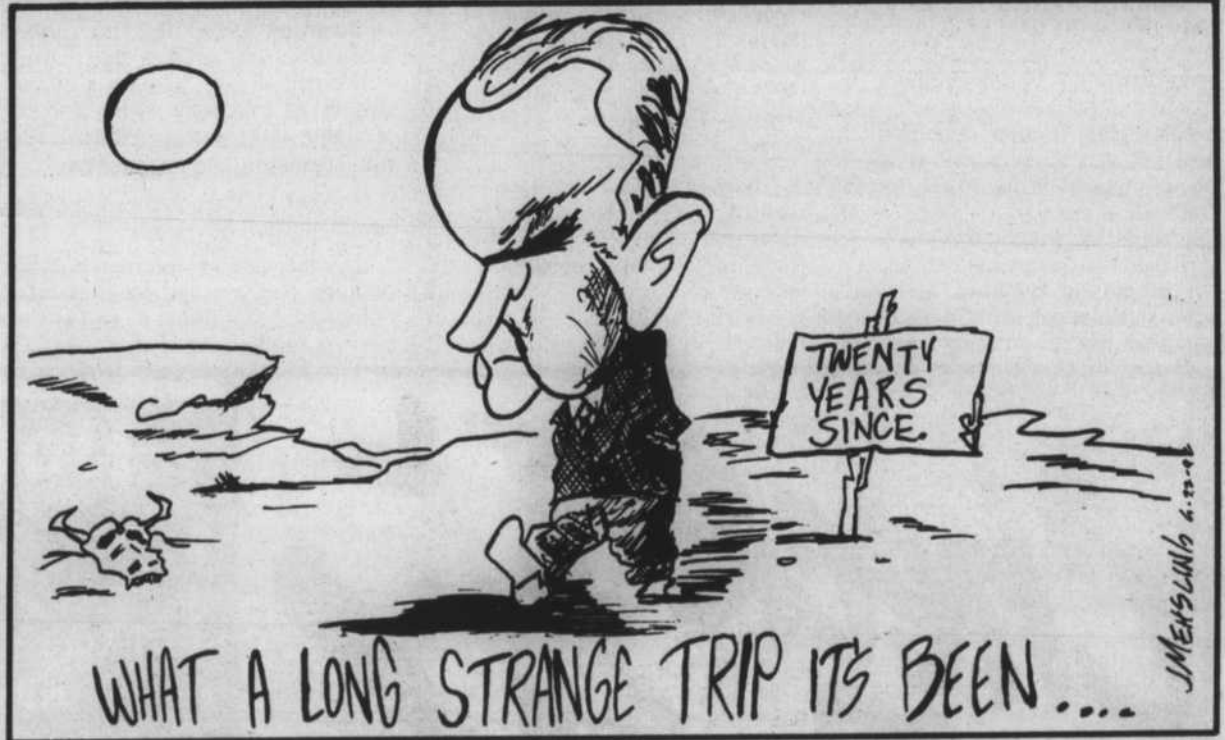
Because parents are failing at this responsibility, their children are lost and society has no direction.

And the tradition will continue, child after grandchild.

What will the results of a valueless generation be?

Just look around.

AL



Are POWs alive in Russia?

The Cold War has melted away, yet it was still bizarre to see a picture of the first ladies of Russia and America walking hand-in-hand, and to hear reports of their almost affectionate chitchat as they toured Mount Vernon, home to George Washington, father of our great country.

This scene for a photo opportunity was in marked contrast from the interaction between the respective previous first ladies, barely restraining their claws to show the world that Cold War tensions were thawing.

Boris Yeltsin was recently in this country for summit talks, and he addressed a joint session of the Senate and House, where he surprised many by stating that it was very possible that there were American POWs still alive within the confines of the former Soviet Union.

Projections went backward to the 1950s as to when the earliest POWs had been detained in the Soviet State. Korean and Vietnam POWs could very well be alive within the formerly formidable Soviet stronghold. It is astounding to consider that there could still be Americans held captive for a war that we pulled out of in 1973, let alone earlier conflicts.

I am severely skeptical of Yeltsin's claim that there are still live POWs taken during the Vietnam era and even further back in military tactical history. With our vast CIA effort and their high-placed defectors, I think we would have heard definitive word — that is say, beyond the rumor mill — before now, when we may have Yeltsin merely evoking the ghost of Vietnam for political purposes.

Don't get me wrong. I would hope that the MIAs would arrive on American soil tomorrow, but the skeptical side of me wins out, telling me that it is highly unlikely that POWs are still being held and breathing.

Perhaps I need the assistance of the conspiracy-minded Oliver Stone, but I don't see the realistic motivation of the United States government to conspire, to this late date, to keep any

valid information about live POWs secret and undocumented.

The scars of Vietnam still pain America's spirit. With the question of POWs never seeming to be fully answered or respected, Vietnam will continue to be a sore spot in America's heart. Those that are in the limelight with this issue should not exploit it for money or political points; those that are truly concerned should just get the job done.

I suppose it is worthwhile to entertain the possibility, for a moment, that POWs are still alive. After all, the Soviet Union was immense in size and secrecy, with many remote outposts where labor camps could hide Americans. For that matter, they could have been covertly inserted into so-called psychiatric institutions, where drugs and doctors could both subdue their bodies and bend their minds.

One shudders to think what condition a man could be in after two decades in a foreign labor camp or mind-fixer prison.

Given, if POWs still exist and can be brought back, how difficult it would be to get them reintegrated in America with freedom and family after at least 20 years. They would be psychological wrecks and might possibly need years of readjustment therapy, if they ever could adjust to that 20 year abyss, with their wives having given them up for dead and gone on with their lives and children having grown up not knowing their fathers. The role of Father/Husband would have to be reinvented from scratch, if even possible.

The freed men would be semi-alien, almost from another world. Witness Terry Anderson's sometimes difficult adjustment period, and multiply it exponentially.

Supposing the other sad but more realistic possibility, that if in the past, the Soviet Union did covertly sneak in American POWs, they would have murdered them in a couple years after they outlived their usefulness for potentially divulging any useful mili-

tary secrets.

In the context of the Cold War, it would have been impossible to gracefully and diplomatically let them go and face the wrath of the world community, especially the United States.

Now that Boris Yeltsin is safely ensconced back in Moscow, we can trust he is talking turkey with the powers that be with regard to the POW issue, if indeed it is a real issue in his mind, instead of just a political maneuver. Yeltsin is still suspect diplomatically. We must remember that he was made by the Communist system that he now rails against, sometimes in a startlingly despotic matter.

His bold, rebellious actions against the coup showed us he has strength, but to what ends will he apply it? Is he an honest or a ruthless political broker? How will he act in the international sphere, given his parochial, apparatchik background? Is Yeltsin claiming American POWs are still alive just to further discredit Gorbachev's reputation in America?

If we Americans find out Yeltsin is merely lying and maneuvering, America will be even more reluctant to deal with and help his troubled, chaotic, needful nation. Honesty in this emerging "friendship" between America and Russia is of the most supreme importance.

There is no place for dirty tricks, especially a trick that could unjustifiably raise the hopes of families that have fallen to despair time and time again.

If Boris Yeltsin does know that Russia has them, he should return them posthaste. Let the explanations and maneuvering come after the homecoming of these long-suffering men. If Yeltsin was merely posturing for politics, he should promptly and forthrightly apologize. After all, egg on his face is better than toasted on a plate.

There, now we can all hold hands again.

Todd K. Burger is a junior philosophy major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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