

**MICHELLE PAULMAN**

# Pondering the ways of the faithful

I carry a Bible with me everywhere.

Well, I did the other day. If you were like me and thousands of other people on campus Wednesday, you passed, and probably almost tripped over, these men who look kind of like one of your uncles, passing out little green Good Books.

You saw Gideons. Usually illusive creatures who sneak Bibles into motel rooms, this was the first time I had ever seen Christian soldiers out in such force. Every five steps, someone tried to hand me a Bible.

You couldn't spit without hitting a Gideon.

Although I have the hard-bound edition at home, I felt compelled to receive the gift these uncle-like men offered, if only to quit getting offers. Besides, it was free.

In this pocket paperback are all the books of the New Testament, with the Psalms and Proverbs thrown in at no additional cost.

Also included in the back is a handy guide for salvation, complete with a dotted line on which to sign.

The whole thing, especially the contract with God, seemed a bit ludicrous at the time to me, a longtime baptized believer.

But one of the doctrines of Christianity is to preach, to spread the word of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in hopes of showing people how they can enrich their lives through belief in Jesus Christ.

While hordes of students passed the Gideons during class breaks, many simply took the books and immediately stuffed them in their backpacks or displayed them to other Bible pushers to show they did not want another, thanks anyway.

Some students passed the Gideons as if they were invisible, like they were passing a street bum asking for spare change.

Even fewer stopped to speak to them.

Based on my prior experience with campus evangelists, I expected that if I spoke to one of these men, he would preach down to me and tell me, in a cheesy Southern accent, that I was a worthless sinner bound for hell if I didn't fall on my knees right then and there and pray for Jay-sus to save my soul-uh.

But the man I talked to was very amiable and subtle. "Preaching," in a fire-and-brimstone context, is too strong a word. We "conversed" about God.

As I passed the rest of the Gideons, I displayed my acquisition to show I did not want another, thanks anyway. But I returned their smiles.

My adventure continued to Broyhill Fountain, where I found a different breed of Christian, although I use the term loosely.

On the plaza was a man waving his Bible and a condom, preaching about promiscuity and how we were all worthless sinners bound for hell if we didn't all fall on our knees right then and there and pray for Jay-sus to save our souls-uh.

Confident after my conversation with the Gideon, I tried to ask the man what denomination he followed for my own information.

I couldn't get a word in edgewise. He ignored my politely put question, or else he didn't hear me over his own shouting.



David Badders/DN

**JON BRUNING**

# Pilgrimage to Ames beats politics

Strangely enough, my trip to Ames, Iowa, last Friday to see the politicized supergroup U2 has pushed me from the political arena. The sights and people I encountered were infinitely more interesting than the week's political scandals, so I hope you'll allow me to depart from my usual diatribe and attempt to imitate John Steinbeck's "Travels With Charley."

I realize, of course, that I'm no "Jack" Steinbeck, but the amazing pilgrimage to Ames was enough to lift anyone's spirits.

Not 10 miles outside of Lincoln Interstate 80 was rusted-bumper to rusted-bumper with glassy-eyed U2 fans on their way to the promised land of Cyclone Stadium. Every other car (and I use the term loosely) was sporting a "U2 or Bust" sign or a "We've got turf seats" poster.

My traveling companion, Dave, and I fit in perfectly in our old Honda with the engine squeak. Dave, at least in his own mind, was unquestionably the biggest U2 freak on the road, so our radio fare consisted of six consecutive playings of "Achtung Baby" mixed with an occasional minute of U2's older music.

Don't get me wrong, I like U2 fairly well. My tastes probably run more to the country side of things, but I wasn't about to turn down a chance to see the most popular band in the world.

Four and a half hours and five pit stops later, Dave (insert Charley) and I arrived in Ames. The traffic had grown increasingly heavy as we went through Omaha and Des Moines, and the masses were clearly becoming restless. Along with 40,000 other people, we arrived a full two hours early and were immediately accosted by a scalper selling turf seats. Dave,

always the businessman, asked the price and was quoted at \$50 each.

We quickly pulled our tickets out of the glove box and showed them to the scalper, smug with the thought that we had paid no more than the \$35-face value. The scalper laughed and pointed out that we had the worst seats in the stadium. Within seconds Dave and I forgot about our puny bank accounts and traded our tickets and \$25 for the glorious turf seats.

When we finally arrived at our destination, we proudly surveyed the area around us and the stage, which was a mere 150 feet away. We anxiously chatted with the group of people around us, many of whom happened to be from Lincoln.

Two women in particular, Gina and Ingrid, told a story that could fill volumes.

Their car had broken down twice on the way to Ames and they had been forced to hitch a ride to the concert with two separate cars. Since we were from Lincoln, they asked if they could ride home with us after the concert. We hesitantly assented, knowing that we wanted to stop at the new casino in Onawa, Iowa, on the way home.

The sounds of the second of the two bands that opened for U2, Primus, had been droning on throughout the conversation. A group of fans held up a "Primus Sucks" banner nearby, and I agreed.

After what seemed like hours, the main attraction finally came on stage. Dave and about 30,000 other certifiably crazy U2 zombies nearly passed out.

I have to admit the show was exciting and worth every penny, but much of the fun was watching the U2 fans scream, "Oh my God! I love this song!" during the opening notes of every single song. (Even the drummer's rotten attempt to sing an Irish drinking song was hailed as fabulous.)

So I left, but not before I challenged him to take his condom and pull it over his head. He still ignored/didn't hear me.

He had plenty of other people to ignore.

As usual when evangelists come 'round these here parts, this one had drawn a noticeable flock of students to mock his message.

I didn't get to see the thrilling conclusion, but most of the time, these things get ugly before they go away.

Students go head-to-head with these so-called prophets, with everyone quoting Bible passages to back up his or her own arguments. Each side is unwilling to budge from its own doctrine.

Which makes me wonder why puritanical Bible-thumpers come to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The word "preach" conjures up images of fire and brimstone to many, including me. Many people choose other religions or none at all.

Hitting them over the head with Christianity won't convert them any more than punching someone in the nose will make them see that fighting doesn't solve anything.

Trying to convert people through fire and brimstone will only root them deeper into their own philosophies. And they may punch you.

While rational discussion may not change anyone's opinion, it airs views without assault, physical or verbal.

Personally, I would rather have smiling old uncles peddle Bibles to me every 10 feet than have some loudmouthed, self-proclaimed man of God order me to pray to Jay-sus or face the eternal fahres of hell-uh.

Or, to quote the Gideon version of Proverbs 3:34:

"Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble."

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I also will admit I joined arms with the people next to me and sang Elvis' "Falling in Love With You" with the band as they left the stage.

When the show ended, Dave and I were so full of adrenaline we had no thoughts of driving directly to Lincoln. The new casino was calling our name and we optimistically projected that we'd easily win back the price of our tickets at the Blackjack table.

Didn't the ads say something about everyone going home a winner from Onawa?

Gina and Ingrid initially objected between mouthfuls of my bag of pretzels, but ultimately acquiesced in the face of their alternative.

Luckily, they turned out to be nice people, although three wrong turns and three hours later they probably weren't so thrilled with Dave and me. Gina and Ingrid had left their driver's licenses in the broken-down car and had no way to get into the casino.

Dave and I, always the gracious hosts, suggested we would be just a moment and offered them the front and back seats to sleep until we'd won our fill. An hour later, Dave had lost a mere \$20 and I had won the princely sum of \$25. When we came back to the car Gina and Ingrid were sound asleep. I don't blame them, I guess, because it was 5:30 a.m.

They seemed genuinely happy that the idiots they had asked for a ride home only had gambled for an hour. In fact, Gina or Ingrid, I don't remember which, offered to drive the entire way home. I opened my eyes in front of Abel Hall two hours later and high-fived Dave.

The night had been memorable, I had won \$25 and one of my favorite quotes crossed my mind. As Nikita Khrushchev once said to the New York Times, "Life is short, live it up."

Bruning is a second-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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Forms are now available for University of Nebraska-Lincoln students who wish to EXCLUDE their name and/or address information from the 1992-93 Student Directory. This form is for EXCLUSION OF INFORMATION ONLY, no changes can be made. The exclusion forms must be completed in person in the Office of Public Relations, 208 Administration Building before Friday, September 18, 1992. Proof of registration or identity is required for completion.

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