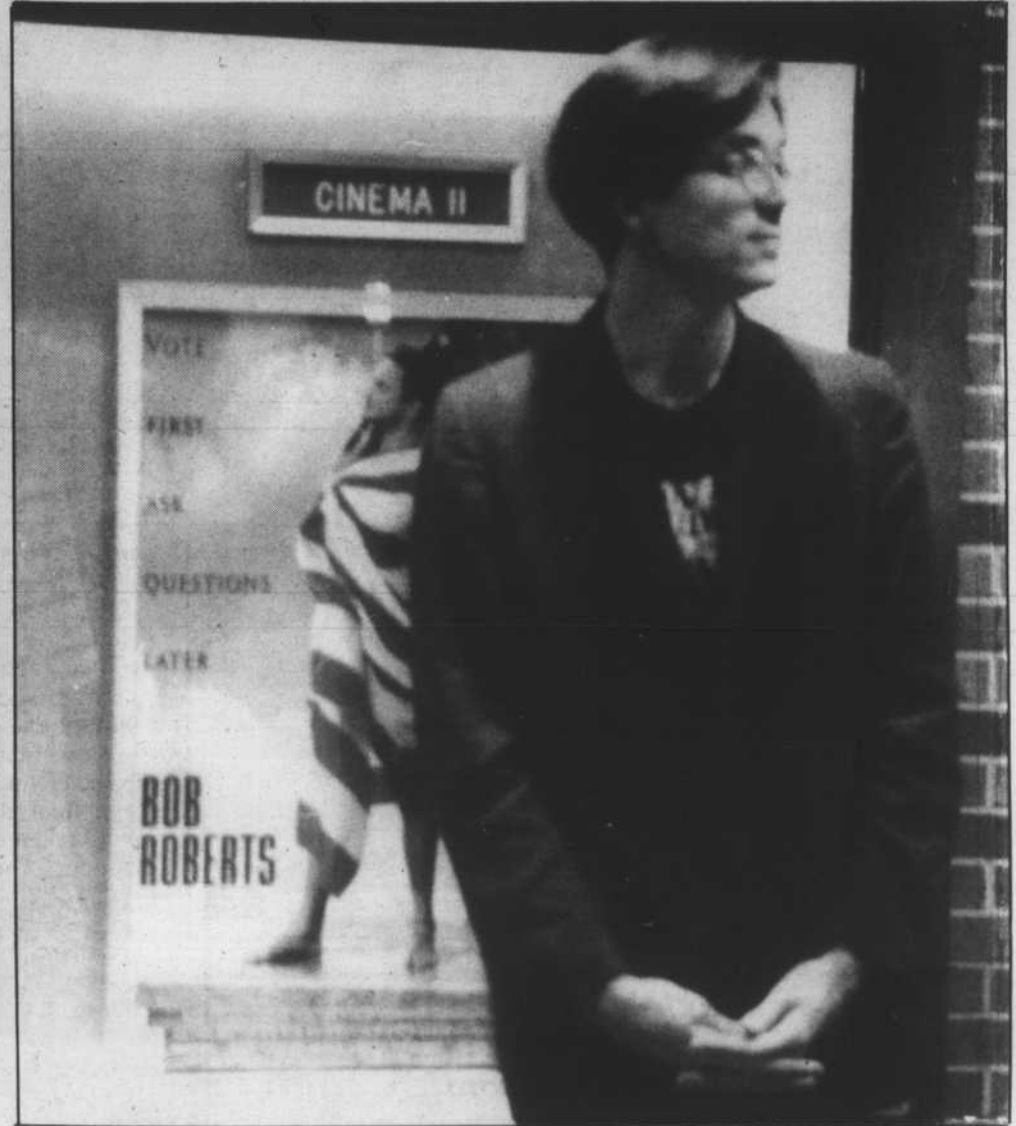


Above: Mark Nemeth at age six in Ecuador.
Right: Mark Nemeth at age 27 in Lincoln. He has gotten taller.



Virtual reality

Experiencing Lincoln overwhelms, baffles the senses

By Mark Nemeth
Diversions Contributor

An intense storm of pack and clean overcame me at the end of August as I moved out of my apartment and into my parent's house 13 miles from downtown Lincoln. Born in the East, I'm moving West . . . tomorrow?

I finished a Harris Labs study from hell in the middle of September. It freaked me out. I tried to sit in my car when I wasn't needed. I'd been getting in these bizarre arguments at 6 o'clock every morning with this Libertarian bee owner "B." (who's driving me to California) this nice, wife-arguing, yelling, tobacco-chewing Navy dude "Y." and Noah.

Every day, Noah wears '70s-collared ox-fords and T-shirts with animals on them; a horse, two horses, zebras, etc. He's studying veterinary science. He works on a farm. On his back is tattooed a Native American and a large horse.

I asked Noah if he grew up thinking he was

Noah the Ark Master or if he identified somehow with the biblical figure. No, he said.

The first time I met Noah, he kept trying to disgust me by relaying detailed accounts of animal dissection. Noah asked me if I was a free-lovin' hippie and said he'd eaten horse meat.

"We can eat animals because they're less sophisticated than us," Noah said.

"Can we eat less intelligent humans?" I asked him.

"Let me put it this way," he said. "Would you ride a horse?"

"Yes," I said.

"Would you ride your grandmother?" he asked.

"If she was strong and wanted me to," I said.

One morning my mother drove me in the dying Volvo with the alien light and moody electric system to Harris Labs at 5:40 a.m. for a drugging.

"Watch out. You're over the line," she said. "You're driving bad."

“No one understood what was cool about the virtual reality body suits. I'd remembered using them before and having my senses overwhelmed, but this time all I saw were some LED lights in these colored-glass goggles. Maybe the batteries are low, I thought.”

"I'm driving fine," I said. "I drive with respect for safety, not the law. If every car around me was going 60 mph in a 35 mph zone, I'd be going 60 mph. Metal is more foreboding than painted white lines."

"It's my car," she said. "I'm the driver," I said.

"Don't start getting selfish," she said. "Don't start getting angry," I said. "You look at everything like it's a movie," she said.

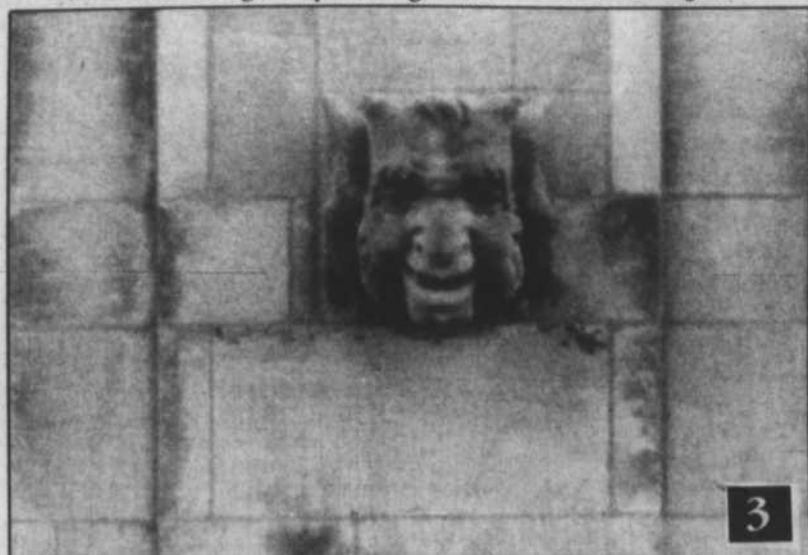
"You look at everything like it's a clothing store," I said.

What were we talking about? "You look at everything like it's an episode of Murder She Wrote."

I tried to bring the logic of the argument to harmless absurdity. We were both silent. I think we were both a little baffled. The sun wasn't even up yet.

I like driving through, around and out of Lincoln. It's very clean. Does it have the nation's second-highest per capita cop population? Gay population? Fast food restaurants? Isn't O Street the longest straight street in the nation? Lincoln must be a nice place for a hungry gay cop in a hurry on a straight street.

See LINCOLN on 10



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Meet MCC representative Ron Brown at Ag Career Day, Thursday, Oct. 8, in the East Campus Union.