

Troubles attend switch to metric system

More adjustments needed than first meet the eye

By Jan Calinger
Staff Reporter

The metric system, also known as the Systeme Internationale (S.I.), has replaced the English system of measurements in every country in the world except two (and England is not one of them). Even Americans, despite their inherent stubbornness, are starting to change over.

Photographers use a 35mm camera. My friends and I buy two-liter bottles of Pepsi. Even my mechanic has a full set of millimeter ratchet settings and talks about a five-liter engine.

The S.I., admittedly, has many advantages over the old "inches and feet" system. You don't have to remember tricky equations like 12 inches to a foot, three feet to a yard, or 1,760 yards to a mile. Instead, it's all 10 of this, 10 of that.

But it will still be a long time before the United States will get into step with the rest of the world. Although there is talk of gradual transitions until A.D. 2000, the final step will take much longer than that.

One reason is that the metric system isn't macho. It makes anyone using it sound like a rocket scientist.

For instance, I hear people in my uncle's bar ordering a pint of beer. That sounds manly. But imagine a man in a Harley-Davidson T-shirt and worn jeans saying, "I want 473 milliliters of Genuine Draft on the double."

It won't happen. The guy would be laughed out of the joint. Even "half-liter," although more than a pint, doesn't seem so. A pint may only be a pint, but it's one whole pint.

Under the S.I., though, my friends would have to say, "I want a 340-grammer." (This is not to be confused with the 12 ounces that constitute a can of beer, which would be 354 milliliters.)

Even at a diner, one couldn't order a quarter pounder with the works. They would have to settle for a 113-grammer. Or, if we round off, a tenth-kilogrammer.

The system may have one good point, though. If, on the freeway, a man sees he is going 100 (kph) as opposed to 62 (mph), then he may not want to speed as much.

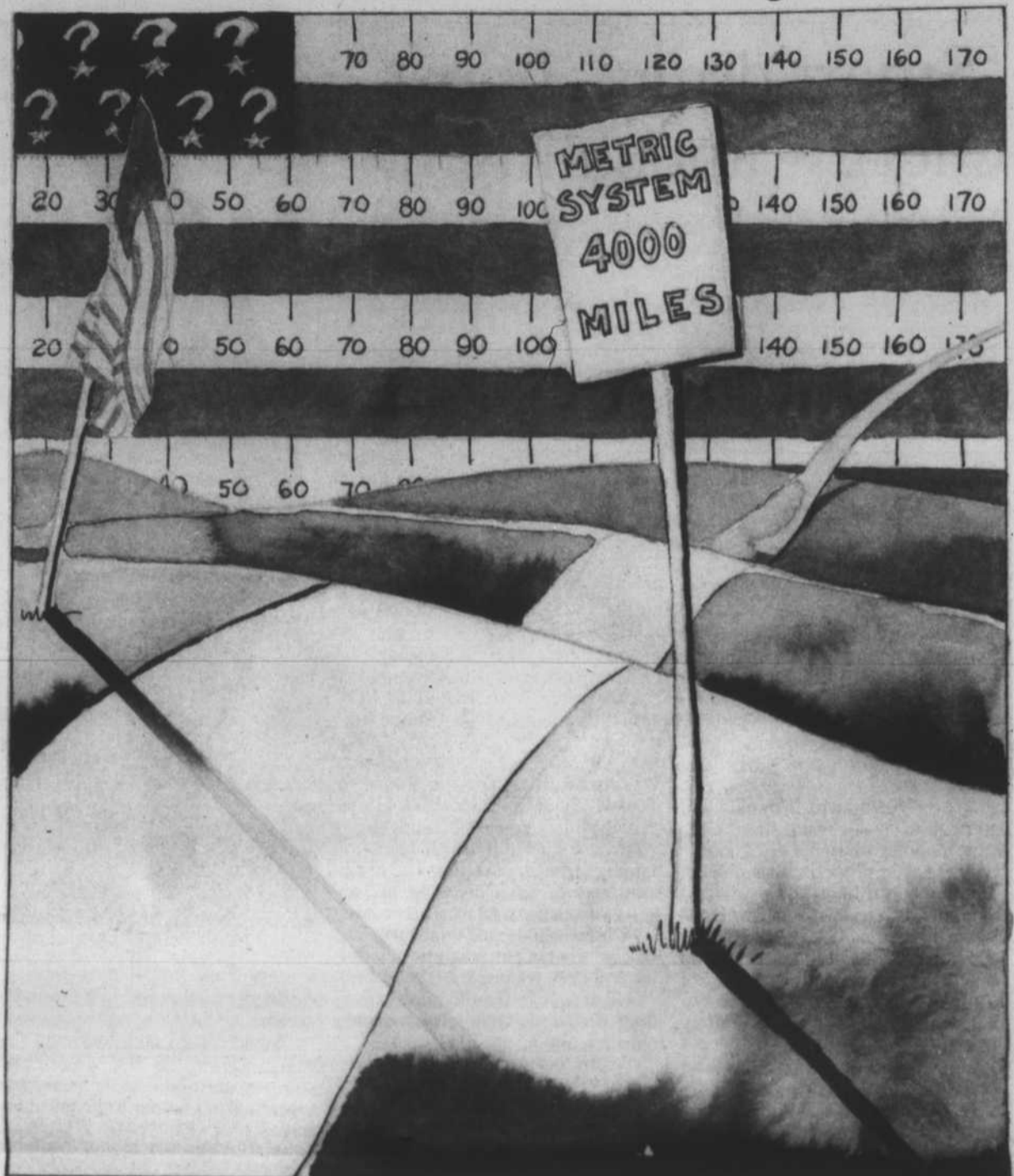
On a more serious note, the change would cost a lot of money. No doubt drivers have often noticed the markers that show how many miles away from the border one is on the interstate.

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The state would have to employ a lot of people to yank the one-mile marker and hammer it into the ground at the one-kilometer mark along every highway in each state. That, admittedly, would only take a journey of 1999 feet, or about three-eighths of a kilometer.

But the two-mile marker move would take twice that, or 3998 feet. And the 455-mile marker, the last on the Nebraska section of Interstate 80, would have to be moved 909,577 feet, 172 1/4 miles, or 277 1/4 kilometers. That's a lot of moving.

Perhaps someday Americans will take the time, effort, and money to change the way they gauge their length, volume and so on. But for now, I'll have a foot-long, a pint of Pepsi, and a car that can hardly do 65 miles on the interstate. And I'll enjoy every macho minute of it.



David Badders/DN

Non-football fans can capitalize on plenty of weekend activities in Lincoln area this weekend



Here are some highlights of what's going on in the Lincoln area this weekend:

Want a free alternative to watching the Bills and the Cowboys throw a pigskin around? Try a foreign film or two. Nebraska ETV is featuring four exotic films Sunday.

Beginning at noon, the French "Jean de Florette," a 1987 film about the 1920s France, will be shown.

At 2:05 p.m., the sequel to "Jean de Florette," "Manon of the Spring," will air on NETV, followed by the Flemish film, "The Flaxfield," at 4 p.m.

"Babette's Feast," a film about a Parisian Catholic refugee who is sheltered in a Danish village by strict Lutheran spinsters, will air at 5:30 p.m.

All the foreign films will be broadcast with English subtitles.

On a musical note (pun intended), the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music will present a free recital by mezzo-soprano Judy Cole at 3 p.m. Sunday in Kimball Hall.

Cole is an associate professor of voice at UNL. She has appeared in supporting roles as an apprentice artist with the Santa Fe Opera Company for two seasons.

She will be assisted by Catherine Herbener on harpsichord and piano, John Bailey on flute and piccolo, and Tracy Sands on violoncello.

Here's an alternative to the usual alternatives. The 13th Annual Quackoff will be in Avoca Saturday. Duck races on ice, a premiere performance by the Schoolhouse Orchestra and a dance with Silver Wings will be featured.

Registration is from 10 a.m. until noon at Town Hall. Races start at 1 p.m., and the dance begins at 6:30 p.m.

If foreign or culture films are not what you're seeking, the Lincoln Fantasy and Science Fiction Club is presenting a free screening of various Godzilla movies Saturday from 5:30-11 p.m. in the Nebraska Union Ballroom.

The Japanese-American venture, "Gunhed," will be featured.

The Native American Public Broadcasting Consortium Retrospective continues its ongoing film festival this weekend with the movies "Distant Voices... Thunder Words" from 1990 and "Eyes of the Spirit" from 1983.

These films on Native American life and culture will be shown today at 3 p.m. and Saturday at 11 a.m. The films are free and open to the public.

For more information call 275-3294.

The Ralph Mueller Planetarium is presenting a live performance by John Serrie today, Saturday and Sunday. This performance will be the first such live-music presentation in any area planetarium.

"Romantic Concert Under the Stars," will be performed today and Saturday at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. Matinee shows will be offered Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

The cost is \$10 for adults and \$5 for children ages 12 and under.

The Lincoln Symphony Orchestra is continuing its season today by featuring the third of its guest-conductor concerts.

Yong-Yan Hu, associate conductor of the Savannah Symphony, will lead the orchestra in its performance, which will include Rachmaninoff's "Capriccio Bohemien" and "A Chilly Moon in the Spring" by the Chinese composer A. Bing.

The 8 p.m. concert will include a pre-concert introduction in the Steinhart Room of the Lied Center for Performing Arts at 7:30 p.m.

Tickets for the concert are \$25.50, \$19.50 and \$16.50 for adults, and discount tickets are available for UNL staff and students.

— Compiled by Shannon Uehling

New club open, aimed at college students under 21

By Stacie Hakel
Staff Reporter

Stand up and cheer because Grandstand is ready to get down and boogie.

Open since Christmas at 14th and O streets, Grandstand was created in Lincoln specifically for college students, Russell Kaelberer and Garry Robinson, president and vice president of the club, said.

The two had marketing experience with clubs in Colorado, and brought it to Nebraska after discovering that students ages 19-20 had nothing to do for entertainment, Kaelberer said.

"Knowing the market in Denver, I felt it was a better business opportunity to target a captive audience," he said. "Our market is designed to target the university population under 21, and give an entertainment alternative for those not legally old enough to enter a bar yet."

The music at Grandstand is also geared toward the college student. Grandstand not only features the traditional Top 40 music, but also alternative, techno, hard rock and more, Kaelberer said.

He said that each night featured a different type of music which enabled students to come on a night they chose.

"We've created this for the University students," Kaelberer said. "It wasn't designed to be a teen club. We encourage University students to come in whether they are under 21 or over 21."

National and local bands are in plans for the future, Kaelberer said.

But that's not all. Grandstand derived its name from bleacher seating, which indicates sports-related contests for the future. The name also described the step-seating of Grandstand which allowed people to sit informally in groups.

Kaelberer said there was still work to do in setting up the club. But with promotions from various companies, radio phone lines, and the biggest dance floor in Lincoln, he said he hoped Grandstand would be a success.

Grandstand is open Wednesday through Sunday with a cover charge ranging from \$1.50 to \$5.

Local record firm gives area bands boost on new CD

By Bryan Peterson
Staff Reporter

Lincoln-based Caulfield Records has just released its fifth record, "Record Number 5," a seven-inch compilation with one song each from four area bands.

The record provides another boost to the already booming local music scene, which has witnessed a resurgence in the number and quality of bands, concerts and recordings in recent years.

Preserved on vinyl are Sideshow and Mercy Rule, both of whose members have been active in Lincoln bands for more than five years.

"We haven't had any songs out for a while, and the others are good bands," said Bernie McGinn, bassist for Sideshow and the main force behind Caulfield Records. "It's a good way to give other bands exposure."

Following this record, Sideshow will be releasing a compact disc which may also appear on vinyl, said McGinn. Mercy Rule just finished recording at Lincoln's Studio Q and a compact disc is forthcoming from them as well, he added.

Germbox and Molly McGuire, both from Kansas City, have played at Duffy's and other local venues. Germbox recently disbanded but Molly McGuire will soon have its own seven-inch record on Caulfield Records.

Curiously, Germbox may be the most widely heard of all these bands, thanks to one of Caulfield Records' distributors, Community 3.

Through the vagaries of Soviet disintegration, Community 3 happened to be the only importer of foreign music into the Soviet Union after the state-owned record company collapsed.

The owner of Community 3 "stepped off the plane a hero" to the Soviets and played a Germbox song on state radio to an estimated thirty million listeners, McGinn said, a number which dwarfs the 1000 copies of this compilation which were pressed in Lincoln.