

Quest for success

'Holy Grail' showing meant to begin Starship 9 tradition

By Gerry Beltz Staff Reporter

Do you know what the average wind speed velocity of an unladen swallow is? If you responded, "African or European?" then you know where this weird question comes from.

In celebration of the first anniversary of the Starship 9, the long-popular comedy "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" opens today at the Starship 9 (13th and Q streets).

Byron Bonsall, manager of the Starship 9, said "Holy Grail" was brought back, not only to do something different for the anniversary, but also for a filler should the condition arise.

"There might be a situation where we might not find enough product for the screens, and we have a movie that should be gone and out of there," he said. "If older films like this will play well at the Starship, we'll do this more often."

Bonsall noted that for now this is "just an experiment."

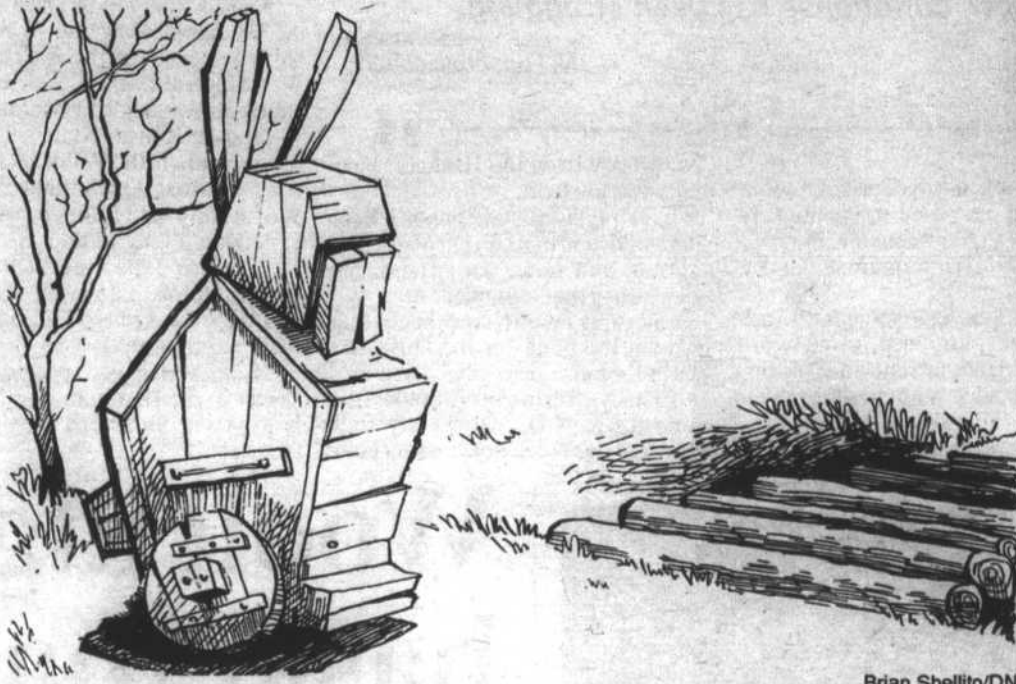
But he predicts that business will be very good for the film.

"I expect to kick some major butt," he said.

In "Monty Python and the Holy Grail," King Arthur is gathering his knights together because he believes he's on a mission from God to find the Holy Grail. But of course, they can't find it, and this leads the entire bumbling troop (including John Cleese, Michael Palin and Eric Idle) into a myriad of bizarre comedic encounters and situations, including cow tossing and the attack of a giant wooden rabbit.

Bonsall said that he thought it was the general zaniness that attracted people to "Holy Grail."

"Going to this movie," he said, "you have to



Brian Shellito/DN

"I expect to kick some major butt."

— Bonsall, manager of Starship 9

know that you're going to see some very bizarre things."

Bonsall said he had hopes of bringing back other old movies, provided that the "Holy

Grail" venture was a success.

"If this goes over, I already have it down to three films which I would like to show next year for our second anniversary," he said. "I would like to make this a tradition if at all possible."

Diary of a Madman

I went home to help Mother call her baldness to Father's attention.

Hello Father, Mother your hair looks great today



From the look on Father's face I think he finally figured it out.

Thank you son



I believe he's finally becoming more aware of what's going on around him.

SON?



Mirror experiments raise hot issues

"Living in the Future"

with Sam Keptfield

In January, the Russians launched a small payload into orbit, which unfolded to become a 65-meter-diameter mirror. Laced along a spidery framework was a thin sheet of reflective Mylar.

The mirror, orbiting 225 miles above Earth, reflected weak sunlight back to Earth — somewhat less candlepower than a full moon.

OK, so it's not exactly Sputnik. For all the press coverage, it's on the same level with the interminable Cosmos satellites they keep launching, which only make news when their nuclear reactors fall back to Earth.

But since this little experiment is the first step in a planned series of larger mirrors, it raises a valid question: How far can — or should — man go toward controlling the environment?

The Russians have always been big on this. Back in the days of the Evil Empire, the Soviet government used nukes to dig lakes and canals, reversed the flow of several rivers and even planned to use a string of nuclear power plants along the Pacific to raise the water temperature and create much-needed warm-water ports for military ships.

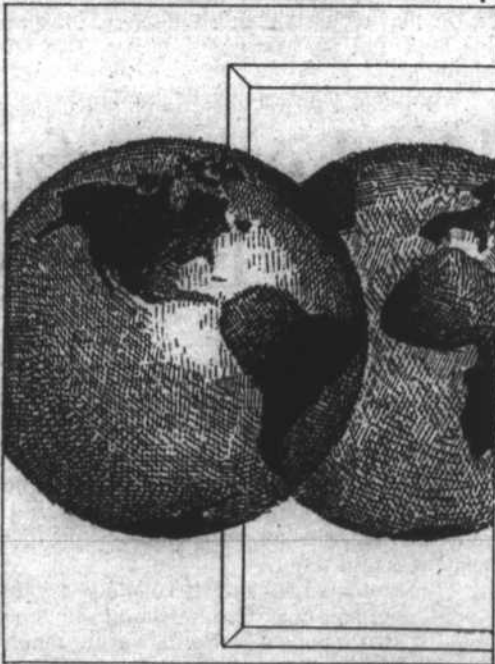
The U.S. government considered using huge inflatable mirrors during the Vietnam War to illuminate the dense jungles where troops were fighting at night. Code-named Nile Blue, this also floundered due to opposition from astronomers, who warned that the extra light would

render their telescopes useless.

So just what good is a giant orbiting mirror? Well, cities along the Arctic Circle like St. Petersburg or Nome, Alaska would probably like a little sunshine during their six-month-long winters.

Even the Americans considered digging a new Panama Canal across Nicaragua with nukes.

And the Russians aren't the first to think up



David Badders/DN

this space mirror idea. A German rocket scientist, Hermann Oberth, first conceived it in 1929.

During World War II, the Nazis thought about using mirrors as "sun guns," but it never came off because atmospheric scattering of the light and heat prohibited it.

Illuminating cities from space and lengthening the days in winter could not only lessen power consumption, but provide aid to those suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Extended illumination could lengthen crop growth.

All wonderful things, to be sure. But what of the downside to it? Nature operates on a fairly predictable cycle: long days in summer and shorter in winter. Circadian rhythms by which the body regulates itself have built themselves largely around this cycle of light and dark.

Start having 12-hour days in December, or even lengthening days in summer, and you're bound to upset it.

And, of course, with the Hubble telescope on the Fritz, astronomers are going to complain about light pollution again.

All valid concerns — but does this make it a bad thing?

Most people who make these choices think only as far ahead as the next election, not the next generation.

So what's the point, you ask? It's that using technology, and especially new space technology, involves a trade-off between beneficial and detrimental uses.

It might be terrific to light Nome, Alaska, in the winter, but widespread use of artificial light over large areas of land could disrupt the natural order of things.

Unfortunately, our leaders are often unschooled in the adverse effects — and left clueless about the positive uses — of new technologies.

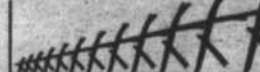
Or they're so constrained by pesky legislators and inertia-bound bureaucrats that the technology isn't even noticed.

And too often the result is no result.

Sam Keptfield is not a scientist, but knows an awful lot about it, and is an arts & entertainment columnist.

Theatrix features struggles of Chilean prisoner, writers

theatrix



Theatrix offers two plays this week, "Death and the Maiden" and "Squirrels," both of which began Thursday.

"Death and the Maiden," directed by Robin McKercher, will run in Studio 301 of the Temple building today and Saturday at 9 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Set in Chile after the collapse of the Pinochet regime, "Death" hinges on the experiences of a woman who was held prisoner for 40 days in the hands of the totalitarian government that tortured and raped her.

Playwright Ariel Dorman is a Chilean exile, but no country is ever specified in the play, making it particularly relevant to the current struggles of people in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, McKercher said.

A few seconds' walk away in the Studio Theater is "Squirrels" by David Mamet. It runs today and Sunday at 7 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m.

One of Mamet's earliest and least known works, "Squirrels" is a short, snappy play about two writers who are incapable of completing a paragraph.

"Nothing really happens," said director Randall Wheatley, "but it's a lot of fun."

"We see TV. We see movies. We see all this stuff, and it looks so alive," he said, "yet all it is is one man sitting alone in squalor typing away. I see this as a writer's nightmare."

—Matthew Grant

The BIG City

Things in the Big City are back to normal: nothing to do.

But the weather is supposed to be nice, and frisbees will be making their annual appearance, along with luscious people in shorts eating ice cream slowly and tanning their thighs, so get out and do something, for Pete's sake!

Weekend — "Gas Food and Lodging" at the Carson Theatre, various times, \$4 for students; "Sing On!" at the Creamery, various times, \$7.50.

Friday — Chris Proctor, guitarist, LAFTA house concert at 3160 S. 31st St., 7:30 p.m., suggested donation — \$5.

Saturday — Malaysian Night '93, 6 p.m. Nebraska Union Centennial Room, 6:30 p.m.; Lincoln Symphony Orchestra Young Artist's Competition, 8 p.m., \$15.

Sunday — UNL Brass Ensemble, Kimball Hall, 8 p.m., free.

Calvin and Hobbes

HOW MANY BOARDS WOULD THE MONGOLS HOARD, IF THE MONGOL HORDES GOT BORED?



by Bill Watterson