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EDITORIAL

Full Nelson

Governor helped keep state prosperous

The past four years have been tough ones for the United States. The nation was caught in a recession. Companies scaled down. Budgets dropped. People lost their jobs. Through it all, Nebraska kept its head above water. We suffered, too, but while some other states nearly collapsed under the pressure, Nebraska survived. And it did so under the leadership of Gov. Ben Nelson.

Nelson announced his bid for re-election Tuesday. He hasn't been a flashy governor, but Nelson has kept Nebraska stable. He helped us weather the storm, and he continues to steer our state through the choppy waters of crime, welfare reform and economic hardship.

Last year, Nelson helped cut \$100 million from the state's budget. It's hard for a state to flourish under such large cuts, but Nelson managed to make these cuts without crippling Nebraska.

During a national recession, unemployment here stayed relatively low. Nelson even went to bat overseas for Nebraska farmers, encouraging other nations to buy more beef and grain.

Nelson has responded to issues that Nebraskans care about: taxes, welfare and crime. He has made decisions based on what Nebraskans want, even if it has meant stepping across traditional party lines.

There may be a better candidate for Nebraska, and maybe he or she will be revealed in the next few months. But when Nebraska voters go to the polls this year, they should remember that Ben Nelson helped keep Nebraska stable during difficult years.

And that was no small task.

Job challenges

World issues to confront new secretary

There were reports that William Perry, who has been nominated as the next secretary of defense, was reluctant to take the job. If these are true, they are understandable.

If Perry is confirmed by the U.S. Senate and becomes President Clinton's next secretary of defense, he faces challenges that will not be easily solved.

Les Aspin, the current secretary of defense, left the job after less than a year. The Clinton administration's handling of defense issues was highly criticized during that time.

If Perry is confirmed, he will have to deal with the ongoing war in the former Yugoslavia, an unresolved war in Somalia, conflict in Haiti and an Iraq still led by Saddam Hussein. He will have to deal with nuclear weapons in North Korea, Russia's potential instability and the issue of gays in the military.

Perhaps more challenging than any of these problems is the issue of shrinking defense budgets. Perry will have to find ways to do more with less if the military is to move forward in the years ahead.

But he is prepared for that challenge. He worked in the Pentagon during the Carter administration and more recently helped reform the Pentagon's purchasing rules.

The Senate should swiftly confirm Perry's nomination so he can get on with the difficult job of providing leadership to the U.S. military. President Clinton needs to establish a credible defense policy, and Perry can help him accomplish that goal.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.

THAT WAS THE MOST VINDICTIVE, UNFAIR, UNACCOUNTABLE, WITCH-HUNTING INVESTIGATION I'VE EVER SEEN... TOO BAD YOU DIDN'T GET THE WHITEWATER JOB.



CINDY LANGE-KUBICK

Child's toys limit gender equity

I never should have allowed those Barbies in the house. It started out innocently enough. On her second birthday, my daughter Anna received a My First Barbie from her Uncle Bruce.

Except for her name, this Barbie was a clone of every other. Platinum tresses, silicone-injected bustline, an I-can't-breathe waistline and loong legs — a blond Brooke Shields with breasts.

Barbies are dangerous. They are no different from the guns my son wanted for his birthday. I told him, "No guns, no exceptions." Then I let my daughter drag Totally Hair Barbie and her hot pink convertible into our lives. She was followed by Hollywood Hair Barbie, Stacie, Skipper, Surfin' Ken and even a talking Barbie who brilliantly stated "Math class is tough."

How did this happen? Why do I have a daughter who spends her days playing dress up and a son who wants to be a sniper when he grows up? Is it nature or nurture? Biology or Barbie?

I'm not blaming Barbie. This is bigger than a twelve-inch doll in stiletto heels and a feather boa. It's about denying our children the freedom to be who they are. Our country's ideology rests upon the premise of freedom. Yet our youngest citizens are coerced into rigid molds that define what constitutes male and female.

It is easier for me to keep guns out of the house. I can see the correlation between violent toys and aggressive behavior. I want my sons to be sensitive yet assertive, sympathetic but self-sufficient. When my first son was born, I dressed him in purple and pink as well as blue. He grew into a nurturing and gentle child.

However, it didn't take him long to discover that there was a big world outside of home where boys do not wear necklaces, dress in pastels or cry when Dumbo's mother dies.

By the time Anna was born, my resolve to be a gender-neutral, super mom had given way under fatigue and



pressure. One only has to watch Saturday morning television, sit in on a public school classroom or read the Bible to see why Barbie has become an alter ego for a young girl's future self. Part of me knew firsthand what a smile and the discrete batting of one's eyelashes could accomplish for a woman in the world. Barbie is no dummy. I cannot tell my child her looks will not serve her in some very important ways as she grows up. They constitute what 18th-century feminist Mary Wollstonecraft called "the sovereignty of beauty." The trade-off is that women, in order to maintain their power, have "... resigned the natural rights which the exercise of reason might have procured them, and chosen rather to be short-lived queens."

In some ways I am a good role model for both my sons and my daughter. I read Ms. instead of McCalls and Friedan instead of Fabio. I tuck them to sleep with Father Gander, not Mother Goose.

There are no high heels in my closet, and I haven't painted my nails since high school. Still it feels I am fighting an uphill battle. In today's political climate, I'm half-afraid that one day they will dial up Rush Limbaugh and accuse me of being a "femi-nazi" for refusing to shave my legs.

We deny the potential of all our children by narrowly defining who they are and what they should be.

Wollstonecraft wrote, "Men and women must be educated, in a great degree, by the opinions and manners of the society they live in." More than 200 years later, our society still says it is taboo to wear a certain color, play with particular toys, feel certain emotions or aspire to a particular station in life, depending on one's gender.

We no longer claim women's heads are too small, or their nervous systems too delicate for intellectual stimulation. But we still look for that non-existent "math gene" to explain why girls lag behind boys in the hard sciences instead of looking at the socialization behind gender differences.

Critiquing our children's toy boxes and finding alternative playthings are just a couple steps toward gender equity.

For instance, would parents buy, and children play with, a different sort of doll? Would there be a market for Barb and Kent, a reasonably happy, but not trouble-free couple who drive a fuel-efficient Geo Metro instead of that hot Corvette?

Barb would have nondescript brown hair, a pear-shaped figure and fallen arches. Kent would be slightly balding, a little paunchy but a nice guy. I don't know, but I think it's worth a try.

Lange-Kubick is a senior news-editorial and sociology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Eisenhower

E. Hughes Shanks' characterization of President Eisenhower as a "professional soldier and killer of women and children" in his column Jan. 20 was silly at best and at worst, stupid and mean-spirited. Eisenhower might well be criticized for his record on civil rights and any number of other issues, but the aspersion is a flip and simple-minded view of history for a political science graduate student.

I assume that even the most revisionist of political scientists have not yet turned Adolf Hitler into a benevolent democrat, defending the interests of the Fatherland with the deaths of millions of people in World War II, among them a considerable number of women and children. I also assume therefore that the Supreme Allied

Commander who indeed ordered actions that resulted in the deaths of women and children as he was destroying Hitler's armies and civilian war machine is still not seen as having blood on his hands.

To characterize Eisenhower as Shanks has simply confuses arguments about events like the Vietnam War, when we did have a clear choice whether to kill or not.

Ronald Nugent Nebraska ETV

Hazing policy

In reference to the bill introduced lately to make hazing a crime, I believe this is a prime example of — to quote an old cliché — making a mountain out of a molehill. Jeffrey Knoll's accident was tragic, but let's face it.

That was a single, isolated incident that could happen at any party. If hazing is outlawed, the brotherhood and camaraderie so important within fraternities will lose its meaning. Hazing is important in building loyalty and cultivating character that will stay with pledges for years to come.

However, because so much heat has been put on fraternities lately, I believe it would be a good idea for them to have a hazing policy in the future. Fraternities should print exactly what pledges can expect during hazing, whether it's forced consumption of alcohol, whipping or sleep deprivation. This way pledges and their parents will know what to expect during their pledge year.

Mark Knoffler sophomore sociology