

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Shooting still stumping all of us

First it was an accident. Then maybe it wasn't. Now it's up to the Lincoln Police Department and the Lancaster County Attorney Gary Lacey to find out what happened Jan. 30. Authorities said a Nebraska football player allegedly fired two shots into a car at 17th and L streets that morning.



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The theories could probably be ignored as mere speculation, but several came from Nebraska coach Tom Osborne. Osborne took it upon himself to conduct an investigation of the shooting — including examining the car and talking to the driver. He is close to the players involved and probably has some idea of what went on.

But many of Osborne's statements do not adequately explain what happened. Some of the things he has said have been contradicted by statements from the police and the county attorney.

The most celebrated of Osborne's theories was his initial assertion that the gun may have been fired by accident. Did anyone in Nebraska believe that story?

To his credit, Osborne has given up on the accident theory. At a press conference Feb. 2, he said there were "a couple of things I stated a couple of days ago that were not totally accurate." Osborne said the information he gathered in his investigation helped change his mind. But he declined to say exactly what he learned.

We can only hope the police have the new information as well, because there are many unanswered questions in this curious case.

For example, everyone knows there were two separate incidents — one at the Residence Inn and one on 17th and L streets. But how are the two related? We know that on Jan. 30 two police

officers were dispatched to the Residence Inn at 1:20 a.m. There was a party at the hotel attended by several Nebraska football players and recruits.

According to the police, a fight took place when unidentified assailants showed up at the hotel. Nebraska redshirt freshman Ramone Worthy was stabbed in the back, and wingback Abdul Muhammad was pushed through a window and also received lacerations to his hand.

At about 2:50 a.m. that same morning, two shots were fired into a car belonging to UNL student Brooke Bohac at a stoplight at 17th and L streets.

Lancaster County Attorney Gary Lacey filed two felony charges against Nebraska defensive back Tyrone Williams for the shooting. Lacey said Williams smashed a window of Bohac's car and then fired shots into the car as it sped away. Williams' attorney said he would plead innocent to the charges.

Osborne said he thought the two events were related. He said the players in the car were agitated by what took place at the Residence Inn. A phone call they received on their cellular car phone further bothered them. He said they "didn't know what they were getting into."

But there are several problems with Osborne's explanation.

First, the players in the car were not the same ones involved in the Residence Inn fight. Lacey said Nebraska

football players Ed Stewart, Kareem Moss and Tyrone Williams were the only people in the car.

Osborne said the players in the car were taking Abdul Muhammad to the hospital or had taken Muhammad to the hospital. But Lacey said Muhammad was not in the car.

The matter of the phone call is also curious. Osborne said the caller told the players "we've got you in our sights." He said the players interpreted the call as threatening.

That is possible. But if the players thought they were threatened or in danger, why did they get out of the car?

Lacey's account of the call is different. He said a passenger in Bohac's car made the call from an apartment before they went driving. Lacey said the call was a prank, and the caller initially identified himself as someone with the FBI.

If Lacey is right, why did the players think they were in danger? If they didn't know the call was a prank, as Osborne has suggested, then what did they have to fear from FBI agents?

Not much of what has been revealed about this case makes sense. The conflicting stories certainly do not.

But people should keep asking questions in the hope that eventually there will be some understanding of what happened that morning and why.

Fitzpatrick is a senior political science major and the editor of the Daily Nebraskan.

E. HUGHES SHANKS

Comparisons only hurt people

Making comparisons between two people can be unfair. Even when meant as a compliment, a comparison can hurt people's feelings and damage the images we have of them.

I think we make comparisons because we're lazy. We use them to make quick and easy explanations. We tend to make hollow comparisons for convenience.

Far too often we freely compare public figures without even thinking.

Recently, I overheard a friend of mine singing. Having been a musician most of my life, I felt I could make a qualified compliment.

She sang a short phrase. I was impressed by her Phoebe Snow-like or Deniece Williams-like vibrato.

Without thinking I blurted out, "You sound like a sister." A black woman.

I suppose if she were black I could have said something like, "Damn girl, you sound like Phoebe." But my flawed intention was based partially on race.

I didn't even catch my error until she asked what my next column would be about.

I replied, "It's about what I just did to you, actually. It's about how we make mindless comparisons — how we take shortcuts, especially when making race-based comparisons."

Flippant comparisons also deny a person's individuality and ability to stand out. What is intended to be complimentary may actually be condescending or belittling.

Comparing an upstart figure in a particular field to an already established figure tends to diminish the overall significance of both parties.

One person's hero may be another person's anti-hero.

In our haste to explain things, we rush to describe one person using another person's accomplishments or failings. No matter how you slice it, one or both lose.

In most comparisons, neither party really has a chance to defend themselves. Unless someone says they as-



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pire to the accomplishments of the other person, he or she may get defensive.

People deserve protection from sweeping summations of them by others. This protection comes by giving every individual credit where credit is due.

I once heard an interviewer ask Spike Lee about how it felt to be called "The Black Woody Allen." I wondered, "What does that make Woody Allen, the Jewish Orson Welles?"

Lee retorted that it was not reasonable to be compared to Allen. Sadly, Allen hasn't had the opportunity to say what he thinks. He's been busy in court.

Lee said Allen didn't have any people of color in significant roles in his movies. That was true when Lee said it. However, Allen's most recent film stars Alfre Woodard, who is black.

So much for that comparison, huh? What would Spike Lee be to the "film" industry without Woody Allen? What the hell kind of question is that?

Besides, there is no guarantee that their fans think Lee and Allen belong in the same category anyway, or even the same planet. Good Lord, they are two distinctly different and significant filmmakers. Period.

Here are some other comparisons of public figures. You be the judge.

Rush Limbaugh and Kenneth Hamblin are both well-established media figures. Limbaugh is white, from Missouri and well-known for strong political views.

Hamblin, who is black, grew up in

Brooklyn. He has a twice-weekly Denver Post column and local radio show.

Similarities between the two begin and end with the fact that they are controversial media figures. It's highly likely both men would prefer their reputations to stand less on how controversial they are and more on their convictions.

The fact they make a living pissing people off all the time is just a coincidence.

Hamblin says he hopes to motivate the black and Hispanic communities of Denver by saying "things that a white person couldn't get away with."

It would be suicide for Limbaugh to incorporate racial justification into his message. No comparison, I say.

Hamblin started as a photojournalist. Limbaugh's father owned a radio station. Again, comparing Limbaugh and Hamblin is not fair.

The other day, a friend of mine compared Tom Osborne and Buffalo Bills coach Marv Levy. He thought they were two peas in a pod just because they are both highly educated and have recently lost bowl games. But what does that have to do with their coaching styles or personalities?

It shows how some comparisons are made and the damage they can do, especially when they are made to fulfill some self-serving bias or meant to let out frustrations.

Either way, it isn't fair. And we need to cut it out.

Shanks is a graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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 February 11, 1994
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CRAIG 'N COMPANY

March 5, 1994
 2:30 P.M.
 Centennial Room
 Nebraska Union

Craig first started recording for children in the early '80's, when he made a special visit to his wife's nursery school class. Since that time, Craig has earned a CINE Golden Eagle Award for video excellence for his original songs and lyrics in *Songs For Us*. Craig presently hosts a children show on the Disney Channel called *Craig 'n Company*.

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