

# OPINION

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Page 4

Daily  
**Nebraskan**  
Editorial Board  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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## Students beware

*UNL will stick it to you*

If you're an incoming freshman, as you charge your textbooks to your new, color, student ID, you might want to think about what you're getting into.

Right now, all you're probably thinking about is where to put your stereo in your residence hall room or eyeing that plate of chocolate chip cookies your mother sent with you.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is definitely exciting. It's a time to expand your knowledge and set yourself up for the real world. There are so many people on campus and so many things to do.

But there are a few caveats.

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents rose tuition again this year. While most students were away from school, they got hit with a 6.2 percent increase.

You won't notice a difference because you've never had to pay tuition before. However you're paying \$4.25 more per credit hour than incoming freshman last year. If you're not a math major that comes out to an extra \$63.75 for 15 hours of classes.

At the same time, several university administrators received large pay increases. NU President Dennis Smith saw his salary jump from \$168,630 to \$175,375.

In the four or more years you spend here, you'll learn that the University has no respect for your meager checkbook.

Yeah, those textbooks are expensive, but wait until you get your tuition bill.

## Peace vs. freedom

*Is safety worth the price of freedom*

It's been said that it's easy to maintain law and order. Terribly easy. All you have to do is give up a few civil rights. Recent talk about being tough on crime is all well and good. No one wants crime. Society is better off with it — particularly violent crime.

But somewhere along the line things have gotten a little out of hand.

The framers of the constitution of the United States seemed to think that it was better to let some crime go unpunished than that the citizens of our land should face fear from the unjust enforcement of the law.

They provided that the accused should be considered innocent until proven guilty.

It's easy for us to overlook this great step forward in the history of freedom.

Innocent until proven guilty is not a nicety — but the very foundation of our legal system, but in a recent poll, most respondents said they felt O.J. Simpson should have to prove his innocence.

This shows more than a misunderstanding of the law. It is more than mere ignorance. It represents a very dangerous trend in favor of civil peace at the expense of individual liberty.

Now the so-called John Does are to face trial for the bombing in Oklahoma, and a cry rises up in the land: hang the villains!

But these men have nothing to prove. No amount of wishing will make it so. The burden of evidence is on the prosecution's side and if they fail to prove their case, these men will walk.

No amount of peace is worth abandoning this principle.

### Editorial policy

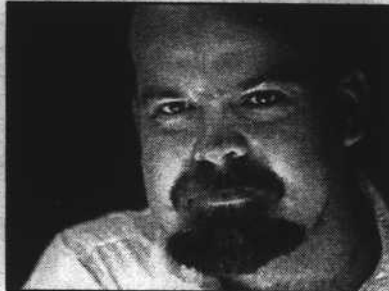
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### Letter policy

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: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.

## Innocent man?

*Cartoon results in an interesting summer*



**Mark Baldridge**

*"I draw pictures of the president in clown suits, I draw elephants that talk. No one takes them seriously."*

School children, on the first day of school, are required everywhere to make an accounting. They each must scrawl in childish letters the same essay every year: How We Spent Our Summer Vacation.

In our case (the case of those of us who stayed in Lincoln for the Summer) the season has not passed uneventful. This essay is intended for those who missed the bizarre events of the summer of 1995.

One of our cartoonists came up missing.

On June 22 the Daily Nebraskan ran the editorial cartoon that appears here at right. As much as I might personally want to wash my hands of it, I cannot. The picture was published by the paper. Even though I wasn't here to pass judgement on it at the time, the paper that employs me now is responsible for it. It's part of the package I inherit as Opinion Page editor. I have to defend our right to run it.

Drawn by James Mehsling, it refers to the then recent acquittal of Lincoln police officer Luke Wilke in the death of Francisco Renteria, a resident of Lincoln and an innocent man, who died in police custody.

All this is old news to most of us. What may be news — what certainly should have been news, if there'd been more students here to watch it happen — was the arrest, on the day after the cartoon appeared, of the artist, Mr. Mehsling, at his home.

I should point out here that Mehsling did have an outstanding warrant from the previous spring — for vandalism.

But the vandalism in question had already been admitted to and paid for by another.

Not to go into what may still be an open case, Mehsling believed the case already closed — a third person, known to him, had confessed the crime to the offended party and paid a price: \$60.

This, of course, is only Mehsling's story.

The story from the police department is a confused one: Yes, the warrant was legitimate, but the timing was bad.



Even Police Chief Tom Casady admitted the arrest cast the department in an unflattering light.

News stories in the Lincoln Journal-Star made it clear that the arresting officer was receiving "counseling" on the propriety of arresting a high profile critic of the police department.

Wilke's lawyer said his client was keeping options open on whether or not to sue.

Meanwhile, Mehsling was held for four hours after his \$50 bail was paid, never told that it had been paid, and then — in a kind of agony of anticlimax — released.

He said he thought it was all a big joke.

"I wasn't surprised, if that's what you mean," he said. "I was joking with the guys down here (at the DN) that they might be coming to take me away."

"I guess I was a little surprised when they put the handcuffs on me," he said.

Handcuffs on a cartoonist? Even on a suspected vandal this jewelry would seem a little over-dressy.

"When they told me the warrant was for vandalism I was relieved because I knew I hadn't done it," the suspect said.

What was quickly becoming an unlikely footnote to the Renteria case could have been made even stranger if the arresting officers had actually found Mehsling where they came looking for him first: the offices of the student paper — the Daily Nebraskan.

Things would have been clearer, maybe, if he had been here when they came around: Cartoonist dragged from newspaper office after offending cartoon published — it makes a nicer headline.

And the whole situation would have been a lot different if Wilke had decided to sue. Interesting freedom of speech issues are at stake here, aren't they?

Wilke is an acquitted man, after all. The court has declared him innocent.

But anyone has the right to question the judgement of the court. And as Mehsling himself has said:

"I draw pictures of the president in clown suits, I draw elephants that talk. No one takes them seriously."

Now, myself, I'm a writer. I don't depict things. I can only talk about them, paint pictures with words. Maybe my opinions are less likely to be taken as statements of fact because of this.

Yes, a lawsuit would have been most interesting. I can see arguments for both sides, can't you? But neither Mehsling nor (as would be more likely) the Daily Nebraskan was sued. Instead he was arrested.

He wasn't killed, thank God — this is not New Orleans. Neither was he stopped in an elevator between floors and beaten senseless — it isn't even Omaha. Thank God.

But he was arrested and it is my opinion that he was arrested because of the free expression of his own opinions.

Is that right?

I mean, I can say I believe the police are responsible for the life of an innocent man, can't I? That the police department of this city is a fascist, racist institution that should be slapped down and restructured from bottom to top. Can't I? Or do I forfeit police protection by doing so.

Or worse, do I risk harassment. Because, make no mistake, that is what this represents.

I am no cartoonist. I paint with words. So here's my picture — and my challenge to the police department of our fine city. A picture of the deep dark insides of police HQ:

A cop with a newspaper, pouring over a cartoon. And he mumbles to himself (or shouts across the room, who knows) "Mehsling, Mehsling. We got anything on this guy?"

And even now — is my name being mumbled by some vindictive bike cop, somewhere?

Baldridge is a senior english major and Opinion editor for the Daily Nebraskan.

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