

Playing for Huskers a dream

Not only is today Thursday, but it's also Cornhusker football Thursday. Can I say "Cornhusker" without a lawsuit?

Therefore, in the constant journalistic quest for timeliness, my originally scheduled article will be placed on hiatus.

You'll have to wait until next week to read about why you should never shampoo your neighbor's poodle without expressed written consent.

Tonight, Nebraska football will again be upon us, and Herbie or no Herbie, it's bound to produce as much excitement as taped phone calls from congressmen to minors.

Every time I think about seeing the Huskers take the field, I dream that some day I will be out there sprinting yards behind the rest of the team.

After all, that's a big part of why I came to Nebraska. I have a dream of playing for the Huskers.

I realize I'm not the most athletic of humans — or goats for that matter — but I possess a desire to play the game seldom found in goats.

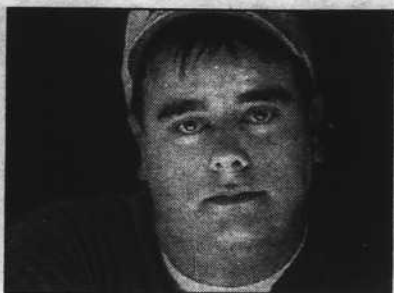
Sure, I've been called fat before, and although I prefer the term "horizontally challenged," I don't think it would inhibit my abilities to produce on the football field.

The reason I didn't play for the Huskers last year was because, as my mother put it, "I had about as much right to share a field with Tommie Frazier as a pile of donkey vomit."

She was also quick to point out that I wasn't really that good at high school football. She's correct.

In fact, an unidentified news source twice quoted nuns at my Catholic high school in Natchez, Miss., as saying I was the "suckiest" player they had ever seen.

As crushed as I was, I have accepted it as another pathetic



Steve Willey

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chapter in the just as pathetic novel that has become my life.

But if there's one thing that can turn a person's life around, it has got to be playing collegiate football.

Today's football players have more advantages than a Rush Limbaugh-Ed McMahon tennis match.

Suppose, for example, you're "fortunate" enough to enroll in a chemistry class while at college. Like most chemistry students, you decide your time would be better spent ingesting battery acid.

Statistics have shown that, as an athlete, your chances of passing the course are still very high.

Another good thing about playing football is that you get to wear Band-Aids on your nose.

We've all wanted to publicly do this at one time or another but,

because society frowns upon it, we usually resort to wearing them alone in our basements.

Many of us, myself included, have lost jobs because we showed up to work with Band-Aids on our noses.

In football, however, this is held in the utmost regard, and you're usually rewarded with full pardons to all previously committed crimes.

And despite my less than glorious reviews from the church, I still have all the qualities a great college football player needs.

I'm fast, I'm mean and I'm always late for class.

Speed has never been a problem for me. Even with my 300-plus pound frame, running comes as natural to me as tuition hikes do to UNL.

One of my roommates once timed me at 4.1 seconds in the 40-yard dash. If you're not familiar with sports, this number is phenomenal for a man of my size.

This number is of course unofficial because it took place within the confines of my home. It occurred in between opening statements of the O.J. trial when I sprinted to the kitchen to get a spoonful of mayonnaise.

Sadly, you won't find this statistic in any record books

because the NCAA strictly prohibits the use of condiments to enhance speed.

Meanness is another trait that lies innately within me. To this day I still won't come home from work unless I kick at least three puppies.

So Osborne and company, when you return from Oklahoma still undefeated, and feel like the win just wasn't as meaningful as it could have been, I empathize.

It could be that much better for both of us.

Willey is a junior ag-journalism major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Campus beauty lifts the spirit

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's got a good thing going.

I'm not talking about a second national championship, or the fact that on-campus living units are bursting at the seams

— or an increase in National Merit Scholars,
— or the stellar parking situation.

I'm talking about our grass and trees and flowers.

While the now defunct environmental movement fades rapidly from the public's consciousness, UNL's Department of Landscape Services deserves a big thumbs up.

I've spent the last three years admiring the great work that the crew has done. And for the past three years, I've had the well-meaning intention of writing a letter to the editor singing their praises.

Oh well. Here's my chance.

Have you ever taken the time to notice that each flower has an identification tag? Or how creative the names are? Summer Sun. Moonbeam. Foxfire. I have.

I frequent the stretch of sidewalk that runs from the green space, along Andrews and Burnett, and ends at Avery.

It's an amazing palette of colors and smells this time of year. Even in the heat, the miracle workers at Landscape Services are able to create life and beauty.

There's this cute little patch of Impatiens by the health center. I'm so impressed that they're alive!

These tiny, colorful flowers need a lot of care, shade and water. Most don't make it through the summer. But these are going strong.

Other great places include the Sheldon Gardens, the area in front of Architecture Hall and the green space.

Now, at the risk of sounding sappy, I truly believe that the folks at Landscaping are the unsung heroes of this campus. I've seen them out there in the wee hours of



Jessica Kennedy

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Personally, all I have is a half-dead house plant.

Half was in a too-small pot and half was rejuvenating in a cup of water.

But I felt a renewed allegiance to my "little guy."

He's an heirloom plant. I inherited him from my mom when I moved away. Otherwise he's a nondescript, green-leaved plant.

I repotted it before I moved back to campus.

But I lost it two weeks ago in a very unfortunate accident. My window fan fell on top of it and chopped it — just as a lawn mower chops grass.

The empty pot still sits on its

table.

A memorial of sorts.

The remaining stem soaks up the light from the window. I wonder, if I water the chopped stem, will it grow?

I'm devastated and want to replace it, but faith in my ability to be a provider and protector has been shaken.

So, in the meantime, I turn back to the beauty on campus. There's really nothing quite like it. I've spent some time on other campuses and they don't compare.

And the pride of UNL Landscaping has got to be East Campus. It is a virtual Eden. The whole campus is an arboretum, not to mention a great haven for nature lovers.

The magic of East Campus is powerful. It can elicit responses of awe, love, peace, serenity, etc. And the sense of solitude is incredible. East Campus is low-traffic in residential surroundings.

And that's its charm.

Kudos to Kim Todd, the Campus Landscape Architect.

Kudos to Wilbur Dasenbrock, the Director of Landscape Services.

And kudos to Kirby Baird and Jeff Culbertson, the landscaping supervisors at City and East campus, respectively.

Your dedication is important to the students and to the campus.

I know that the job can be thankless and that it isn't uncommon to lose the flora and fauna to heat or bugs or thoughtless people.

And I know that sucks.

Keep up the magnificent work. It is appreciated.

Maybe not every day. Maybe only when I'm in a reflective mood or I'm remembering my little house plant.

But if it can lift my spirits just once, I owe you a world of thanks.

Kennedy is a junior broadcasting and public relations major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

...doomed to repeat it.

1994

Otey execution was year ago Saturday

On June 11, 1977, Jane McManus, 26, a photography student, was raped, stabbed and beaten to death with a hammer in her Omaha apartment by Harold Otey.

On June 20, 1978, he was sentenced to death for his crime.

Three and a half decades later that sentence was carried out on Friday, Sept. 2.

This Saturday marks the one-year anniversary of that execution. — ED

Harold Lamont Otey was put to death early Friday morning, the first execution in the state of Nebraska since 1959.

The execution started at 12:23 a.m. and ended at 12:25 a.m.

Otey was sentenced to death in the electric chair for the 1977 rape and murder of Jane McManus of Omaha. The last execution in Nebraska was Charles Starkweather's 35 years ago.

State's witnesses were questioned after the execution by more than 40 members of the media.

The state's witnesses were Ed Howard of the Associated Press, Leslie Boellstorff of the Omaha World-Herald, Mike McKnight of WQOW-TV in Omaha, Paul Wice of KGFW of Kearney, Bill Kreifel of the Lincoln Journal and John Shaw, the associate warden of administrative services.

Witnesses who Otey selected were friends Joseph Munshaw and Jessica French, Attorney Paula Hutchinson and clergyman Alim Abdullah. The media were not allowed to question those witnesses.

Boellstorff, the first to speak, was visibly shaken by what she had witnessed. Her hands shook as she spoke to reporters.

"The electric chair isn't a very dignified way to die, but Harold Lamont Otey died with dignity," she said, her voice trembling as she told her story. "he smiled and said 'I love you' to the witnesses, to his witnesses who were there."

McKnight said Otey did not have any last words, but looked every witness in the eye after his death warrant was read to him.

"He looked at me in the eye for a brief moment, and the only way I can look at it was he was saying 'I hope you can live with yourself,'" he said. "That's the way I saw it."

Witnesses described four 2,400-volt jolts of electricity that were administered to Otey. They said smoke rose from near his left knee after the third jolt.

Howard called the burn on Otey's leg "enormous."

The witnesses said Otey's friends and witnesses cried softly.

Howard said Otey remained strong.

"You would think the roles

were reversed," he said. "He looked like he was someone there to encourage others."

Howard said he heard a clunking noise when the volts were sent through. The time between the jolts was distorted, he said.

"The best way for you to describe it away in your mind is a few seconds and several eternities," Howard said.

The witnesses refused to comment on their opinions of the death penalty. But State Auditor John Breslow, an official observer of Otey's treatment before the execution, said the whole week had been traumatic.

"We're all going to have to deal with what we've witnessed and observed tonight," he said.

Earlier Thursday, Gov. Ben Nelson said he took no pleasure in carrying out the sentence, but was obligated by his position.

"In a capital case, every safeguard against error or abuse must be taken," he said. "However, once the judicial process has established that these safeguards have been taken, it is the responsibility of the state to see that the sentence is carried out in a timely manner."

Nelson said he felt sorry for people on both sides of the issue. He said he had kept an open mind when it came to information on Otey's changing attitude toward his crime.

The 17 years since McManus' murder and the more than 50 appeals have been too much, Nelson said.

"It has drifted away from the original crime so far ... that it's ... academic for some," he said.

At the State Capitol, tension finally broke at the Attorney General's office after confirmation from the penitentiary warden that the execution had been carried out.

Dan Parsons, spokesman for Attorney General Stenberg, read a statement from Stenberg after the execution.

"On June 11, 1977, Harold Lamont Otey robbed, raped, repeatedly stabbed and finally strangled Jane McManus to death. Under the laws of the State of Nebraska, the penalty for these crimes is death," Parsons said.

"... Mr. Otey's cruelty and violence brought about his own death and brought about grief and violence for the McManus family and to his own family and to the friends of both families."

The statement expressed sympathy for the McManus family and all Nebraskans.

"The law of the State of Nebraska has been carried out and justice has been done," Parsons continued from the statement. "Those who engage in extreme acts of unlawful violence in the State of Nebraska should now clearly understand the consequences of those acts."

BE OUR GUEST

The Daily Nebraskan will present a guest columnist each Monday. Writers from the university and community are welcome.

Must have strong writing skills and something to say.

Contact Mark Baldrige c/o the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588.

Or by phone at (402)-472-1782.