

# OPINION PAGES

## OUR VIEW

### Naked truth UNK actors stripped of academic freedom

The naked truth of academic freedom escaped administrators at the University of Nebraska at Kearney when they told a UNK theater professor to remove scenes of partial nudity from a student play or be labeled "in-subordinate."

The UNK professor, Jack Garrison, made the first mistake by not challenging the administration. His 28-year service and tenure gives him academic freedom, but Garrison backed down without a fight. He failed to stand up for his students and his profession.

UNK Chancellor Gladys Styles Johnston justified her censorship by using a vague University of Nebraska bylaw that states: "Where the university's interest as an academic community is clearly involved, the authority of the university may be asserted."

It could be interpreted that this bylaw gives the university free reign to do whatever it wants. This contradicts the reign given to academic freedom, and thus contradicts the heart and soul of a public institution for higher learning.

The bylaw should be reworded or eliminated.

Through state taxes, Nebraskans fund the university. The people of Nebraska should decide whether or not they want to see a play. They should choose whether or not they want to sit in the audience.

Chancellor Johnston, a state employee paid by the university, should not pick and choose what cultural activities the entire UNK campus is allowed to see based on her personal preference.

Fortunately, some members of the administration and faculty at UNL already see through the dangers of executive privilege ruling over artistic endeavors.

Chancellor James Moeser and Richard Durst, dean of the College of Fine and Performing Arts, said they would not ban nudity from a UNL play and do not advocate censorship.

Tice Miller, director of the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, says the UNL theater has shown full and partial nudity and will continue to do so in a tasteful, appropriate way if a production warrants. In fact, "Six Degrees of Separation," an upcoming UNL play, will have nudity in it.

Miller, who has been at UNL for 25 years, says he has never been told what he can and cannot put in a play. But, he says, if he is ever told to cut something, "we will have a serious discussion about academic freedom."

He said the decision at UNK "certainly would not have been the decision made in Lincoln."

Chancellor Johnston's move to put the wraps on UNK's actors may have muffled Garrison, but it shouldn't pull the wool over the eyes of the rest of the NU system, leaving it blind to unwarranted censorship.

## MEHSLING'S VIEW



### Kasey KERBER

## You might be eccentric if...

There comes a time in every opinionated columnist's life when he or she decides that they need to write about a deep, touching issue.

That person makes a conscience decision to cast away all the creative, silly jokes and strive to make a serious, idealistic point.

Thank God this is not the time. Instead, I'll be nonconforming and doing my part to make people laugh and forget about such nagging issues as midterms, "what I did last night" and the forever nagging "Come on, bell, I need to go plug the freaking meter!!!"

Therefore, this week's column will be dedicated to finding out whether you're normal or not.

Yeah, I know what you're saying: "I'm normal. How dare you question my normalness! Next you're going to question my He-Man tattoo aren't you? What nerve!!!"

Well, relax. I'm just going to see if you can be classified as "eccentric." It's noncompetitive with the term weirdness, which many people would associate with two guys running around a dorm floor half-naked racing vacuum cleaners. Besides, beer causes that.

You see, there was an article that appeared in USA Today exactly one year ago about eccentricity or "straying from the normal."

The most interesting portion of the article was a side graphic that accompanied it.

It gave 15 "characteristics of eccentricness." If you have 10 of these, you are, in all likelihood, eccentric.

I could just tell you what these are, but because I am such an eccentric guy with unusual living and eating habits, doing the normal thing would just not be within my capacity. I've decided instead to be an eldest child of wisdom and scatter each single characteristic throughout the column for you to find.



Remember, if you have any 10 of the characteristics, you are eccentric, or in a more literal sense, abnormal.

Now, some of you might be strongly curious — if I'm eccentric, is it a bad thing? Should I go out and buy a new wardrobe or get rid of my He-Man tattoo? Am I doomed to be considered weird by my peers — maybe even more bizarre than the new "E.T." look-alike Herbie Husker mascot?

Survey says ... no! You might not realize it, but many celebrities we know and admire for their intelligence have since been classified as eccentric.

Men such as James Joyce, Alexander Graham Bell, Ben Franklin and Albert Einstein were eccentric, as well Emily Dickinson and Katharine Hepburn in the women category.

Don't believe me? Think I just have a mischievous sense of humor? Well, James Joyce carried around a pair of lady's bloomers with him. Alexander Bell covered his windows because he was afraid of the moon's rays. Franklin took air baths, meaning he stood naked in front of an open window, taking deep breaths. And Dickinson? She wore only white her entire life...

See, you can be eccentric and still become famous. This doesn't mean I want you to stand naked in front of an open window holding a white pair of lady's bloomers, taking deep breaths — but you can hit the top of the ladder even as an oddball.

For me, it brings back memories of an old friend from junior high. His name was Kurt Nolen.

Kurt must have known from his childhood that he was different. By the time he reached eighth grade, he was the only guy in our class who had enough facial hair to make up a beard.

He was happily obsessed with a hobby, which would be playing his electric guitar. Kurt also believed there was a band of witches in our class.

Before I knew him, I once got into a scuffle with Kurt. The dean of our school sat us down and acted as a mediator.

I don't remember what the heck we talked about, but I remember one thing Kurt said that stuck in my mind. He said: "People say I'm weird, and I say thank you! I'm proud to be!"

Kurt was a guy that wasn't afraid to be different. I learned to admire that in him. We became pretty good friends — although I never did buy that thing about there being witches in our class.

I don't really know what happened to Kurt. He was an only child, a sort of loner and moved around a lot because his father was in the military.

Maybe he's playing an electric guitar in some club somewhere. Maybe he's writing a documentary about witches among us. Or maybe he's still challenging those who challenge him.

All I know is that he's out there doing something different and abnormal. Something ... eccentric. And he wouldn't have it any other way.

Come to think of it, neither would I.

Kerber is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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