

# OPINION PACKAGES

## OUR VIEW

### Downhill slide

*As election time nears things are getting ugly*

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to politics ...

Nebraskans have been especially lucky this election cycle. We've been blessed with a kinder, gentler kind of politicking, not only from our presidential candidates but from our Senate candidates.

Until recently.

Oh sure, Ben Nelson, Chuck Hagel, Bill Clinton and Bob Dole have taken a swipe at each other from time to time. But it hasn't been the whole story — more the exception than the rule.

It was rather nice, this being a time when people are tired of politics — when partisanism is a naughty word on the campaign trail.

Clinton and Dole, in their first debate, openly said they liked each other. They disagreed, like most people do, but they didn't resort to name-calling and harsh criticism.

Nelson and Hagel both have said they would run a clean campaign and a campaign on the "issues."

So why is everyone being so negative?

Dole tossed his first debate style of respect and decency and went after Clinton on their first question of Wednesday night's debate.

Dole and Clinton even criticized each other on a question about the ills of partisanism and division. Ironic, isn't it?

The Nelson/Hagel race was fairly quiet up until a week ago, except for their last debate, which both candidates compared to a boxing match.

Now, Nelson is buying thousands of dollars of TV time to criticize Hagel. Hagel is saying the ads are lies and is launching his own counter ads.

Hagel went so far as to ask for Nelson to resign his position as governor Wednesday. Nelson refused.

As little as a week ago, both the Nelson and Hagel camps were saying they were prepared for their opponent to launch "attack ads" and "smear campaigns." Funny thing, considering neither side was provoked.

In just 19 days, voters go to the polls. Leads have to be guarded, deficits have to be made up.

Desperate times, desperate measures, as they say. But are these desperate times in either race?

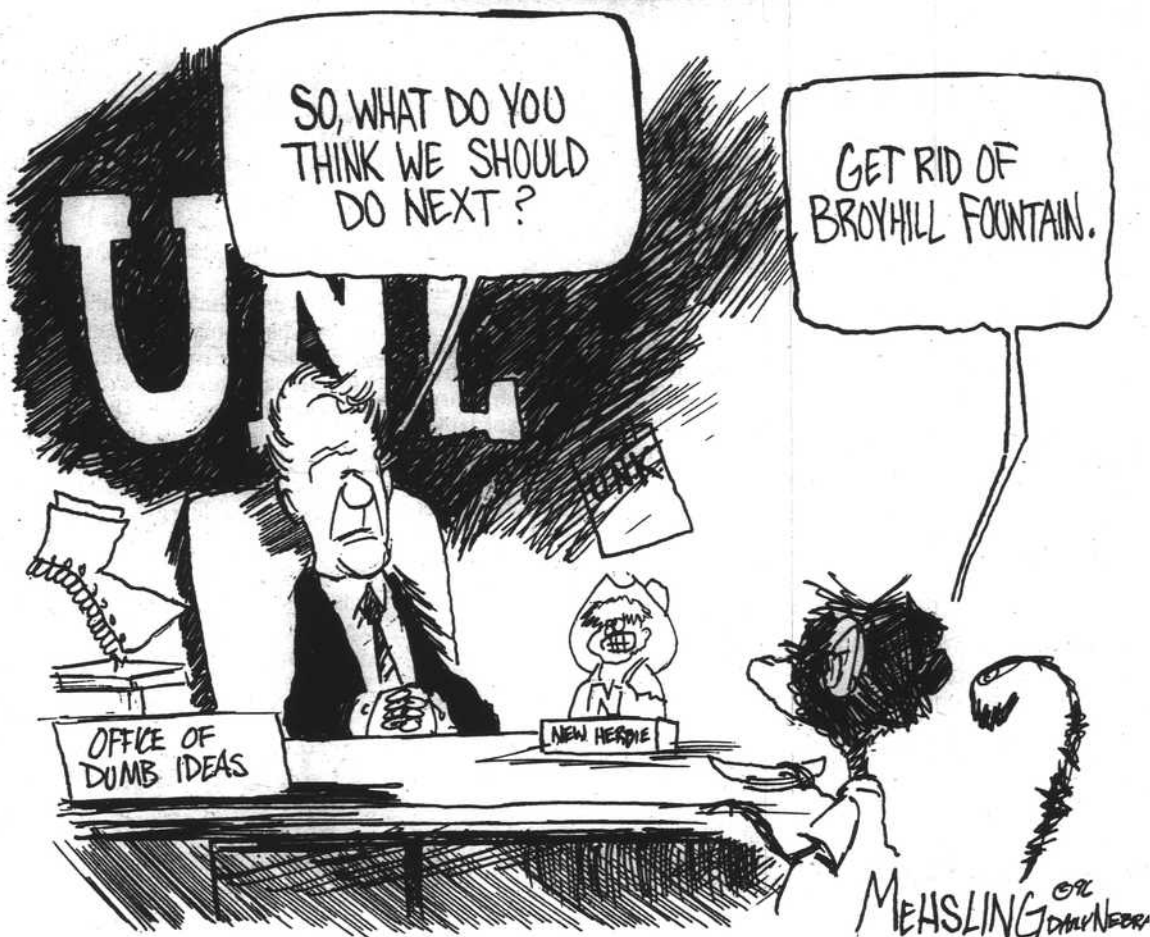
Dole had a large deficit to overcome — double digits in the home stretch is never an enviable position in politics.

But before the debate, Dole was slowly narrowing the gap in the polls. He had been selling respect and dignity and wisdom for months. It had appeal to many voters.

But we're now in the final days of the long campaign. Barring a miracle, the once semi-clean campaigns of 1996 are going to get dirty. And dirtier and dirtier.

And that's unfortunate.

## MEHSLING'S VIEW



## GUEST VIEW

Todd  
ANDERSON

### Living the American dream in France

Today when I was walking back to my residence hall from the bus stop, I paused at the curb to let a two-door Peugeot speed by at 70 kilometers per hour. (This is good advice while anywhere in Europe.)

Anyway, after the car passed, I noticed a white sticker with a black F in the rear window. This was really nothing new; almost every car in France has one, so that it can be identified while being driven in other countries.

But this sight, which has become an everyday thing for me, sparked a thought that has passed through my head several times in the two weeks since I moved to my new location: I'm in France! Actually, I'm living in France!

Don't misunderstand; I'm not writing this with a capricious attitude (pbbblt, I'm in France and you're in Lincoln). That's not what I'm saying.

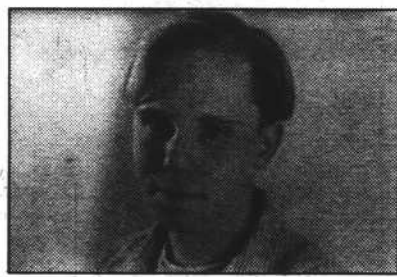
This amazing yet obvious revelation carries a tone of disbelief and wonder. Understand, this isn't supposed to happen to a mid-American poor student from Nebraska — or so I once thought.

Seven years ago, I learned my first French words. Then, Mrs. Simpson's eighth-grade tri-culture class opened up a portal leading to a completely different world: foreign language and culture.

In the ninth grade, I decided to study French, and throughout the year, I learned the basics. Then, in high school, my interest not only carried me through three more years of foreign language, but also drove me to devour any sort of French material I could obtain.

I remember spending several hours each week reading the high school's copies of "Paris Match" or "Le Figaro" or renting films such as "Belle du Jour." Sure, I didn't understand everything, but the point is, I learned. And more importantly, I was drawn to the culture.

All of this interest in studying, reading and film-viewing was leading up to one thing: I had to visit France.



"I didn't think it was feasible for a kid raised on food stamps and secondhand clothing to make a trip across the ocean."

At that time though, I thought this idea was completely impossible, even after my French teacher, Miss Brown, planned a summer trip through France.

I didn't think it was feasible for a kid raised on food stamps and secondhand clothing to make a trip across the ocean. But still, the idea grew on me and I couldn't give it up.

I knew neither I nor my parents could afford the trip, so I found a part-time job. I sold Toblerones. I sold Christmas wrapping paper. Anything to raise money, I was doing it.

Now, I don't want to turn this into some cheesy success story; but I did it. So now, how does that bring me to the University in Angers?

Before entering the University, I had a good idea I wanted to continue with foreign language. Knowing that it's almost impossible to speak a

foreign language fluently unless you are surrounded by it, I checked out UNL's study abroad programs during my first campus visit.

After that, I stayed in contact with International Affairs, and a year ago I decided to start the application process to study abroad in France. After a year of forms, applications, recommendations, tests and general busy work, I made it once again. But the whole time and even up until the last moment before arriving at the University in Angers, I doubted everything.

Though I knew living and studying in France was something I had been wanting to do for the past several years, the idea remained that it just wasn't supposed to be me.

Again, I thought, a 20-year-old student from Norfolk, Nebraska, doesn't do these sorts of things. But what I didn't understand then and what people were always telling me, I understand now. It is possible and, really, not that uncommon. Others from Norfolk and any other spot on the map in Nebraska have done it.

I'm learning what they've all known: It is possible if you want it to be, it just takes a little courage and hard work.

So now, I'm growing used to the idea that I live in Angers and that Paris is only two hours away. It still seems unreal that London is a six-hour train ride and that I'll be in Greece in December. But it's all coming true. It's what I wanted, and until now I didn't know how that really felt.

That's what I mean when I exclaim, "I'm in France!" A French car might not be speeding by when this feeling hits another student; it could be any place or any time. I only hope every student has the chance to experience it.

Anderson is a junior French and Spanish major and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter who is studying in France this semester.

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