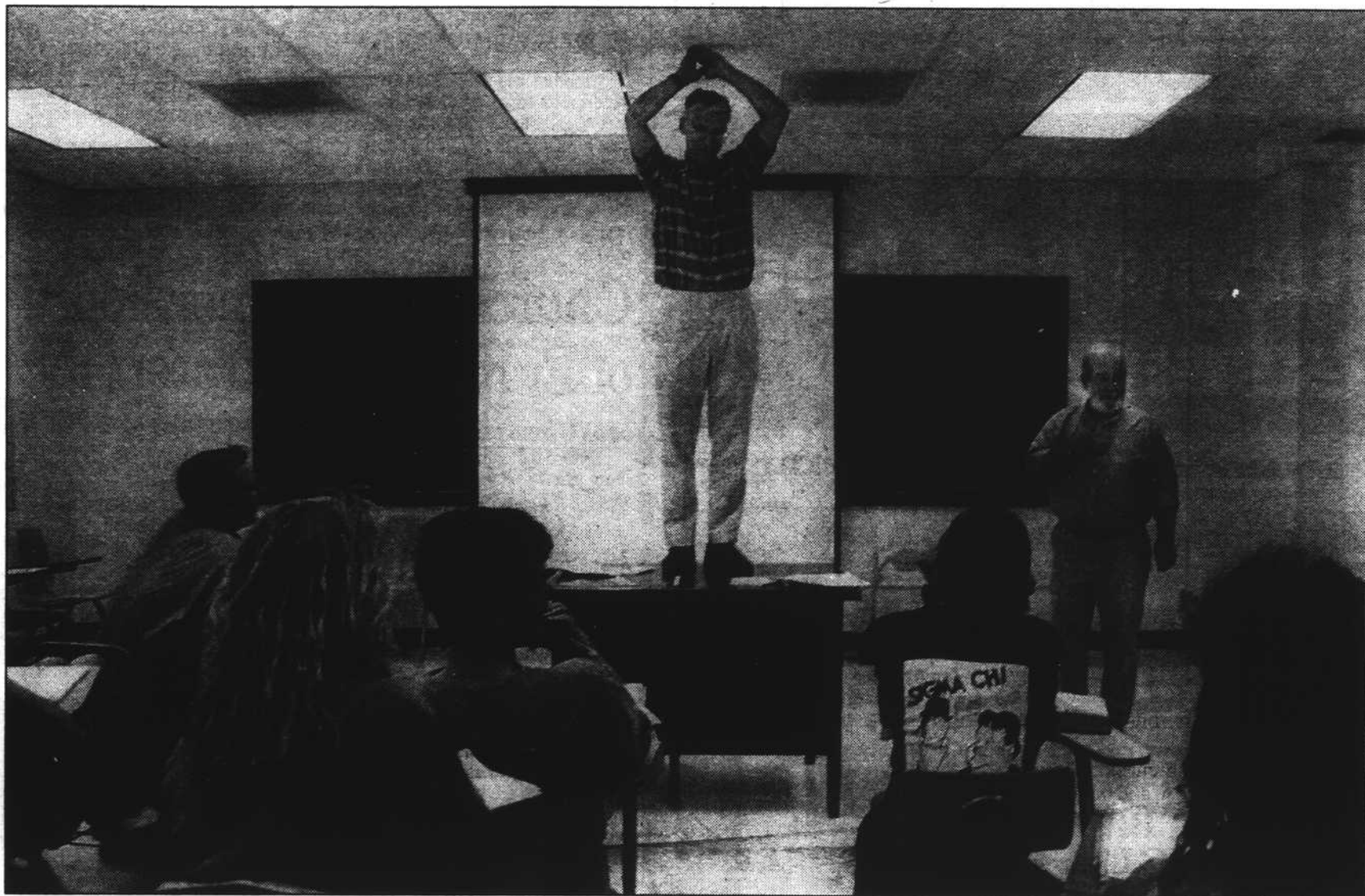


OUR VIEW

Heaven-bound



RICHARD STRECKFUSS, center, and Alfred Pagel perform their skit illustrating the "Paul Revere lead."

COURTESY OF COLLEGE OF JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Streckfuss stood for excellence

I have something to tell you. A very important man died of cancer Thursday morning. A man named Richard Streckfuss. A journalism professor who would climb up on a desk, hold his hands above his head and wink at any student who would begin a column the way I just did.



He would signal to his friend and colleague of almost 15 years, Alfred "Bud" Pagel, and the two would immediately set the scene for their most popular classroom technique — their enactment of the "Paul Revere" lead. They would ask students to suspend their disbelief just long enough to be convinced that Streckfuss was a church steeple, and Pagel, Paul Revere. With a signal from the steeple (and a wink of Streckfuss' eye), Pagel would gallop onto the scene and announce, in a loud, clear voice: "I have something to tell you!" And then he would gallop away. Their point being, had Paul Revere failed to tell the news up front — if he had failed to warn his fellow Americans that the British were coming — ours would be a very different world. Richard Streckfuss didn't just have something to tell, he had something to teach. And teach he did. He entered students' lives and made a difference. He was a friend, a confidant and a mentor to me and innumerable others who have gone through the College of Journalism and Mass Communications. And he has been distant but

"I think there was something special about him that made those who knew him want to be better."

ALFRED PAGEL
Associate professor of journalism

driving force behind the Daily Nebraskan. Much like Paul Revere, his legend will live on. It will live on in the successes of his students and the numbers of lives they touch. "He was one of those people ... a friend you wanted to keep in contact with beyond the time you were in school," said Andy Raun, a reporter for the Hastings Tribune and a 1993 graduate of the College of Journalism. "But I guess that wasn't in the cards. I just feel blessed that my path crossed his." Streckfuss is remembered as a man of great commitment and compassion — a man of high standards and understanding, and a source of joy. "If you are going to talk about Dick Streckfuss, you have to talk about how funny he was ... or maybe 'incorrigible' is a better word," Bud Pagel said of the man with whom he team-taught advanced reporting for 12 years. "He made me laugh," Pagel said. "He made me laugh, and he made me think ... and he kept me honest — brutally so." Pagel describes Streckfuss as a "tough marshmallow." His sweet demeanor in no way compromised his solid standards. He did everything he could for his

students. In return, he asked only that they work hard and accept nothing but excellence from themselves. "I think there was something special about him that made those who knew him want to be better ... in a lot of ways. Better journalists. Better people," Pagel said. "And I think as a result of that, there's a little corner of the world that's a bit better." Streckfuss' impact reached beyond the confines of the journalism college. He was recognized university-wide as an outstanding adviser — one of the best, according to Donald Gregory, the director of the Division of General Studies. Gregory said Streckfuss was "deeply involved" in the successes of his students. "He just really cared about students," Gregory said. "He was devoted to them outside the classroom as well as inside the classroom. And he saw to it that they got what they needed." Streckfuss was one of the only professors to win Parents Association Recognition Awards every year they were presented. The awards are voted on by parents and students and recognize professors who have been especially influential. "I don't think that the students

ever had a better friend," Pagel said. "One of his special touches, I think, was that he had great empathy with the students struggling to learn what he was teaching. And that's a bit unusual." Streckfuss had an open-door policy in his office — as do his colleagues in the news-editorial department. But Streckfuss was especially sensitive to the needs of his students. He was never too busy to stop and listen. He was never too busy to help a student solve a problem — no matter how small. He never belittled students — in fact, he had a way of challenging them and drawing out the greatness he saw in them. He was inspiring. He was what a university professor is supposed to be. And he has left a lasting impression on all those who knew him. Debi Ward, journalism instructor at Omaha Burke High School and a 1983 graduate of the College of Journalism, said, "One thing he taught me to do was teach the important skills, but to still meet people's needs. He had his standards, but he was always a person who made time for the people in his life." He made time, and he made a difference. Pagel said he was told by one graduate, "I never sit down to write anything that Paul Revere doesn't flash in front of my eyes." Richard Streckfuss stood up for students and for what he believed. "He's gone, and I'm retiring," Pagel said. "So maybe Paul Revere will go away, too." But the memories and the message will last. Anne Hjersman is a senior news-editorial and English major and opinion editor for the Daily Nebraskan.