

NU cheerleader's condition, spirits improving

By **MATTHEW WAITE**
Senior Reporter

Tracy Jensen had a good holiday vacation. On Christmas Day, she moved her hand. On New Year's Day, she moved her arm. Her mother, Lori Jensen, said that's all the holiday cheer she needed. "Everything that she gets back is just a bonus to us," she said by telephone from the family's home in Lyons. "She very easily could have gotten nothing." Tracy Jensen is recovering at Craig Hospital in Englewood, Colo., from injuries she sustained in an accident during cheerleading practice Dec. 4.

Jensen, a 20-year-old University of Nebraska-Lincoln junior, fell while trying a tumbling maneuver and injured her neck. After her condition improved from critical to serious, she was taken from Lincoln General Hospital Dec. 19 and moved to Craig Hospital, which is known for its rehabilitation unit. Paralyzed from the neck down following the accident, Jensen has slowly gained movement back in her arms and legs. At Craig, Tracy has improved steadily, her mother said. She now works with weights on her legs and arms. The respirator that helps her breathe can be taken off for up to 30 minutes, and Lori Jensen said doctors were optimistic the respirator would be gone in a couple months.

And Tracy's attitude, Lori Jensen said, is sky-high. "It's hard to be down when she is laying there smiling at you," she said. The young cheerleader's smiles are a far cry from her practice at Mabel Lee Hall on Dec. 4. She was attempting a round-off to a back hand-spring to a single back-tuck when she fell. Jonathan Dahl, another Yell Squad member, was the first to be at Tracy's side and noticed she was not moving, or breathing. Dahl, a trained lifeguard, breathed for Tracy Jensen while teammates called paramedics. "Tracy wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the people on the Yell Squad," Lori Jensen said, listing off teammates after teammate who helped her daughter. "They are all heroes in our house.

I just want to bow when I see them. "Thank you just seems so inadequate." Renee Swartz, the UNL Spirit Squad director, said a few members of the squad have been out to see Jensen. Swartz said teammates were concentrating on Jensen's recovery, and were not talking of an eventual return to her third year on the squad. "It's probably the farthest thing from her mind, but she said she missed it terribly," Swartz said. Lori Jensen said the goal now is for Tracy to walk. "She really wants to be able to walk back into the ICU at Lincoln General to say hi to everybody," she said.

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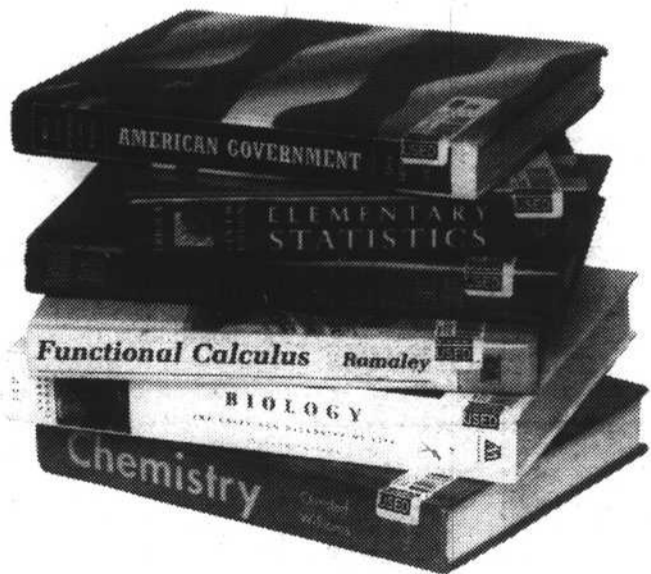
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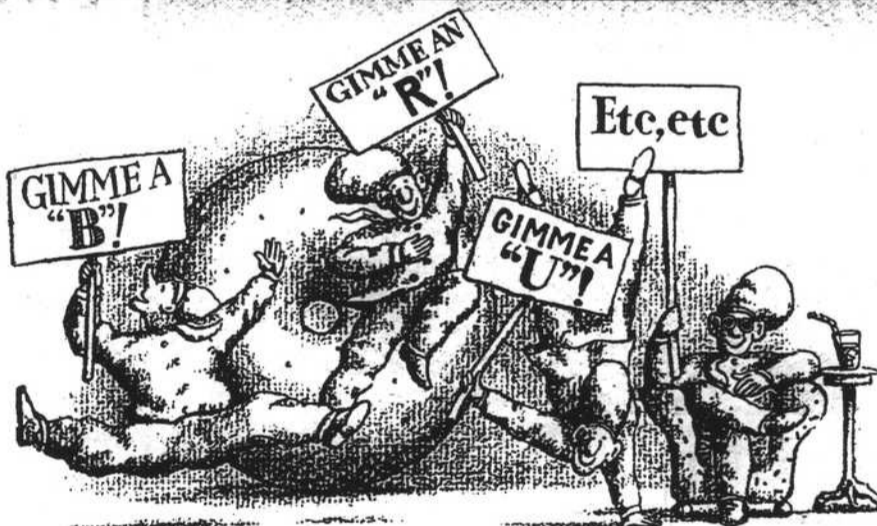


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