

# OPINION PAGES

## Our VIEW

### Dedication

*Sen. Warner's shoes will be hard to fill*

Irreplaceable.

It's the one word that starkly describes the loss of Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly, who died this week of cancer.

Warner's contributions as the most senior member of the Legislature were countless.

During his 35 years in the Legislature, he served at one time as speaker of the Legislature and chairman of several committees.

He was instrumental in getting state aid for schools and helped cut state spending during severe tax crunches. This year, people across the state recognized time and again how Warner wrangled agreement among senators in the Revenue Committee on details of the upcoming tax relief bill package.

One big impact Warner had on the NU system was helping transform Kearney State into the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

He was known as a champion of peoples' causes and a fiscal conservative firm in his belief that the state could not outspend its resources.

Possibly even more important than his contributions on individual issues was his underlying wisdom. Legislators knew him as the dean of the body. He was known for bridging the gap in disputes and for coming up with last-minute solutions to statewide problems.

When he spoke, people knew to listen. Ears perked up throughout the chamber for a valuable piece of wisdom, explanation or suggestion.

Gov. Ben Nelson, who generally supports term limits, said Warner was an exception, calling him the "best argument against term limits I have ever known." His wisdom, stature and leadership in the Legislature, Nelson said, were qualities that would make him "irreplaceable."

During this session, Warner kept coming to the Capitol even though the cancer spreading to his bones was making him weak — he zoomed around to committee hearings in a motorized cart, sometimes joking about his "new wheels" as he presented one of his bills. Nelson said the effort was one he couldn't imagine anyone else making.

Let's hope someone else is willing to put forth the effort Jerome Warner did.

It may be impossible to replace 35 years of service to the people of Nebraska, but the zeal, dedication and fairness that marked Warner's career are certainly strong ideals to aim for.

## Mehsling's VIEW



## Guest VIEW

### The Right Stuff

*Conservatives' nostalgia is hypocritical facade*

AUSTIN, Texas (U-WIRE) — Alongside our exhilaration about many of society's recent accomplishments, such as the Internet, gene-engineered miracle cures, expansion of human rights and anti-lock brakes, lies a parallel nostalgia for the way the world used to be.

Audiophiles hoard old LPs. People forgo rollerballs to buy obsolescent fountain pens. Old folks mutter about how safe their neighborhoods once were.

While much of this longing for the past is harmless, the political uses of nostalgia are insidious in their application by myopic conservatives.

Describing the politics of nostalgia in America is like recounting the social controversies of recent decades.

Conservatives who detest "social fragmentation" conjure up a cozier, more righteous past as they decry teen pregnancies or the unraveling of the urban fabric.

Family-values advocates emphasize the alleged domestic harmony of their own childhoods (much of which is pure fantasy) when critiquing the liberated state of middle-class modern women, who, traditionalists reason, selfishly favor careers over the traditional maternal role.

Paradoxically, a number of these very family-values-activist mothers abandon their own children to carry on their self-empowering national crusades.

Religion is, of course, the ultimate bastion of citing traditional authority. It is not surprising, then,

that conservatives call upon the religious right's condemnation of abortion, contraceptives and divorce for moral justification in their arguments.

Conservatives are fond of comparing yesterday's family piety with today's godlessness. But these activists' manipulation of the past is remarkable both for its widespread appeal and lack of self-consciousness.

The details of tradition are often invented wholesale for political purposes. For example, when New York Gov. George Pataki banned the state flag of Georgia from Albany, Georgians were outraged that their sentimental, Civil-War-era flag (a near-copy of the Confederate banner) had been so disgraced.

Few Georgians realized, however, that their state leaders generated this version of the Stars and Bars during the civil rights unrest of the '60s as a show of racist defiance against federal desegregation policy.

Similarly, many Southerners naively believe the Civil War had nothing to do with slavery and was only about states' rights. The fact that the primary right these states fought for was the right to subjugate black slaves is conveniently de-emphasized in their spurious high school textbooks.

Even in a less political sense, the traditional lifestyle longed for by nostalgic types is rarely what life used to be like in the past. Wistful recall is always selective; nostalgia is often less about the past than the present.

Reminiscence is not unhealthy.

On the contrary, it is vital to realize that candlelight can be romantic, that automobile design used to be an art form, that a handwritten letter is a welcome change from the e-mail queue.

Appreciation of what used to be serves as an important critique of what our technologically oriented economy engenders.

Awareness of history is particularly crucial in the seemingly ahistorical maelstrom of TV-image consumption and modern information overload.

The political uses of nostalgia, on the other hand, are perversions of the past for current advantage, and must be recognized as such.

— Peter Kirby  
The Daily Texan



AARON STECKELBERG/DN

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