



**DANIEL MUNKSGAARD** is a sophomore English and religious studies major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

"Why not bomb the hell out of them and beat them to it?"

That's what a friend of mine said about the whole Middle East Situation. I'm using Situation with a capital "S" to show this means more than the Iraq Thing, although that one was probably hot on his mind.

He was kidding, of course, although the rest of us thought he crossed the line.

Just a tad.

And just a tad is all it would take for many U.S. citizens to agree with him. Who isn't tired of Saddam Hussein acting like an idiot? Who isn't sick of valuable info-tainment space being taken up by the latest Israeli/Palestinian gunman when we could be reading about cloned calves and Ernie Chambers? In short, it's old news. Worse yet, it's old news we never really understood in the first place.

Sure, madman dictator invades a neighboring country and oppresses his people - that we can handle. So we go over there and gut his forces with our superior military; hey, good clean fun. But what is up with these people? Suicide bombings, fighting over desert, thumbing their noses at us, the United Nations and each other any chance they get. Can't they behave like rational, media-fearing westerners?

Ah, there's the rub. We just don't understand them. We see Middle Easterners, Muslims in particular, as savage, backward and bloodthirsty. When someone says "Muslim," (putting aside the fact that most Muslims don't even live in the Middle East) there's usually one image on our minds: that of the Mad Arab, wielding a huge, curved sword and slaughtering everyone in his path, keeping harems and doling out oil for insane prices, all in the name of Allah. It's an image that goes all the way back to when the Muslims first surprised the hell out of the Byzantines, and was reinforced when Europe in turn sur-

prised the hell out of them, first with the Crusades, then with colonization.

The problem is we're completely off in this assessment. The religion of Islam is, in principle, every bit as peaceful as Christianity or Judaism (and we've all seen how peaceful those two faiths can be). In some ways, it's a great deal more tolerant.

From the very start of the great Islamic empires, Christians and Jews were allowed complete religious freedom and protection under the law in exchange for a poll tax. They were much more lenient than the Christian empires, which more than mishandled their Jewish populations and couldn't even fathom dealing with resident Muslims. Even today, Christian Serbs are slaughtering Bosnian Muslims by the thousands, while Christians within most Islamic states are permitted at least grudging respect.

And it's not as if the western world has been a role model in the peaceful coexistence department. It was only 50 years ago we were carving each other up in the battlefields of Europe, and only 10 years ago we were ready to bomb the bejeezus out of the Red Menace in the name of democracy. The Middle East hardly has exclusive rights to petty wars and senseless bickering.

It's not that difficult to understand. What we are looking at is a group of nations that feel as strongly about their individual sovereignty as we do. But since none of them wield a stick that's much bigger than their neighbors', there's no Big Boy to quiet things down when they step on each other's toes.

We're looking at a group of nations that until mere decades ago were being openly exploited by countless western nations. We even made it a point to compete with each other to see who could exploit more of them. For quite awhile the head of Iran was little more than an American puppet. Understandably, many Iranians weren't very happy about this. So when Khomeini took over, they were glad to finally have one of their own in charge, even if he tended to go overboard once in

# Us and them

## Understanding is key to Middle East conflict

awhile. We often view ourselves as decadent, materialistic and amoral. How do you think they see us?

I'm not minimizing the prob-

lems in the Middle East by any means. I get just as frustrated, depressed and apathetic as anyone else when yet another snag in peace talks comes on the news, or Saddam starts getting snotty again.

But maybe if we

tried to start understanding the reasons for all this conflict and respect the sovereignty and dignity of Middle Easterners, we could handle this more intelligently than just rattling our sabers every year and grumbling about how much easier things would be without them.



AMY MARTIN/DN



**MARK ZMARZLY** is a senior English and speech communication major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Who out there is having a bad day?

What if I gave you 20 bucks? Would that help?

Tell you what I'm going to do; The first 10 responses to this column from people describing how bad their day was, will receive 20 bucks, compliments of yours truly. As I await the flood of letters, I'm going to go through my mail.

Unpaid University of Nebraska-Lincoln parking ticket: 25 bucks. Overdue Love Library fines: 20 bucks. Special fees on English classes: 40 bucks. University Health Center bill: 75 bucks. Career Services: 25 bucks. Application for graduation: 30 bucks.

Well, this sure sucks.

Please disregard the first paragraph of this column because I'm now looking for the nearest plasma

clinic.

Let me understand this - in addition to the \$1,600-plus a student drops on tuition and books per semester, the university wants an additional \$200? If you drop \$1,800 on something, don't you want the best value for your money?

Let's break down all of the perks and high-performance options you get for your money:

You get parking 358 days a year. Plan on \$5 and an extra mile hike on game days.

You get to spend extra money after four or five years of education to actually accomplish what you were there for (a degree), graduate and find a job.

You get the assistance of student advisers who assure you that Nutrition 101 will count as a biological science credit.

You get mandatory attendance policies on classes that you pay to attend.

You get to attend Husker games with church service-like excitement or risk getting thrown out of the stadium.

You get to not drink on campus

property, even if you live there and are 21 or older.

Finally, you get an education that, in my opinion, ranks up there with home schooling.

This seems like a poor exchange for your education dollar. You can correct some of these injustices with a little advice.

Never talk to a student adviser. Demand to see the head adviser, if he or she isn't out writing a book for next semester.

Go on to grad school, someplace where the classes are taught by the professor, not the TA.

You can bypass the graduation and Career Services fees by transferring, dropping out or simply never graduating.

As for parking, cheering at football games and drinking, all you have to do is give the university more money. Twenty years and a couple thousand dollars' worth of donations, and you can partake in these indulgences that you are currently denied. You will even have the pleasure of being one of the "distinguished alumni."

Let me attempt to explain the uni-

versity's apparent thinking on this issue. I imagine the conversation went something like this:

"Our distinguished alumni are being inconvenienced with a \$5 parking charge."

"Well that seems unfair. Is there anyway to correct this blatant injustice?"

"I was thinking that we could give away some of the student parking areas to the alumni. This would fix the problem, and it would be fun for the parking attendants to belittle the students who foolishly thought they had a right to park there."

"That sounds great. We should also let them park in the faculty lot by Memorial Stadium. This way, their children could play catch in the grassy area while mommy and daddy get trashed on campus."

"OK, send out a flyer, but don't let the students know what's going on."

"My lord, we're brilliant!"

Obviously no business or organization is without its flaws. All students expect a little inconvenience on a campus of more than 20,000 students, but this is ridiculous. It seems

that a little consideration should be thrown the student body's way. I do believe the students who are being nickel and dimed to death now are the same people who will be asked to donate money and time in the future. Would these same people deny their children care and consideration but then expect their children to care for them 40 years down the road?

I have no problem donating my time or money to an institution or organization that deserves it. All students want to give back a little something to the people who made their college experience unique and fun.

Let's set up a donation fund for the downtown bars, Amigo's at 12th & Q, La Bamba's or even a local charity organization. Set up a scholarship in your name if it pleases you. Show the university you care about education but not for the torment or pains that you endured while here.

And as for this future alumnus, I will politely ask for my name to be removed from any future donation list for the simple fact that I received from this university only what I could steal while the administration wasn't looking.

# Show me the money!

## Graduates should get as good as they give