

Snow time for learning

Students shouldn't have to risk life, limb to attend class



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The department of public works told the people of Lincoln to stay at home on Sunday.

Police, fire, and paramedic vehicles experienced difficulties getting around and told people in need to be patient.

Lincoln Public Schools Superintendent Phil Schoo told parents to keep their children at home and out of danger.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln told its students and employees to, in effect, "Get your ass to class."

In the name of higher education, UNL had classes on Monday morning despite possible hazards to its students and faculty.

One-word question: WHY? One day could be very important in a class. Monday could have been your final review before the midterm. It could have been a recitation day. It even could have been a test day.

But most likely, it could have been a postponed day.

Let me take you through the events of my Monday that have led up to this article/bitchfest.

7:00 a.m. - I awake and turn on the radio. I pray to hear that class has been canceled.

7:04 a.m. - Radio guy announces that hell is still hot, i.e., UNL will have class.

7:10 a.m. - Watch Ford Bronco get stuck in snow bank on my street. Contemplate the reality of getting my Honda out of its snow fort. Look for bus pass.

7:45 a.m. - Head out front door and begin six-block walk to bus stop.

7:47 a.m. - Car almost runs me down as I walk down the street. Slip on ice.

7:48 a.m. - Decide to run with scissors toward the bus stop to add to the danger of the situation.

7:59 a.m. - Bus approaches, slides past, hits snow bank. I board.

8:00 a.m. - No longer wonder how the Hell's Angels get around in

the winter. Sit down next to Wolf, Blade, Hacksaw, Jug Head, Fang and Trevor.

8:02 a.m. - Learn the easiest way to kill someone in a knife fight.

8:05 a.m. - See the easiest way to kill someone in a knife fight demonstrated.

8:30 a.m. - I arrive at class and am greeted by nine of my fellow students. Nine students out of 25.

I'll spare you readers the minute-by-minute account of the rest of my day. My two other classes both had 11 students in attendance. Both of those classes usually have around 24.

It didn't shock me to see such a horrible attendance in class; I expected it. My morning obviously wasn't quite as dramatic as I made it seem, but I went through quite an ordeal to get to my classes, classes that could have and should have been canceled.

The argument against canceling class is that the academic calendar is set, and a day off translates into a day without learning. A day off per semester apparently has drastic consequences that will be felt for the rest of the semester.

I have four English classes this semester: British Lit, Women's Lit, Medieval Lit and Shakespeare II. I would feel really bad if I missed a

day of talking about Dickens or Chaucer but I'd manage to deal with it. English classes can manage a day off.

Jon's Notes makes money off of typing up lecture notes. Your lecture professor could just as easily make copies of his notes and pass them out on Wednesday. Lecture classes can manage a day off.

My sister teaches Math 106 and will hate me for saying this, but here it goes. A day off math is like a trip to Disney World. Granted, math students would be behind and probably wouldn't be able to make up that class, but they'd be smiling for weeks.

Business, art, psychology, sociology, engineering and all other areas of study can make up a day off. We lost two days last semester because of snow, and I don't think any students in any class on campus felt shortchanged. Teachers have the challenge of making up for that day but they manage to do it. At least when classes are canceled, nobody misses any important information.

The decision to have class on Monday left some students at a disadvantage. This disadvantage comes at the hands of the weather. I mentioned earlier the lack of students in my classes and, talking to my fellow

students, it seems that most students were missing a majority of their classes. Those students who couldn't get to class or who had the common sense to stay at home and not risk injury have now missed out on a day of learning.

You could argue that a day off from class denies students the education they pay for. When students send in their tuition they expect a certain amount of information to be encountered. It could be seen as admirable that the university didn't want to deprive us of what we paid for.

If you missed class you could argue that the university tried to force you to endanger your health to get the education that you paid for. Why should you have to make up work because you live out of town or off campus? You shouldn't.

Unless we have another freakish snow storm this semester, KNOCK ON WOOD, I personally won't be affected by what this university chooses to do in the future with snow emergencies.

But I would simply like to make the university officials see that having class on a day like Monday only denies learning to many of the university's students.

It's a tall world

Short people face discrimination in love, jobs, shopping



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I sometimes think I'd like to be tall. Really tall.

I want to know what it feels like to stand 6 feet, 2 inches, powerful and proud, lording over everyone else, and looking down on the rest of the world. I want to know what it feels like to physically dominate people.

I get sick of being short. I don't even think I'm that short. Five feet, 5½ inches isn't all that short, is it? I wouldn't even care about my height at all, except that I live in a world of tall people.

Everything's built for them. Most tables and counters are too high for me. Not a lot - just enough to be perpetually inconvenient. I can never reach the things I want on the top shelves. I often have to beg some tall person to reach stuff for me.

Oh, the indignity of it. There are rides in amusement parks I will never be allowed to ride on because of the height restrictions.

One of the worst inconveniences about being short is the urinals that were presumably installed by some very tall plumber, halfway up the wall. Ever had to stand on tiptoe to relieve yourself? Believe me, it's awkward to say the least.

There is such a thing as size-ism in this country. Short people are discriminated against in countless subtle ways. According to the ELEVATORS® brand shoe company, there are measurable social and business disadvantages to being short.

Studies have shown that job recruiters, choosing between men of comparable backgrounds and skills, select the taller man 72 percent of the time. They've determined that every extra inch of height brings a person an additional \$600 per year in salary.

According to these same studies, women find taller men "significantly more

attractive." The ELEVATORS® brand shoe company points out that 18 of the last 22 U.S. presidential elections have been won by the taller candidate. The ELEVATORS® brand shoe company certainly wouldn't deceive us on these points.

Facts and figures aside, the discrimination against short people is apparent. Ever notice that Fortune 500 executives and CEOs are always really tall men? There's a glass ceiling for height as well as gender - sort of like being picked last for a team in gym class. The discrimination never ends.

Shopping for clothes is when the disadvantages of being small become most apparent. If you're short, it's really hard to find clothes that even fit. And it's getting harder, too.

For some reason, fewer and fewer stores even carry items in small sizes anymore. The scale starts at medium and goes up from there. When I've asked store managers why they don't stock small sizes, they've told me that a lot of the manufacturers don't even make the small stuff anymore, so I'm often stuck with medium.

But there's a trend for clothes to be baggier now, so the size mediums that were passable before are now just ridiculously oversized. I swear I've purchased the very last pair of 28/30 jeans left in this city, if not the whole world.

Tall men and fat men have special stores just for them. Smaller women have the petite sections. What the hell am I supposed to do? Start shopping in the children's section? If current trends continue, I may soon be reduced to wearing Osh Kosh B'Gosh and Garanimals. At least coordinating colors would be easy.

Tall people are so condescending - always looking down on the rest of us. They're snide. The world is built for them, and they know it. They're more sought after. They're naturally better at sports. They're likely to get the good jobs. They have all the advantages.

Tall people are pushy, too. I get shoved to the pack of crowded elevators and generally get pushed and crowded on the dance floor. Tall people frequently block my view at movies, and the bigger guys are always blocking my mirror space at the gym.

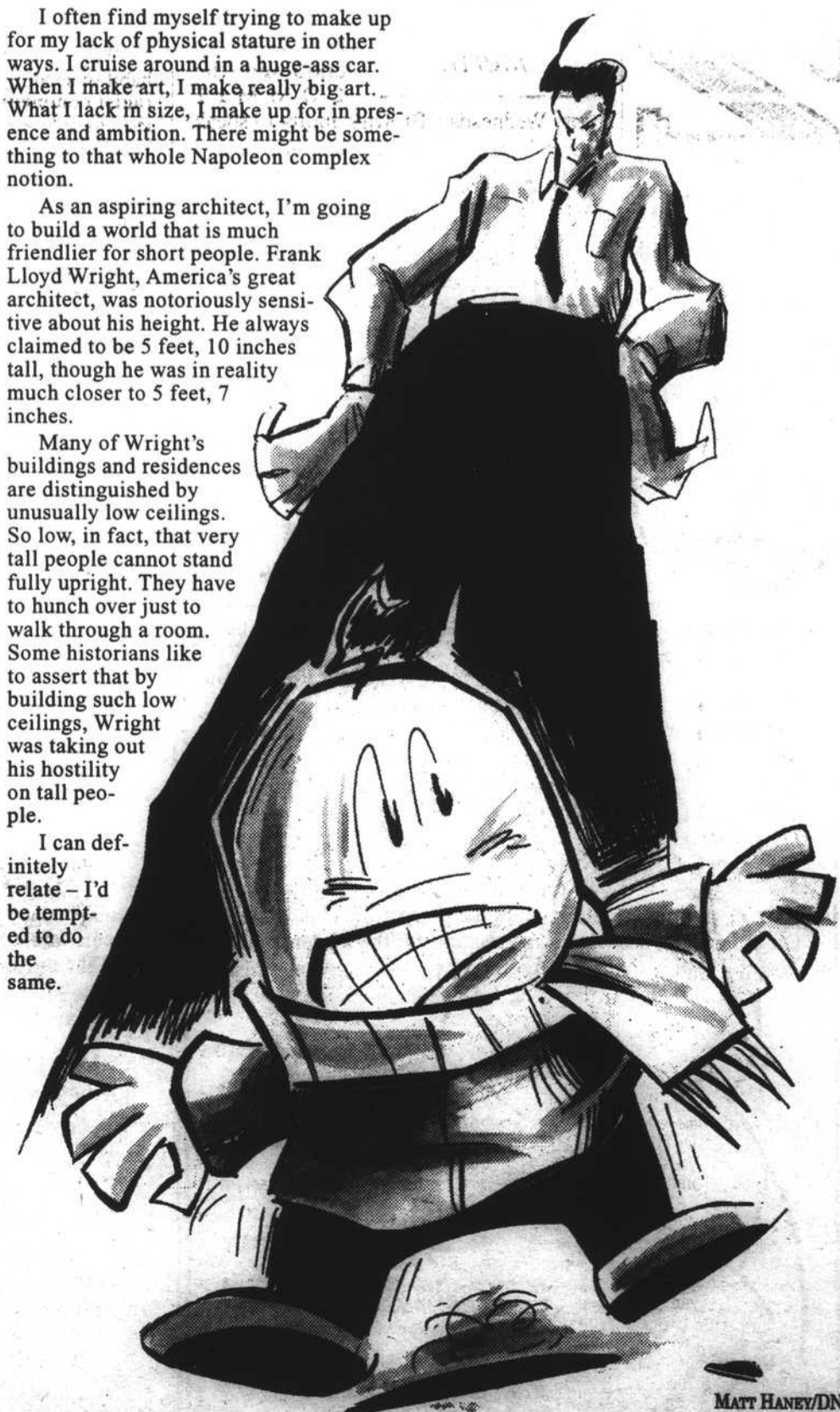
Being small wouldn't be at all bad if it weren't for all the bias toward height. Being smaller even can have its advantages. Furniture is really roomy, for one thing. And ... well, I guess that's about the only real advantage.

I often find myself trying to make up for my lack of physical stature in other ways. I cruise around in a huge-ass car. When I make art, I make really big art. What I lack in size, I make up for in presence and ambition. There might be something to that whole Napoleon complex notion.

As an aspiring architect, I'm going to build a world that is much friendlier for short people. Frank Lloyd Wright, America's great architect, was notoriously sensitive about his height. He always claimed to be 5 feet, 10 inches tall, though he was in reality much closer to 5 feet, 7 inches.

Many of Wright's buildings and residences are distinguished by unusually low ceilings. So low, in fact, that very tall people cannot stand fully upright. They have to hunch over just to walk through a room. Some historians like to assert that by building such low ceilings, Wright was taking out his hostility on tall people.

I can definitely relate - I'd be tempted to do the same.



MATT HANEY/DN