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Poor Ken Hambleton.

I'm sure the letter of apology from the White House is on its way for making him and his photographer wait a few extra minutes before getting in to see the president.

I was there too, and for a young, college journalist, the waiting was half the fun.

In his Saturday column, the Lincoln Journal Star sportswriter told of the adventures he, his photographer, myself and two Daily Nebraskan colleagues had in getting access to the White House for the national championship ceremony with the president.

Mr. Hambleton seemed a little ticked off that (among other things) we had to wait a few extra minutes while the Secret Service checked our credentials — something we thought had already been taken care of.

But there was a little mix-up so we had to wait.

A procedure a 50-something sportswriter would find annoying, but a 25-year-old newswriter found

Not jaded yet

Job perks still excite reporter after White House trip

pretty darn cool.

Cool because the White House Secret Service was checking my personal history. (Don't worry Mom, they let me in.)

Cool because I was a few short minutes from going to places in the White House that you just can't go on the self-guided tour.

Cool because this was, for me, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

But this was old hat for Mr. Hambleton. This was, after all, his second time covering this sort of thing.

Heck, he seemed like part of the White House press corps the way he told that Secret Service agent how he knew which entrance we were supposed to go in and all. Pretty impressive, Ken.

The tight quarters that is the White House press briefing room also wasn't very impressive to Mr. Hambleton.

The narrow room was tight and uncomfortable for a 50-something sportswriter used to the more roomy confines of football press boxes and basketball press rooms.

But it was absolutely amazing to a 25-year-old newswriter.

Amazing because while I was sitting in the seat reserved for the Boston Globe's White House

reporter, I thought about which class I would normally be sitting in.

Amazing because I knew there were a whole bunch of people back in Lincoln who would love to be in the position I was in.

Amazing because I realized again that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

But to Mr. Hambleton, the scene was similar to horse stables, pits at Eagle Raceway and a teen-ager's bedroom.

A more accurate and worthy description is a combination television production room and newspaper newsroom filled with producers, reporters and camera operators waiting for news to break.

But I suppose for Ken, you see one White House press room, you've seen them all.

After a few minutes of contemplating (and turning down) Daily Nebraskan photographer Matt Miller's idea of going up the podium to have my picture taken, we were allowed to go to the East Room where we would meet back up with the players, coaches and president.

Right about then the heart started pumping a little quicker and the feeling of being in a place you will most likely never, ever be in again became even stronger.

It did the feeling that in a few short minutes, I would be able to see the president of the United States of America.

A feeling, I learned, that was much different than the feeling of seeing your favorite athlete or band or movie star in person. And I knew all along that I wouldn't get that close to the president, but that didn't really matter. I got close enough.

(Not as close as DN senior reporter Brian Carlson, who shook Clinton's hand and talked to him Tuesday.)

Star struck, Ted?

You bet I was, and I am not ashamed to admit it. Seeing the president was a dream come true.

But, apparently that isn't such a big deal to a grizzled, old Lincoln, Nebraska, sportswriter.

He complained, "I'm pretty sure I heard him," and "I think Clinton's hair is kind of gray."

Then he compared the whole thing to inviting a group of friends over and having somebody walk across the other end of the room with a Clinton mask on.

Sure, Ken.

I'm not sure where he was standing when he mentioned that the press was kept behind a rope 4 inches from the back of the room, but from where

I stood, it was more comparable to standing in line for a movie and three people up is the most powerful man in the world.

More than a couple of times during our time in the East Room, Daily Nebraskan senior sports reporter Shannon Hefflefinger looked back at me to say exactly what I was thinking: "This is so cool."

But I suppose it's understandable for an old sportswriter like Mr. Hambleton, who is used to having unlimited access to everything, having a full cold-cut tray waiting for him at every sporting event and being a big shot in the world of Nebraska sports reporting, seeing the president for the second time isn't really that neat.

Yes, it poured all day (until we set foot into the White House) which put a small damper on the day, but for a couple of young reporters from the Daily Nebraskan getting the chance to get into the White House and see the president was worth every second the Secret Service had us wait.

The headline for Hambleton's column said "Trip to Washington a memorable one."

Too bad for him — the grizzled, old reporter — it was memorable for all the wrong reasons.



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DANGER: Oranges can cause cancer. No, dear reader, it's not a misprint.

Thanks to a study from the University of Leicester in England, Vitamin C has been declared a potentially dangerous substance.

The study found that ingesting typical supplementary doses of Vitamin C (about 500 milligrams) daily can cause genetic damage, which could lead to cancer and rheumatoid arthritis.

Well, thank you very much, doctors. Is there nothing left that won't be declared potentially harmful?

I mean, there I was sitting in front of the tube each morning chomping on my orange slices before swallowing my daily vitamins, blissfully unaware of the serious health risk I was subjecting my body to.

Isn't it enough that they ruined eggs and butter? Why did they have to pick on defenseless oranges?

But perhaps it's all for the better. Perhaps it's even time for Congress to step in.

Or maybe we should just sic the Food and Drug Administration on those evil orange growers and the juice and vitamin manufacturers for leaving us twisting in the wind with this destructive substance.

Hey, if it was good enough for the tobacco industry, why shouldn't it be good enough for all the distributors of disease-causing products?

After all, we must work together to save our children from making the same mistakes we did!

And if we make it too hard and too expensive for adults to get a hold of things that are bad for them, oh well. In the end, they'll be better off too.

And while we're at it, let's hit the alcohol industry. How many deaths are caused each year by that substance?

How many of our innocent young-

sters imbibe that product? What about lawsuits against the industry for alcohol-related crimes and health problems?

What about McDonald's, Burger King and all those other uncaring distributors of high-cholesterol foods? They don't even require an ID to buy their product! Unsuspecting children of all ages can shove all the fat-filled, greasy burgers they want down their throats in a single sitting.

And how about the car and combustion engine industries? How many tons of smog have been generated by those purveyors of respiratory diseases?

Somebody has to pay for rebuilding the ozone and for exposing our children to increasing amounts of dangerous ultraviolet waves; why shouldn't it be them?

Because if we don't clamp down now on this disturbing trend toward ingesting unhealthy substances in childhood, we'll all be doomed!

What's that, you say? Parental responsibility? Individual choice? Moderation?

Oh, Well, I suppose that could work too. It's just that Congress and our lawyers are doing such a great job bringing those evil tobacco distributors to their knees while collecting mountains of money at the same time. It seems like a perfect answer to all our society's problems with excess.

Besides, just imagine the amount of tax dollars alone that would be generated from such a venture. We could finally build that space station on Mars!

And if the attorneys general could get CEOs from just one industry to agree to a siphoning of \$368 billion, imagine our collective take-home pay from the rest of those sellers of death.

It'll be a relatively simple process.

All we need to do is bring all those nasty pushers of heart disease, cancer, and high blood pressure to court.

We'll hire teams of hungry lawyers to dig up background information about how these industries knew all along their products were chock full of stuff that was bad for us.

And when we've got them sweating in the corner, pouring over strate-

gies for marketing their wares overseas, we'll whop a big figure on them and offer to settle out of court.

We'll use the money (after compensating all those hard-working people who battle this menace, of course) to pay for all the health-related illnesses from greasy pizzas, fast food and, now, oranges. The revenue from Los Angeles smog plaintiffs alone would bring in billions!

Plus, before we let these evil-doers return to their nefarious work, we'll make them put out advertisements AGAINST buying their product.

Better yet, the resulting black-market trading in the cheaper stuff will keep law-enforcement officials and lawyers in business for years, as well as provide some great political campaign fodder.

And we'll all get to feel like part of the solution by paying more taxes to stamp out the illegal trading that suing these people indirectly caused.

It just keeps getting better and better.

But we need to be careful. We can't afford to be too greedy.

Just look what happened last week when Congress upped the demand in fines from the cigarette manufacturers to \$516 billion over 25 years, instead of the agreed-upon \$368 billion. The CEOs walked away from the table.

We had them where we wanted them! Years of government funding for programs galore, including some to stem the use of tobacco, financed by the industry's own money!

And just like a new poker player staring at a straight flush, we tipped our hand and blew it.

The government assures us they'll continue to move toward a resolution (i.e. stick it to 'em) without the tobacco giants' cooperation.

After all, budgets have been drawn up and speeches made about all the wonderful things that will happen for each and every one of us when this money for things that are unhealthy starts rolling in.

It's a perfect plan, so long as truly healthy living doesn't catch on too much.

But, hey, even if it does, we can always bring the industries responsible for that trend to court too!

We'll introduce new studies about diseases of excess health food and clean living and charge them with corrupting our youth.

It's worked before.

