

# High hopes

## Ropes course teaches lessons in courage



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Men. Women. Harnesses. What do these three things have in common? More than you know, my friend. More than you know.

I am referring, of course, to the always challenging team-building festivities known as the ropes course. What did YOU think I was talking about?

If you are not familiar with the ropes course, I shall do you the honor of an explanation. A ropes course, or the Big R.C. as I shall refer to it from this point on (because doesn't that just sound so cool?!), is a series of mildly to hugely challenging activities completed by your team or by you and you alone.

Well, it's not really just you — your team is supposed to be a part of it. I think I may have missed that in the instruction section. Whoops.

Since the only way you could truly know what goes on during one of these things is to actually go through one, I will try my best to magically transport you through my writing. Stop laughing!

The following is an average sequence of a day on the Big R.C.

Your group is coerced into arising in the wee hours of the morning and meeting with smiles on your faces. Since smiling is impossible at 10:00 a.m., you are allowed (by some campus organizations) to come with a crabby face.

The facilitators at whatever camp you are going to will, however, threaten to use a medieval torture device on you if you don't show up with a smile. Some victims have informed me

of the unexpected fun involved, but I'd strongly recommend siding with "The Man" on this one.

Side note: Before you get there, you'd also better coat your epidermis with some form of bug repellent. If you don't, you'll most likely lose a limb within 23.7 seconds to rabid mosquitoes. No one in any of my groups has had to deal with the horror of mosquito-induced amputation, but you never know.

When you arrive at your campground of choice, you will be led far into the densest Nebraskan wilderness ever known to civilized life. You may even begin to feel as if you've wandered into some bizarre, alien place such as Iowa.

Don't break into a cold sweat at this point — you are not in Iowa! Just keep reminding yourself of that, and it will all be OK, at least for awhile.

Your way-cooler-than-you'll-ever-be facilitators will first lead you in some form of stretching exercises to warm up those tired collegiate bodies. On one of the last courses I participated in, our facilitator told us to pretend we were in a giant peanut butter jar to get our bods all nicely stretched.

(I am still not quite sure what this meant or what it had to do with warming up my pulled gluteus maximus muscle, but I am working on it. I must admit that I was having too much fun watching student leaders shake their butts around in the air to really worry about it, anyway.)

After the stretching, you will commence a series of running, dodging, diving, screaming and frolicking ground-based games, which were invented solely to make you sweat as much as your body is able. This will make you and the rest of your group stink worse than most New York cabs. There is no way around this.

Side note: The sweat will cause your bug repellent to slide right off your body, making you a virtual magnet for every creature with the ability to bite or sting within a 6,000-mile radius. There is also no way around this.

After the frolicking (which may

sometimes involve a stuffed lobster and/or rubber chickens — don't ask), your group will start Low Ropes activities. This is the part of the Big R.C. that involves various climbing, lifting, balancing and falling (on other people, naturally) activities.

Side note: If your group has any incompetent members (such as myself), it is not advisable that you do anything backwards and/or with your eyes closed. Don't ask. Just trust me.

These activities can be very fun and rewarding. They can make you feel like an important part of your group, unless you drop someone, in which case you'll feel like crap for the rest of the day. There is no way around this, either.

Once you're feeling all pumped up and ready to do the really exciting stuff, you'll sit down and eat lunch. This will inevitably lead to much more bug biting and gnawing (of your food, that is). It also becomes very easy at this time (if you happen to be me) to lose whatever momentum you had built up to attack the High Ropes.

The High Ropes is a series of wires and ropes connected by trees or poles suspended approximately 30 feet off the ground.

This, as you are likely aware, is really high.

You must put on a helmet and are sufficiently strapped into a very flattering harness so you have (practically) no chance of falling to your doom.

If you have any sort of fear regarding, and these are clinical terms, "losing your balance in high places" or "losing your lunch in high

places," or if you just happen to be a "chicken" or a "weenie" (like me), you may choose not to participate in this segment of the Big R.C.

The problem with this is as follows: Before you begin, the way-cooler-than-you'll-ever-be facilitators will educate you about something called "Challenge by Choice."

This means that if you are a "chicken" or a "weenie," you do not have to do anything. They will assure you that no one will pressure you to do any activity you don't want to do.

Upon informing those around me of my fear of heights during a recent Big R.C., I secluded myself to the "weenie-chicken" picnic table and was left alone — for the most part.

One of the facilitators, who honestly was an incredibly nice gal, kept hinting that "we'd be completely harnessed in" and "there'd only be a minimal chance of biting it" in hopes that we'd succumb and try it out. Everyone else did, and I was left at

the "weenie-chicken" table to rot in my own embarrassment.

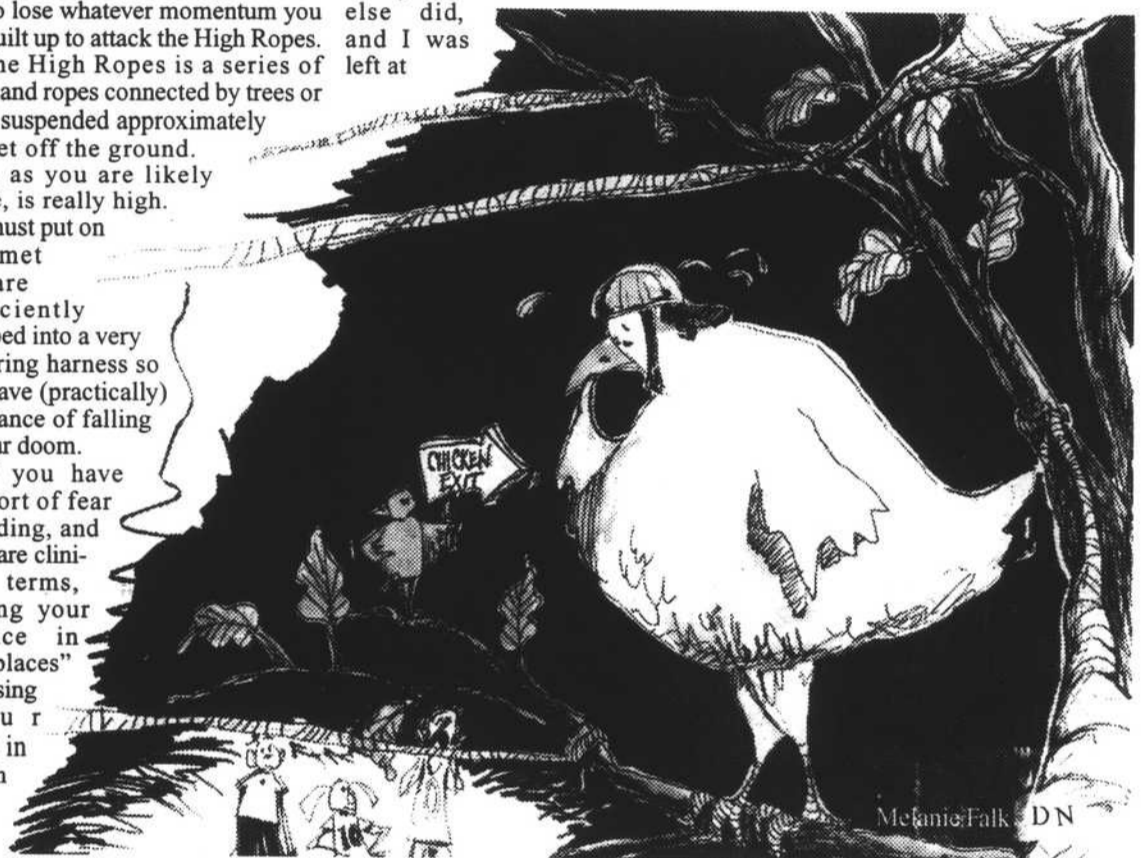
Oy.

If you choose not to attempt the high ropes (or another contraption referred to as "the Power Pole" which is a different story altogether), you most likely will be kicking yourself for many weeks (like me). But, like others before us, and I know that you're out there, all we need is another chance, and we'll do it. Maybe two more chances. Okay, three. Forget it.

If you get the opportunity to do the Big R.C., my advice is this: Do it, and have faith in those harnesses. I know I missed out, but I'm trying to remember that I am no less of a person because I am a "chicken-weenie."

Just like any other struggle in life, it's important to remember the words of H.I. in the movie "Raising Arizona" — "I'm okay, you're okay, and that there's what it is."

H.I., you're damn skippy.



# I don't like Mike

## Voting for Johanns in gubernatorial race is an ignorant decision



**GRAHAM EVAN JOHNSON is a graduate student in German and environmental social studies.**

Today, I was going to talk about automobile fatalities, but a more pressing issue came up, namely, the debate for governor, and our government structure as a whole in the U.S.A.

I'm sure everybody watched the debate on Friday night that was broadcast from Grand Island, because I know the deep interest the Nebraska community has in how their money is spent statewide and by what laws they must abide.

It was evident how important this debate was to the Lincoln Journal Star, because in Saturday's paper the debate coverage received a minimal side-column on the front page, under the leading story, which was a conversation about Cornhusker football.

Anyway, the first thing I continue to have a problem with is the winner-take-all dualist structure of the U.S. government.

No matter who tells you different, the government in the United States is not a democracy. It is a plutocracy that is funded by big business lobbies ("plutocracy" means "government by the wealthy").

Because of the winner-take-all, dualist system, the members elected to our government's legislative and executive branch are insufficient in number and issue concern to adequately represent and benefit the extreme variations of income levels, ethnicities and situations of people in the United States.

How fair is it to give *only* the person or party who receives the most votes a representative seat at the decision making table? This is not a board game! The winners and losers in these matters also affect the livelihood of the many people they are representing.

Until the United States adopts a democratic procedure that models proportional representation, the country will continue to be run by those that have the money and make the deals, rather than the people residing here.

With a winner-take-all system, if a candidate loses, then the public they represent also loses.

This is very undemocratic.

We do need less government to obtain a form of bureaucratic efficiency. But we need more delegates to better represent the concerns of a large, diverse population, who can

work towards maximizing the standard of health, safety and living for everyone.

Isn't that what a democracy is? A government of the people, by the people and for the people? A democracy is not a government run by corporate conglomerates and developers that do not properly heed the concerns of the public.

An example of this type of government is the German federal parliament. The Bundestag has about 660 members from six or seven parties representing the needs of only 60 million people.

However, the U.S. federal parliament contains only 535 members from only two parties who attempt to represent the needs of a very diverse 250-million-person population.

It is clear what is fairer and what better represents the concerns of the people.

In a proportionally representative government, members are selected by the percentage their party receives after a vote. Candidates run individually on a party platform in the order of their influence and position within the party ranks.

When the votes are counted, the candidates are sent according to their parties' vote percentage.

For example, let's say there are six parties and each party has 10 delegates.

After the vote, the Greens receive 30 percent and send three delegates, the Social Democrats and the

Libertarians both receive 20 percent and send two delegates each, and the Democrats, Republicans and Ross Perot's group receive 10 percent and send one delegate.

In the United States' winner-take-all system, the Greens would send all 10 delegates and eliminate the interests of the other parties which represent 70 percent of the people.

See how undemocratic this is?

One may ask how this affects issue gridlock and voter turnout, two very important questions.

First of all, a legislative body that has more interests represented is bound to find that those interests conflict more often.

But one advantage is that big business lobbies would have less influence and the public would have more, thus facilitating fairer and healthier policy-making.

Furthermore, this type of proportional election and government increases voter turnout, because the voters know their vote really does matter and counts toward fair representation.

This would seem to be pertinent considering only 60 percent of Nebraska voted in the 1996 general election, compared to Germany's 81 percent voter turnout last Sunday.

The Nebraska unicameral would be perfect to pursue this type of government.

So I find it a bit silly that there are only two parties, and only two candidates running for governor. But that is

how executive branch campaigns work in the United States.

Bill Hoppner definitely proves he is worthy for office through his diverse interests for the people. He has been focusing on the importance of young adults in the voting process, whether they vote for him or not.

Johanns, on the other hand, would rather support the building of an elevated highway over Wilderness Park and industrializing the area around that park than worry about the existence of that park, the deep concerns of its neighbors and the impending 100 year flood plain they inhabit.

Johanns seems to prefer a government in which the only players are himself, the Chamber of Commerce and the developers that fund the City Council members' elections.

Johanns also supports legalizing concealed weapons that would usher in an American Revolutionary style vigilantism. States with this kind of law have seen increases in murder rates.

So if Johanns supports the ignorant urbanizing in flood plain and wildlife areas, sees more value in concrete than agricultural land and would rather have people arm themselves than work toward improving the roots of criminal activity, then what is he going to do to the entire state?

Vote for Bill Hoppner, because if we only have two candidates, then Hoppner is certainly the better choice in November.