

Born-again Nebraskan

Campus radio station, Husker football and even the union renew doubter's pride in state



JAY GISH is a senior broadcasting major and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

I've never been a huge fan of Nebraska as a state, even though I've lived here all of my life. Sure, I've gone through the typical periods of Husker hysteria in my younger years — fueled by my dad's never-failing love of Big Red football.

But Nebraska is a common butt of jokes — from "South Park" to the movie "The Unforgiven" — and I'm usually much more apt to side with those who are cracking the jokes.

I know friends who are going to higher-ranked schools, in more populated states, with much friendlier climates. And I admit, I've often wished we could switch places.

I've regretted being a Nebraskan. Something's happened in the last couple of months, though.

Somehow, a welling sense of content and pride is fighting its way up inside of me. What could be conquering my disdain for this overlooked chunk of rural America and this third-tier institution?

For one, I'm realizing there's more to be said for our conservatism than I thought. Some of the people I know who have migrated out of this state revealed quite liberal souls. What I mean is they quickly changed into someone they weren't before.

Now I'm not saying all change is bad. There are plenty of people in Nebraska who should be paddled until all their lousy ideas come clinking out of their heads onto the sidewalk.

But converting into a completely different person is rarely a good idea.

And even if that newly created person includes some improvements, it makes it hell for old friends to relate.

If you don't like what you *liked* anymore, and don't feel what you *felt* anymore, how can we connect? I know people who have basically left their old persona behind when they left this state, and I honestly feel like I can't talk to them now.

That's a sad thing. Know what else? Integrity can get you a long way in life, and the heartland is one of the few places left where a person can get it.

We like to talk about how it's such a cutthroat world out there, and that self-promotion is the real key to success. But most success stories, if you pay attention, include a strong element of integrity and sincerity.

Just visit my Mass Media in Society class. Our readings are filled with critics despairing that no one has the values anymore to do journalism the right way. Well, if anybody does, it's probably people coming out of that same class.

Nebraska pride is also an unexpected side effect of our football team's 9-4 season last fall. We've gotta face it: for a Husker football squad, that's bad. And some of the media bitched out the fans for lamenting our temporary fall from grace.

But I'll tell you what, I expected the grousing to be about 10 times what it was. Overall, I'd say our fans handled their shame like kings ... kings wearing giant rubber corn ears on their heads.

I've been out of state more since I came to college, and it's given me the chance to see what it's like out there a little more clearly.

That's why I also have to pin a silver star on our campus radio station, KRNU — that's 90.3 FM, for the 80 percent of campus that didn't know we had a radio station.

All the disc jockeys on KRNU are so

students. Of course, they aren't all fantastic. But most are no worse, and often they're better, than students doing the same thing at higher-rated, more expensive universities. (If I may say

myself, "better" includes the weekly talk show "Lady and the Tramps.")

Most student radio stations across the United States have an alternative format just like ours. But I've done some listening over the Internet, and KRNU's programming is often a lot better than the dreary, rhythm-lacking jazz that a lot

of other alternative stations like to play so much.

To be honest, a lot of the songs played here are crap too ... but that's part of the nature of alternative music, and Nebraska is still doing it better than most.

I also begrudgingly admit that the reborn Nebraska Union kind of impresses me. (I originally didn't like all the construction, and I didn't like helping to pay for it.)

At first, I really wanted something massive sticking out to break up the flat new face of the building — like a giant gargoyle. But the whole thing's kind of growing on me.

Compared to the limited space available during construction, it now seems as if you could get lost in the new study areas.

Bigger is better (even if it's mostly illusion). No denying that.

A lot of people are enjoying the new union computer lab (which we paid for with our dear technology fees). But even better than that is the little student art gallery near the north entrance.

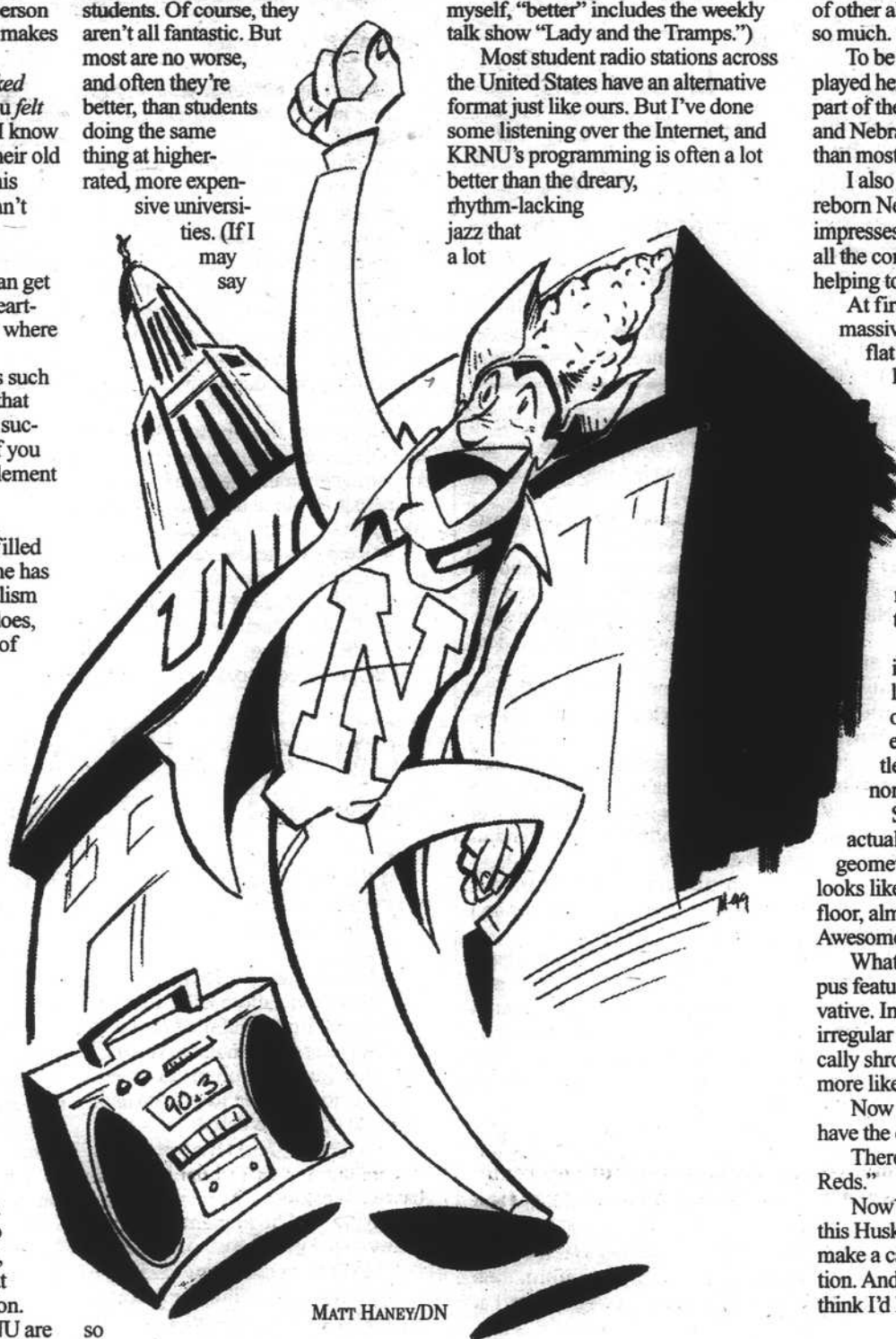
Some of the work in there is actually interesting — including a geometric design made out of what looks like heart medicine. It's on the floor, almost daring you to step on it. Awesome.

What tops it all off is the new campus feature that's strikingly nonconservative. Instead of a fountain, we got an irregular collection of bricks periodically shrouded in mist ... it's really more like a religious oracle.

Now it's New York and Paris that have the catching up to do.

There. I've said my "Go Big Reds."

Now let's hope I can shake off all this Husker pride by May. I've gotta make a career for myself after graduation. And sentimentality aside, I still think I'd like to try somewhere else.



MATT HANEY/DN

Raising the bar

Nebraska State Bar Commission may have unfairly excluded some exam applicants



TIM SULLIVAN is a third-year law student and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

I need to come up with about \$540 to pay for a bar exam review course by the end of the month. April 1 is my deadline to fork over another \$450 to the Nebraska State Bar Association to take the bar exam.

The reason (other than the fact I don't have the money) for being so concerned about these deadlines is that I think I might be wasting \$990.

OK. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that after seven years of college and accumulating about \$75,000 in student loans, only a fool would think that spending another \$990 to prepare for and take one last test would be a waste of money.

Well, maybe it is. I'll tell you why. There's the little problem of the Converse case.

Paul Converse graduated from the University of South Dakota School of Law last year. The former Corvallis, Ore., city council member had been employed by an irrigation company in Nebraska while attending the South

Dakota law school. He didn't like the employment prospects for lawyers there and decided to apply to take the bar exam in Nebraska.

A month before the scheduled bar exam last summer, he got a letter from a member of the Nebraska State Bar Commission telling him that he was being denied permission to take the exam, because he had "demonstrated a consistent pattern of behavior that is abusive, disruptive, hostile, intemperate, intimidating, irresponsible, threatening or turbulent."

The Bar Commission cited a number of incidents in communications with Converse's lawyers in support of their decision.

Paul Converse designed and sold T-shirts portraying the law school dean nude and riding a "weiner-mobile." He put up a photograph of a nude woman's back and posterior at his work station in the law school library. (I wonder if the faculty there ever rifled *his* workstation?) He threatened litigation over various situations.

Converse called the T-shirts "political satire." The ACLU sided with him on all of his expressive conducts with the exception of this T-shirt.

Some of the other things Converse did were to file a grievance against a professor for capricious grading, distribute a story about the law school dean, which included the characters Tweedledum and Tweedledee, stir controversy over what he thought were unfair health insurance practices for foreign students and post faculty

salaries on a bulletin board.

"It's all First Amendment stuff," Converse told Omaha World-Herald reporter Rick Ruggles last summer.

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 7-102 is the relevant law in the state of Nebraska with regard to admission to the bar. The reason the bar commission denied Converse permission to take the exam was because he was of "poor moral character." The statute requires applicants to be of "good moral character," among other things.

After you plunk down your \$450 to take the bar exam, the Nebraska State Bar Commission conducts an investigation to determine if you meet the standard of "good moral character" before granting you permission to take the bar exam.

Robert W. Mullin, a member of the Nebraska State Bar Commission, told the World-Herald last summer that the purpose of the investigation is "intended to discover dishonesty, misconduct in employment, such abuses of the legal process as vexatious lawsuits, financial negligence, violations of court orders, evidence of mental or emotional instability and other problems."

Converse had no criminal background. According to a World-Herald story, at least two men had been denied permission to take the bar exam in the five years preceding Converse's application.

One was denied permission because of contacts with law enforcement authorities. Another had been hostile with staff at Creighton Law

School and had not been completely candid about his employment history.

The dean of the South Dakota law school kept a secret file on Converse that was sent to the Nebraska State Bar Commission when Converse applied to take the Nebraska bar exam, despite a federal law requiring that students be able to inspect and review educational records.

The bar commission granted Converse an appeal hearing last summer. Commission member Denzel Busick, a Grand Island attorney, said to Converse, "I'm trying to figure out whether you're a dissident or a clown."

Several questions were asked of Converse regarding his decision to contact a newspaper after being denied permission to take the bar.

It seems to me that the public expects lawyers to be advocates and defenders of the rights of the people. Among those rights are those conferred on us by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Freedom of speech is among the most important rights a lawyer should seek to safeguard on behalf of a client. And a lawyer, of all people, should not be afraid to exercise his or her rights to freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

But the bar commission kept Converse out.

Is it "poor moral character" to exercise your rights under the First Amendment?

My concern is that no matter how distasteful one's views may seem, censorship of those views in the universi-

ty environment has serious implications.

I'm not so sure I want to say that I think the bar association should not discipline a *practicing* lawyer for conduct of that nature. The argument can, and probably should, consider Canon 1 of the Code of Professional Responsibility that mandates that lawyers uphold the dignity of the profession by behaving like *professionals*.

But as reprehensible as selling T-shirts of a nude law school dean may seem, even to me, I still think I need to speak out in behalf of Converse's right to free expressive conduct in the university setting.

To do otherwise would certainly have a chilling effect on the expression of ideas in the hallowed halls of learning we so heavily rely on to keep our nation strong.

Converse told the World-Herald he frequently used the university student newspaper as a forum for his views.

Small wonder I'm worried about the \$990, huh?

At least one of my colleagues tells me not to worry — that my conduct has not risen to the level of unprofessionalism that Converse's did.

Rather, what I've done in terms of reporting — "Sign said ..." (DN, Jan. 22), and "More unwanted" (DN, Feb. 12) — is more in the nature of raising public awareness of legitimate concerns.

I sure hope the bar commission sees it that way.