

If you build it, they will walk

Prospective garages will not alleviate on-campus parking problems



MATT PETERSON is a senior English and news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Tell me if you've heard this one before: Finding a place to park on campus is a joke and the university has no idea how to resolve the problem.

During my five-year tenure at this university, I've watched parking space steadily decrease while permit prices steadily increase — seemingly supply and demand at its finest.

However, rather than supplying parking to accommodate the demands of increased enrollment, campus aesthetics have been a higher priority and potential lots have been supplanted by green space and huge, plate-metal eyesores.

My apologies to those who marvel daily at the complicated splendor that is "Torn Notebook," but even a visitors' center would have been more aesthetically pleasing — a fact the university is apparently conceding in hiding the

sculpture elsewhere on campus.

Heedless of past mistakes, however, Parking and Transit Services recently unveiled its Parking Master Plan in an effort to offset the problems that will be caused by several construction projects in the coming years.

The plan calls for the construction of \$50 million worth of permit parking garages to be built during the next five years. These three garages would replace the 4,000 parking spaces — nearly 40 percent of on-campus parking — anticipated to be displaced by construction.

If implemented by the Board of Regents in June, the plan would be funded by more than tripling student permit prices and more than quadrupling the price of faculty permits, according to the Daily Nebraskan and the Lincoln Journal Star.

These figures are admittedly vague in both sources, but the March 12 DN article reported that annual student permits, which currently cost \$81, would increase to nearly \$300 in 2004, and faculty permits, which cost \$99 now, would skyrocket to almost \$400.

Even UNL's public relations publication, The Scarlet, reports that "fees for a typical 'area 10' permit holder (would) escalate in \$5 or \$6 monthly increments annually through (fiscal year) 2004."

A \$5 monthly increase every

month for five years would result in a \$300 increase by 2004; this figure most closely corresponds with the numbers reported by local papers and would seem to be the most popular interpretation of vague projections.

Parking services anticipates increased availability of parking because of these astronomical prices, but the garages will not provide more space than is currently available.

The logic behind this solution is baffling — apparently parking services can't see the parking lot for the cars. Let's review:

There is currently a shortage of parking on campus; this is readily evident every morning in campus lots where students hover like vultures in their vehicles, waiting to swoop on the next vacated parking space.

The prospective garages will not be adding space; they will simply replace the lots displaced by the building of a visitors' center, a new residence hall and additions to the Walter Scott Engineering Center — not to mention the lots on top of which the garages, themselves, will be constructed.

So after all is said and done in 2004, the university will boast three shiny, new parking garages, students and faculty members will suffer an increase of 300 to 400 percent to permit prices, and UNL will still have a parking shortage to resolve.

Even in the eventuality that skyrocketing prices make students and faculty members reluctant to buy permits — not very likely considering the current demand for permits — then that \$50 million worth of parking garages could sit empty much of the time.

It should also be considered that campus drivers who will be paying for the garages as fees steadily increase during the next few years will not even be here to benefit from the completed project; students will have graduated and, unless the university and Legislature cooperate and take notice, faculty members will have moved on to institutions that pay them their worth — but that's another column.

There are several more efficient solutions to the campus parking shortage, the simplest of which parking services has, coincidentally, already suggested — their master plan simply takes a more circuitous, and costly, means to this end.

If permit prices increase, fewer students and faculty members will buy them — this is how supply and demand is supposed to function.

Why must the university build \$50 million worth of parking garages when the actual solution will be eventually higher permit prices upon completion of the project?

If campus drivers stop parking on campus, they will have to seek alter-

nate means of transportation. UNL currently encourages mass-transit use by offering free city bus passes, but the university should take a more active role in effecting a solution.

The prospective Parking Master Plan calls for an Express Transit System — that's bureaucrat for "shuttle bus" — that would bring students from garages on the outskirts of campus to the center of campus.

Why can't the current shuttle bus system, which runs primarily between City and East campuses, simply be expanded?

Many students and faculty members are reluctant to buy remote parking permits because of the distance of these lots from campus. Consequently, many lots between the Campus Recreation Center and the Bob Devaney Sports Center sit empty much of the time. Adding resources to the current shuttle bus system would increase the viability of these lots, particularly during winter months.

Of course, raising permit prices, selling fewer permits and expanding shuttle bus routes and hours could result in a drop in Parking Services' revenue.

But surely the university cannot presume to compromise the convenience of its students and faculty members simply to continue turning a profit.

Welcome to Wussville

Kids of today pampered by over-safe playing



TODD MUNSON is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

I tell you what, the world today has certainly turned out to be a fine kettle of fish, indeed.

The Dictionary of Cliches says a fine kettle of fish is a Scottish phrase dating back to 1785 that means something's gone terribly awry.

In my quest to become as crazy as a coot, I've found the Dictionary of Cliches to be a most useful guide.

You see, I realized a while ago that at 23, I'm past halfway to the halfway mark to seeing the midpoint of my 20s.

From there it's nothing but a slippery slope to 30. And then, there's nothing left but to jump off the pier and sink to the depths of old age.

Well, I've never been one to have the gumption to pull myself up by the bootstraps to put up a fight, so without further ado, I surrender to thee, old age.

Hot damn!

Hold on, if I'm going to do this old coot shtick up right, I'll new some chaw.

Pardon me while I mosey down to the Piggly Wiggly.

Half an hour later ...

Can you believe the clerk asked me for two different forms of ID? Back in kindergarten, where we used to eat lead paint chips on a regular basis, I remember going to the store with my neighbor Kenny to buy cigarettes, and all it took was "they're for his momma."

Spitooey!

That's much better. Oh Mr. Red Man, you make me as bright as a button.

Speakin' of buttons, what's the deal with these gol darn video games these days?

Back in my day, a kid was born to the purple if'n he had an Atari. One

button, a joystick and some fancy shapes, that's what a video game is all about.

To play video games in my day, you had to be tough. The was no such thing as ergonomics back in my day. That joystick was about as comfortable as a bed of nails. I think back to the day when kids' hands would fall off after playing too many games of Pac-Man.

Now those stupid things have more buttons than I have teeth. Nobody needs the X, Y or Z buttons to play video games. You need just one little orange one, like my Atari — the fire button.

Back in my day, if you didn't get permanent damage from your Atari, chances were the Grim Reaper was just a nipin' at your heels once you stepped outside.

I was a park the other day and, hot damn, the playground equipment was about as lame as a one-legged rooster. Where in God's green earth did all the steel go?

Back in my day, the jungle gym a testament to danger and only the strong survived. Every thing was made out of steel, nice and sharp hunks of steel.

In my day, if a boy were to become a man, he knew all too well that he had to ride down the gantlet of death.

Mere mortals called it the tornado slide.

A twisting snake of jagged metal if there ever was one. If a kid picked a bad day the ride this beast, he'd find himself running to mommy all sliced up like an Easter ham. What really added to the fun was that at any temperature above freezing, the tornado slide would reflect heat like a mirror, causing that boy to run to mommy like a smoked Easter ham.

That jungle gym I saw the other day made me sick. There wasn't an ounce of metal, just one big hunk of hypoallergenic safe so your tush doesn't burn plastic.

It had a tornado slide too, but this one was all of four feet off the ground. Not even a chance for a kid to break his neck.

What really sickens me is that there's not even one bolt on the darn thing that will eventually rust and slice through the eye of an 8-year-old.

As I stood there, madder than a wet

hen, something inside gave me a feeling warmer than the best moonshine East Campus has to offer.

I had survived something these pampered kids of today will never get to experience, the rocket slide.

Back around the time that damn George Bush stepped into office, these monoliths were stripped from the landscape.

For those of you too young to remember, the rocket slide was 40 feet of proof that Darwinism exists. If you can, imagine a the skeleton of a Saturn Five rocket with a slide about 20 feet up, that kids could play in, around and on, if you were skinny enough.

Somewhere just beyond the smell of my chaw, I can still smell the stale air of danger. Kids today don't know what danger's about. Drive-by shootings don't even come close to the thrill of walking around the outside of the rocket slide with nothing but the hard, cold cement below to catch your fall. Sissy wood chips hadn't even been invented yet.

But damn that President Bush and his inbred son.

In the realm of sports and recreation, kids may be playing on the wussiest toys in creation, but thanks to the fascists in the Consumer Product Safety Commission, kids of today will never get the chance to play the game I played every time I went to Grandma's.

And this, my friends, is the hole that proves that kids of today will be the biggest sissies this great nation has ever known.

The game, quite simply, was the backyard edition of the Vietnam War.

Those of us born

in the days of free love know it as Lawn Darts.

Banned in 1988 by the CPSC, Lawn Darts epitomized everything that was right about growing up during a time when people did things because they knew no better.

Turns out some uptight ninny in Washington got a wild hair up his butt when he realized about 675 people, mostly men between the ages of 1 and 18, went to the hospital after playing a game that involved throwing

large, heavy and sharp darts back and forth at each other was a bad thing. Especially when a scant 4 percent met their maker with punctured skulls.

I say poop on the CPSC's plea for us free Americans to destroy all lawn darts.

Somewhere out there on that blasted Internet is someone selling a set and I will buy them.

Soon, the snow will melt, then I will play lawn darts in the greenspace, living life the way it was meant to be before political correctness.

Anyone care to join me?

