

Home sweet home

Rabid dogs, starry nights shouldn't be taken for granted



ERIN REITZ is a senior theater performance major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Well, we're all back from spring break, and I am guaranteeing you that what I'm about to say will make you writhe in jealousy.

I had a break sent from heaven above. I saw beaches and mountains and everything in between. I sunned myself all day long and partied like a rock star all night.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, I spent my week away from scholarly insanity in beautiful, sunny, booze-filled

North Platte, Nebraska.

No lie. Well, except for everything about surf and ski slopes. And partying like Ted Kennedy. And having a break sent from heaven.

But it wasn't all bad. In fact, it was a little interesting.

North Platte interesting? Okay, not really. It's where I've spent the majority of my life so far, though, and I've come to find it more amusing than a lot of places I've been.

(I only regret that I had to leave before the gun and knife fair happened. I miss that cultural showcase every time. I know - I got teary-eyed, too.)

It's a well known fact that, after moving away, your hometown will become infinitely more interesting than it ever was when you lived there. Things change that you never thought would.

Really, who would have predicted that my favorite Chinese restaurant would now have *colored* Christmas lights around its sign? You can just

smell the progress, can't you? (Or is that the moo goo gai pan? I can never tell.)

I actually have a tough time finding my way around town now, and I feel like an idiot. So many buildings have changed their purposes that I have no idea where anything is.

For example, the local mortuary is now a used car lot/sensual massage parlor/taco stand. (Thank goodness they found a use for all of those leftover tables, huh?) Figure that one out. I wanted to stop by while I was home, but I was too busy dodging rabid Chihuahuas in Stapleton.

Yes indeed, it wasn't just North Platte that I got to spend quality time in this Spring Break. I also got to work at my Dad's clinic in that quirky little town. And it is in the lovely village of Stapleton, Nebraska that the Main Street Chihuahuas strike terror in the hearts of men. (Or just me. Yeah, just me.)

These adorable little doggies could rip your leg off just by glancing your way.

(I know you think I'm kidding. Just pray that you'll never be subject to their wrath.)

Outside of the killer Chihuahuas, I find Stapleton to be absolutely insane. And I love it.

I mean, where else but small town western Nebraska can you find an "Eat Red Meat" billboard stuck right in the middle of a cow pasture? Yeah, baby.

There seems to be an inherent quirkiness associated with smaller towns that I just can't get enough of. For instance, I love the fact that the now-defunct cafe used to be staffed by a woman whose main delight was serving imaginary birthday cake to the customers. (Nothing wrong with a little imagination, people.)

Unfortunately they're closed now, but I'm sure another little bit of lunacy will soon move into their place.

And I can't wait. For as much as I complain about my hometown and western Nebraska in general, I really do love it. Maybe it's because I can appreci-

ate the fact that there's nothing quite like a western plains sunset. Or that a corn field about two blocks from my house is an annual migration stop for the sandhill cranes. Or that by stepping into my backyard I can see all the stars at night.

It's easy to take it for granted when you have it every day.

Because of my major, I want to move to a place like New York or Chicago, but I know I'll always have an itch to be back in the Sandhills. Call me a hick, I don't care. I just know how to appreciate what's around me, and if appreciating corn fields and cows makes me a hick, so be it.

So here's to you, western Nebraska. The birthday cake lady, the rabid Chihuahuas, the doomed cows in the pasture, the folks going to the gun and knife fair; I love ya. I love you all. You're keeping it real. (I'm not totally sure what that means, but you're doing it.)

Now pass me a taco. It's almost time for my massage.

Spring cleaning

Plans unveiled to weed non-honors students out of university



J.J. HARDER is a senior political science and broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

In a long-expected move, Chancellor James Moeser announced today that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will make yet another improvement to its honors program.

UNL is becoming an all-honors university.

Beginning the first semester of the 1999-2000 academic year, only students who meet the requirements of the honors program will be admitted as students.

"We've been waiting for this change for a long time," Moeser said. "It will finally help us get competitive with other schools in the nation. Really, how long did you think we could accept every idiot from Gering anyhow? We can't be expected to baby-sit these Nebraska losers when we could be bringing in the geniuses from the coasts!"

The administration has come to the conclusion that this all-honors change is the only real way to increase academic rigor. Honors Program Director Patrice Berger said the program has been implementing gradual changes the last few years.

"Well, every friggin' dorm has like nine or 10 honors floors by now anyway," Berger said. "We might as well kick the slow kids out altogether. And what about that new dorm - wasn't that some kind of clue? Pretty soon all the dorms will be honors, and yes, they'll be connected by a massive tunnel system for late-night studying or whatever it is those geeks do."

Moeser noted that increased academic requirements will obviously be an important facet of the new honors university. Currently the honors average ACT score is 30.7, and the students are graduating from the top 10 percent of their high school classes.

"30.7! I got a 33 when I was in sixth grade," Moeser said. "We're not taking anything under a 35, no questions asked. Those 27s and 28s from Wahoo or wherever can go to Kearney for their degrees. More Cornhusker

dummies will not help the university's status, which means less money. Green. Moola. Ya hearin' me?"

Moeser's advisers assure him the new requirements will increase revenue for the university. The elevated academics should ensure more research grants and fellowships.

"Listen, baby. I'm not just rollin' dice here," Moeser said. "We're playin' the numbers straight up - smarter students equals more cash flow. Capiche?"

The move to an all-honors format will almost definitely decrease the size of the university as well, which is encouraged by many taxpayers. Speaker of the Nebraska State Legislature Doug Kristensen believes the unicameral will also welcome the change.

"We're all tired of explaining tax increases for this university to our constituencies. No one in Minden even cares about UNL," Kristensen said. "Hey, my kids are going Ivy League. No offense, Jimbo."

Since the new standards will mean accepting fewer Nebraska residents, other institutions of higher education will be vying for the newfound plethora of potential collegians. Southeast Community College President Jack

Huck believes his Lincoln campus will definitely benefit from the change.

"Ex-UNL students will be flocking to SCC by the dormload. We'll have more refugees than Miami," Huck said. "And our athletics are really going to skyrocket. No way will those football players be able to hack it at UNL. Half of them probably didn't even take their own ACTs in the first place. I've got two words for you - Southeast Huskers. We're renting Seacrest Field and bringing Osborne out of retirement. That's right, it's D-1. Bowden, Spurrier, they don't want any of this!"

The NU Board of Regents also hopes to snare some of the UNL dropouts. At the next meeting, they are expected to announce the formation of the University of Nebraska-West O Campus.

"We're breaking ground in the parking lot behind Big Red Keno," NU Regent Nancy O'Brien said. "With any luck, we'll expand to the Congress Inn by 2010."

West O extension courses may also be offered on the existing UNL campuses.

"They can use all of those East Campus tractor barns any way they want," Chancellor Moeser said. "And I

think we'll be able to spare that one building where we hid all those bones."

Soon-to-be-appointed UNWO Chancellor David Hibler hopes to appeal to the common student.

"We're going to redefine average here," Hibler said. "An honors student will stick out worse than a midget in a Big & Tall store."

Chancellor Moeser said the key to the new all-honors university will be the graduation requirements.

"All right, big daddy, pay attention," Moeser said. "It doesn't matter what they do after they're admitted, as long as those high school resumes look good. For all I care they can get a 2.0, major in fine food and wine, and write a thesis on the impact of that rock sauna we call a fountain."

All students will graduate with honors after finishing their respective degree programs. The only real requirement is the completion of three honors credit hours, offered through a course

entitled "The Politics of Honors 101: Shafting the Common Student."

A small opposition to the honors implementation has mounted, being headed by Sen. Ernie Chambers, of course.

"This is a state university," Chambers said. "UNL should be serving the average Nebraskans first, not raising the standards for these suckas from out-of-state."

"Land-grant, schmand grant!" Moeser said. "It's the elite of the elite, baby! Put it on bumper stickers and write it on your Christmas cards 'cause it's the phrase that pays. I'm the king of the world and Nebraska is my court jester. I have as much compassion for this state as Danny Nee has coaching talent. Hey, I'm just here to make money and make us nationally renowned."

Editor's note: The quotes and interviews contained in this column are fictional and created by the author.



MATT HANEY/DN