

Righting a wrong

State Supreme Court atones for past error by overturning execution of Randy Reeves

It is tough to admit when you are wrong. Everyone knows that, but courts rarely acknowledge their own wrong doing.

On Friday the justices of the Nebraska Supreme Court bucked that trend and acknowledged the court was wrong when it resented convicted murderer Randy Reeves to death.

The court ruled the case should have been sent back to trial court for resentencing the same way other Nebraska death penalty cases have before and after Reeves. State law dictates any trial court death sentence will be automatically reviewed by the state Supreme Court, but the 1991 court denied Reeves that review. The court acted as "an independent and unreviewable sentencing panel," according to Friday's decision.

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Enforcing the death penalty is the one of the most sober and serious acts the state can do. Every provision must be made to ensure that the death penalty is appropriately

applied.

Nineteen years ago Reeves brutally stabbed and killed two young women in Lincoln's Quaker meeting house, and there was evidence of sexual assault.

In 1981 Reeves was convicted of two counts of felony murder for the events of that night, and a three-judge sentencing panel sentenced him to the death penalty.

In the intervening time, Reeves' case has been considered by many different courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court and Circuit Court of Appeals.

Neither Reeves, nor his attorneys, ever denied his culpability in the crimes. At issue is whether death is appropriate in this case and whether, for Reeves and the victims' families, an execution would accomplish anything.

One year ago Reeves came within two days of the electric chair before the state Supreme Court stayed the execution to hear Reeves' claims.

Those claims have saved his life, but without the courage of the Supreme Court justices, Reeves would be no more.

We commend this court for correcting itself. Since the 1991 decision in question all seven justices have been replaced, shaping the direction of the court.

Every member was appointed by former Gov. Ben Nelson, a legacy only he can claim. This case, and every other death penalty case, requires utmost caution and professionalism. Death is serious business.

Editorial Board

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Editorial Policy

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Phil's VIEW



Time for change

The Daily Nebraskan gets updated look

"We must become the change we want to see." Mahatma Gandhi

In order to grow, there must be change. At the Daily Nebraskan, we strive to produce the best newspaper possible while covering events that are important to our readers.

Now we've made some changes. Last fall, my staff and I undertook an in-depth self-examination in search of improvement. We looked at everything we do, and we saw some changes that needed to be made.

In your hands, you hold the most obvious examples of the changes we have made. Throughout the print edition you will find revisions and additions to the way we present the news.

The other changes are not as readily apparent, but they are probably more important. Our redesign process includes more than a facelift. We've worked the newspaper over from the inside out to better our content and make better use of our resources.

The most valuable resource I have is the more than 100 people dedicated enough to journalism and this paper to put up with me.

To improve the newspaper we will try to streamline our operation and build on what we do.

But breaking old habits isn't easy. I lost count of how many times I've quit smoking last year, but I am still quitting because I know I will be better afterward.

Some of the things we want to change around the office have been done this way since the dawn of time (or at least since we started college). We'll have to work to get better.

But we also need your help in making the Daily Nebraskan the best. As members of the campus and Lincoln communities, you know what is going on and what is important.

Feel free to visit our offices in the basement of the Nebraska Union, call, write or e-mail when you want to comment on our coverage or share story ideas.

The Daily Nebraskan has been covering the University of Nebraska and

Lincoln for 99 years. Throughout the years the paper has changed formats, layouts and compositions numerous times.

Half a century ago, the newspaper sponsored a frosh beauty contest to find the fairest ladies of its day.

In the sixties, the Daily Nebraskan covered the civil rights movement and demonstrations in Lincoln.

At one time we were a broadsheet newspaper. Today we are a tabloid that fits well in your notebook and can be discreetly viewed during boring lectures.

So after several years with the same design, we felt it was time for a change and a renewal.

Every five or six years, the Daily Nebraskan is redesigned by a fresh group of staffers who finally worked their way to the top of our corner of the basement. They think they know the best way for the future.

In that way, we're a lot like our readers, who after four to 12 years at this fine university redesign their own lives. College graduates usually think they know the best way for the future, too.

So here is our effort to change the Daily Nebraskan for the better. I hope you like it.

Throughout the print edition we have made more room for the news and lightened elements in the interest of readability.

Atop the front page rests the flag, significantly less cluttered and quite a bit shorter. The Daily Nebraskan name rests in a familiar orientation, and it, like so many other things in this world, has been downsized.

We would prefer that you read the news of the day instead of getting caught in our name.

I hope the look of our flag will catch your eye and lead it into the page.

You should be able to tell a lot about a newspaper by its flag. It does more than state the paper's name and tease the reader inside. It anchors the page and sets the tone for the rest of the paper.

I chose this design because it best

represents who the Daily Nebraskan is. We are a varied collection of college kids clamoring to make a profession out of what we do for the school paper.

But fortunately for us and the readers, we still have the freedom to do things with flair because we're still in college.

By now some of you are clamoring for the weather, but you can relax and turn to page two where you will find forecasts for today and tomorrow.

On that page each day you'll find the highlights of top national and international news. Try reading this stuff every once and a while. It might be important.

On the opinion pages we've rearranged a few things, but it's all still there. We will work to vary the design of these pages each day as we present different student views.

The Arts and Entertainment section — once relegated to black and white on a regular basis — will shine in full color this semester.

This is where you can turn to learn about events in and around Lincoln. You might even become more cultured if you sample some of the fine arts located there.

And in case sports fans hadn't figured it out yet, the latest in Husker news is now located on the prime real estate of our back page.

Other changes to fonts and styles throughout the paper were done to make everything fit with the overall design and help you find what you are looking for.

Throughout the semester we will continue to improve the Daily Nebraskan, but I need three things from you:

1. If you have any concerns or suggestions about the Daily Nebraskan and our coverage, let me or my staff know.

2. If you know of anything happening that would interest other students or are concerned about something, let us know.

3. If you see me with a cigarette, don't let me smoke it. I really am quitting.

Josh Funk is a senior news-editorial major and the Daily Nebraskan editor

P.S. Write
Back

Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail letters@unl.edu. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.