

Johanns wants 'squaw'-free state

By Veronica Daehn
Staff writer

Following the lead of South Dakota Gov. Bill Janklow, Gov. Mike Johanns says the word "squaw" should be taken out of the name of state parks and bodies of water.

Squaw is an American Indian term that means "whore," said Chris Peterson, spokesman for the governor.

Johanns was prompted to support removing the word after a reporter from the Lincoln Journal Star called and asked him about it, Peterson said.

The governor has expressed an interest in seeking a sponsoring senator for a bill regarding the removal next session, Peterson said.

Fran Kaye, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln English professor, teaches Native American Literature.

She said it was a good idea to remove the word.

"Whatever its history, (squaw) is pretty well regarded as a derogatory word," Kaye said. "You wouldn't have a Cunt Mountain or a Bitch Butte."

Squaw is synonymous with those words, she said.

Though the word should be changed, Kaye said she was unsure

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what it should be replaced with.

The state could use an American Indian word for woman, but that changes with each tribe, she said.

Nebraska needs to find out which tribe lived on the land at the time the bodies of water and recreation areas were named, Kaye said.

But she said that can wait.

"Let's get rid of squaw first and then figure out who the people living here were at the time," Kaye said.

There are 13 bodies of water and

recreation areas in the state that have the word squaw in their names, Peterson said.

He said he expects the word to be removed next session.

People are becoming more sensitive to derogatory terms, Kaye said.

"Nebraskans are particularly concerned with sexual terms," she said. "Once they find out what squaw means, most would be embarrassed. "I would hope."

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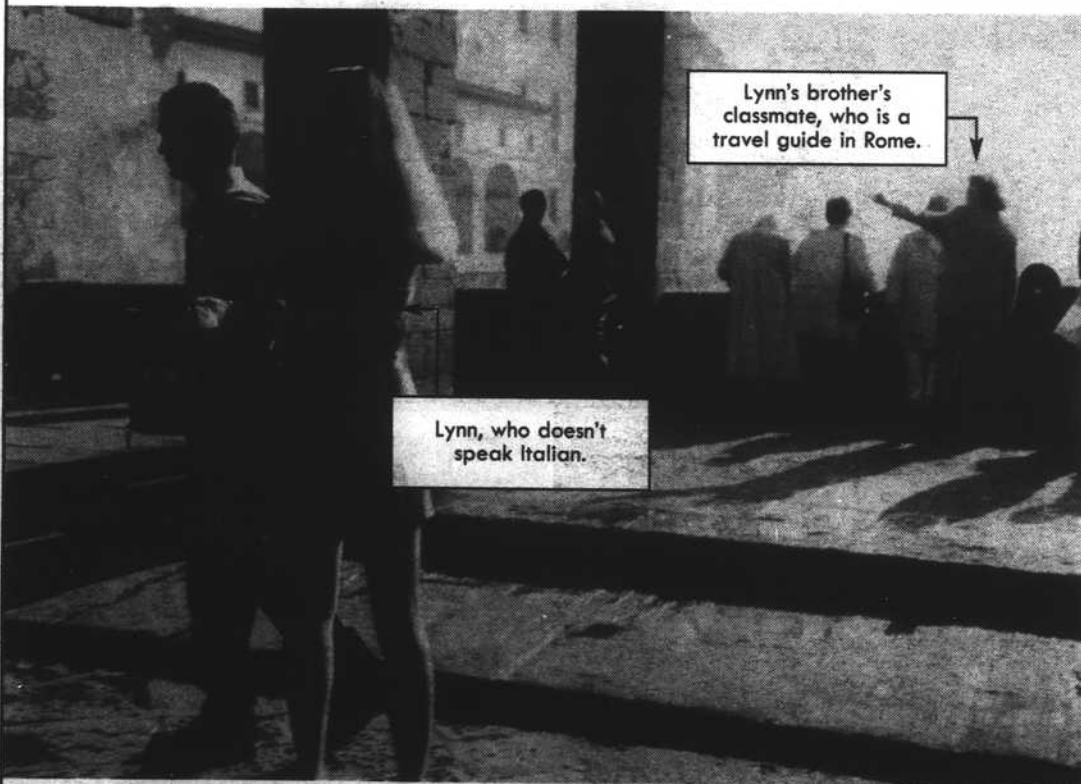


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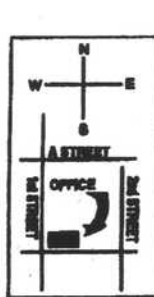
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