

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Final note

Retirement of alma mater long overdue

Most of us never got to hear the Nebraska Alma Mater.

Not because it wasn't played at nearly every special university event, or because it didn't receive widespread publicity.

Nor was it because the song was a badly written piece of music, albeit having pretty corny lyrics.

It was because the groans of the audience – students or otherwise – outdid the volume of the song every time it was played.

In a state where pride goes hand in hand with, well, almost everything, the former Nebraska Alma Mater was something no one – least of all the students – were proud of.

We say good riddance.

Every time we were forced to hear the choir moan "Nebraska! Nebraska!" we knew at that moment that we'd never pledge our true loyalty, especially not to this song.

What's the use of having an alma mater that we never play, or only play upon special request? If the song couldn't make the cut this far, why should it get a second chance?

And now that it's gone, thanks to Interim Chancellor Harvey Perlman, we also say keep it that way.

What's the use of having an alma mater that we never play, or only play upon special request?

If the song couldn't make the cut this far, why should it get a second chance?

Take it off the list. Retire it for good.

An alma mater – by its very definition – is supposed to be a song which stands the test of time. It's supposed to have staying power.

This one doesn't. Didn't. Never would have.

Not even those in the Cornhusker Marching Band – "The Pride of All Nebraska" –

give two hoots that we've bid it goodbye.

If we're going to have an alma mater, let's have one that does its job.

Otherwise, we'd be more than willing to pledge our true loyalty – without any groans – to an alma mater-free university.

Etcetera

Angela Davis and Charlene Mitchell, two prominent human rights activists, will take to the steps of the Capitol today at noon.

The women are speaking as part of a rally marking the 30-year anniversary of the conviction of Ed Poindexter and Mondo we Longa, formerly known as David Rice.

The men are both serving life sentences in the death of Omaha Police officer Larry D. Minard, who was killed on Aug. 17, 1970, by a dynamite-filled briefcase.

Both men have maintained their innocence.

Davis has been a member of both the Black Panthers and the Communist Party.

She brings both her enigmatic presence and rousing beliefs to the capital city and, through this event, gives students a chance to listen.

It's an opportunity that shouldn't be missed.

Editorial Board

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Neal Obermeyer/DN

Echoes of '1984' haunt Net

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither." – Benjamin Franklin



Jeremy Patrick

What's the scariest book you've ever read?

When I think of a truly frightening tale, the one that instantly pops into my head is George Orwell's "1984."

It's often overused as an analogy these days, the idea of a "Big Brother" government controlling an individual's every step and thought. Indeed, controlling the very words a person is able to think strikes me as a fate worse than any other.

However, I've always prided myself on being able to separate fantasy from reality. Had anyone told me a year ago that a worldwide network of surveillance devices existed to sort through and read almost every single form of electronic communication, I would have told them to stop watching so much "X-Files" and get a life.

"That's impossible," I would have said. "Can you imagine the vast amounts of data that flows through these systems – literally billions of messages a day! No organization, even if they could collect these transmissions, could sort through them in any meaningful way."

But my faith in the protection provided by the sheer inefficiency of government has been shaken.

Big Brother, though not quite here, is well on his way under a different guise: Echelon and Carnivore. You may have heard of the recently unveiled massive surveillance system called "Echelon." Created in the mid-1970s by the concerted effort of the United States, England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, Echelon literally captures a vast majority of all satellite, microwave, cellular and fiber-optic transmissions worldwide, including telephone conversations, faxes and e-mails.

It then uses a sophisticated filtering system to sort the messages by keyword and group them for human operatives to examine. The existence of Echelon, though officially denied by the United States, has been confirmed by Australia and New Zealand.

Ostensibly used for "national security" purposes only, the use of Echelon requires no court order or warrant. It selects messages indiscriminately, so long as the required keyword is contained within, and makes them available to government agents.

The only oversight of Echelon comes from national intelligence agencies, and they have resisted supervision.

For example, the National Security Agency refused to share the standards used to monitor conversations with Congress until the House Government Reform and

Oversight Committee launched hearings. France, Italy, and Denmark have also launched investigations.

Another e-surveillance system, Carnivore, was confirmed in the last few months. Operated by the FBI and Justice Department, Carnivore enables government computers to sort e-mail communications as they pass through Internet service providers and collect those that have a certain "To:" or "From:" address.

Unlike conventional phone wiretaps, FBI agents have been using Carnivore without a court order to collect and read the contents of messages.

The use of Carnivore has also resulted in congressional hearings. Three weeks ago Attorney General Janet Reno announced that she would make the system available for an independent evaluation of its capabilities and legality.

The potential for misuse of these systems is endless. The government is telling us not to worry about our privacy being invaded because they promise not to violate it.

"Trust us," they're saying. "Have we ever acted improperly before?"

The FBI once kept extensive files on the likes of John Lennon, Marilyn Monroe and Martin Luther King, Jr. That should answer the question.

At least in those days the potential for abuse was somewhat limited by the legwork involved. Every phone wiretap required a human agent to listen to it, and every intercepted document had to be read by human eyes.

Now, as our society increasingly communicates electronically, systems like Echelon and Carnivore offer the possibility of surveillance on a virtually unlimited number of people.

What can we do about it?

For now, not much.

A Web site operated jointly by three privacy-rights groups provides information about Echelon at <http://www.echelonwatch.com>.

It may be eventually possible to weaken the effectiveness of systems like it if enough people place certain keywords (such as "bomb," "White House," "assassination" and "anthrax") randomly throughout their e-mails.

The American Civil Liberties Union Web site, <http://www.aclu.org>, allows Internet surfers to send free faxes to Congress about Echelon and Carnivore.

It's clear that, one way or another, action needs to be taken. Big Brother is watching, and he won't leave until we make him.



Melanie Falk/DN

Breaking out of the prison in the mind

"You are not your car, you are not your job, you are not your bank account, you are not your stupid fuckin' khaki's." – Tyler Durden, "Fight Club"



Yasmin McEwen

Most of us probably already knew this, and we certainly didn't need some punked-out, wanna-be bad-ass Brad Pitt character to tell us this, yet let me ask you:

What do you want when you get out of college? A good job? To buy a new car and after that to think about settling down and after that maybe buy a house and after that maybe start a family, start going to church and so the circle continues and you may call it the American Dream?

But I call it the great escape. The great American cop-out – the signing over of your life as an individual and the putting to sleep of your ideals, your intelligence, your individual power to make a difference in where life's great train is headed.

Greetings my fellow classmates. I thought I would take this opportunity to warn you in advance of my column.

This may help you to compose your opinions as soon as possible so that any real thinking can be avoided.

So step aboard this train ride called "The Mighty Contemplation." Take a seat and grab some munchies.

Questions will be posed, stereotypes will be slashed and burned, and revolutions will be thought of as sweet nothings to be honored for their greatness they embody.

A revolution – the power of the people to rise up and find freedom once again.

Yet the United States is a free country, isn't it? We have had our revolution and we are no longer prisoners. Or are we?

Fear. The great oppressor. I want to know why people are so afraid. Specifically, what is fear and why do people choose to be paralyzed by it rather than facing their fears head on.

Some people are so afraid of life and all of its obstacles that they choose the easy way out – highways manned with 24-hour Quick Shops that stock false medicinals, fallacies and fantasies. Said escape routes are going to be the topic of my columns. They include addictions, drug and alcohol abuse, incarceration, marriage, religion and suicide.

You see, all of us so-called "imaginary prisoners" really are free, so why do so many of the greater population spend years building their personal prisons to be lived in day-in and day-out?

Prisons of safety, conformity, apathy and worse, far worse, prisons that keep us from thinking for ourselves and making decisions for ourselves.

Well, these are the ingredients that are currently simmering in my jumbalayah pot. Stay tuned for advice on how to jump off of your mind-numbing wheel and start running your own race, one in which time becomes a friend.

It is my belief that our society has lost sight of the reason for life and individuals have signed over their brains, their wills, their very freedoms.

This backyard gypsy is abrasive, mischievous and not a surface dweller. So do join me if you want to go deeper. Do join me if you wonder just like me

What's the hurry
What's the rush
Why the worry
Why the fuss
Since when did time become the enemy

Since when did life become a race
Since when did how much you make become your official time and place?