

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Come, Bill, come Mr. President, you're invited to make a stop in Lincoln

Just as the Daily Nebraskan was about to announce its campaign to lure President Bill Clinton to Nebraska, an industrious reporter noticed a story coming across The Associated Press wire: Bill Clinton's coming to Kearney.

While this deflated our dream of the campus newspaper championing Clinton's visit to Nebraska, it was heartening to see the leader of the free world will at least visit our fair state once before he leaves office.

Clinton, as detailed in a story in today's edition, will visit Kearney on Dec. 8.

While it's good Clinton is coming to Nebraska, it's too bad he chose Kearney, a town that perhaps embodies why he stayed away from this state for so long in the first place.

You see, Clinton avoided Nebraska for eight years because a good number of Nebraskans — including people in Kearney, part of Nebraska's ultraconservative 3rd Congressional District — were happy to see Clinton keep his distance.

It may serve Clinton — and Nebraskans — well if he were to visit the state's two urban centers that are home to most of his supporters.

Lincolnites chose Clinton over the Republican presidential candidates in both 1992 and 1996, and Omahans also provided a solid base of support — with their pocketbooks and at the voting booths.

But, in a way, it's fitting that Clinton, in what is obviously a token trip to Nebraska, will visit the Great Platte River Road Archway Monument — the monstrosity brainchild of former Gov. Frank Morrison, a 95-year-old influential Democrat who had a hand in the president's Great Plains trek.

The monument, which is an expanse of glass and concrete arching across the interstate, much like a big-city skywalk, has been decried by architects as ugly and insignificant and rebuked by history buffs as tourist-trap fodder.

Therefore the arch provides a perfect backdrop for Clinton's visit — plastic and void of meaning, much like the arch itself.

While we don't blame Clinton for keeping his distance from a state that has been disproportionately unfriendly to him at the ballot box, now that he's finally visiting, it'd be nice if he could see more of the state than Kearney — a town that, when emblazoned on the television sets of millions of people, will further ingrain the stereotype that Nebraskans are small-town hicks.

Certainly, small towns, agriculture and even ugly tourist traps are part of Nebraska. (Heck, we have a place called Carhenge.)

But equally a part of the state — and perhaps one thing that embodies it more than any other — is the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

While Clinton will make a stop at the Kearney campus, where he's scheduled to speak, we also implore him to come to Lincoln, where he can visit Memorial Stadium, home of a nationally recognized team; the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, home of an internationally renowned art collection; and the Nebraska State Capitol, known worldwide as an architectural wonder.

With that, the Daily Nebraskan extends an official invitation to Clinton: Mr. President, please on your trip to our state, visit Lincoln, and if you have time, our state's biggest city, Omaha.

That way, you, and the millions watching and reading about your visit in national media, will get a more accurate picture of this 500-square-mile stretch of the plains than a garishly decorated tourist trap sprawling across the interstate ever could provide.

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AFTER THEIR PLANS TO SELL THEIR WEDDING PHOTOS FOR \$1.5 MILLION WERE THWARTED BY PAPARAZZI, MICHAEL DOUGLAS AND CATHERINE ZETA JONES HAVE TEAMED UP WITH THE FINANCIALLY STRUGGLING LEGO SYSTEMS TO OFFER

THE MICHAEL DOUGLAS & CATHERINE ZETA JONES WEDDING PLAYSET FOR \$14.50



Neal Obermeyer/DN

Saturday night requiem

It begins with the shoelaces.

Synthetic material on my legs, cotton on my torso and arms and a knit cap to top it all off. Where am I going? Hell if I know. I grab my keys and my ID (can't walk on campus without it) and walk out the door.

Will I be warm enough? Warmth — an illusion of sorts.

If I am not warm, the coldness will surround me and force me to acknowledge it. It will bring me to life, it will push me forward. It will give me direction.

Fluorescent lights over blue carpet; I am alone, but I know that I am not. I move — down the stairs, down another hallway, then out the door into deepening darkness. In the distance, Hamilton Hall shines, a whole floor of lab-lights punctuating the sky. The sidewalk curves off and to the left. I walk, walk faster, then I break the barrier, my muscles no longer can bear not to do it, I begin to run.

Downtown opens up before me, and I thrust myself into a bath of people that are very decidedly not running; instead they are going to restaurants and movie theaters. I run, watching for irregularities in the sidewalk. I pass by an empty Crane River. I pass by a middling-busy bar or two. I slow down, I walk.

Plaza 4 has a whole line of people getting ready to see some movie. I look in through the window at them. What movies are they seeing? How much did they have to work in order to have sufficient funds to go see a movie on a Saturday evening? Life and blood converted into popcorn and bad acting; such a fair exchange. "Rugrats in Paris?"

My skin tightens in the cold; a blast of wind cuts through my pants. I blink, I hop, I run.

I pass a few churches. There are people in one of them, in the Methodist church. I will be at this church again, this



Jake Glazeski

very church, in a week or so. Playing gigs. I don't believe in this God. But what does it matter, as long as I am paid? Why am I running? Playing gigs.

It was a Methodist church in Baldwinville, N.Y., where I finally understood the depth of religious feeling. An organ, lines of pews and a single, giant stained glass portrait, shining in beautiful reds and yellows, and the whole air had an amber look to it; I felt trapped in ancient tree sap, protected, warm. People scoff at my atheism as if it were a flippant decision, reached out of rebellion. If only they knew. I'm done explaining to them.

The Methodist church in Lincoln, though, is full of old people in long red and gray and navy suit-coats. Women with their gray hair permed to perfection. Why is it all old women seem to have the same hairdo?

I run, still, toward the Capitol building. There I pause. I climb up into a tree and watch the building, surrounded in scaffolding, as the darkness reaches its evening completion. I watch the building. I am looking for that time when all the lights burst on and the Capitol is illuminated for all to see. It never happens. Instead, the building warms up, the spotlights turn on and turn up slowly.

So there is no distinct edge separating light and dark. I think about Ernie Chambers. I think about his consistent representation of minority issues, of his ability to single-handedly dominate a legislature bent on conservatism. We voted him out last election by setting term limits.

The reason DOMA ever became an issue, I think, is because Chambers kept the Legislature from passing its own law restricting marriage to a man and a woman, just as most states have done. Only a few states have moved to amend their constitutions to that effect. If it weren't for Chambers, the issue would never have been voted on; the language of the amendment may never have been so vague; it would have probably passed before Vermont's civil unions, so those would not have been specifically unrecognized. I can't decide whether to mourn his last term.

I get out of the tree. I run a ways still, past the Capitol, shooting due south. Cars pass me on the left, like drops in a shower, fast and then slow; I watch as the red lights recede into the distance. I run by a dark school. I find a neighborhood — it smells like white trash.

That's not a bad thing — it smells like my childhood. The smell leaks out of drafty front doors of old houses painted awkward colors in an attempt to preserve self-dignity. It smells like musty carpets and inadequate lighting in under-furnished basements, playing with old Fisher Price toys where the stickers have faded and peeled, the smiles on the people have faded with old age, the toy cars only have three wheels. My house never smelled like that, but all of my friends' houses did. The smell of the other. The smell of discomfort welcoming. I have never had many friends. Why am I running?

I slow down, I begin to turn around. I walk by an apartment complex, looking in the windows, watching the people sit at their TVs, looking for the windows leading to rooms of people that I know. The windows are dark, the driveways are empty. I am alone, they are gone. I turn around.

I have a goal now, but it is not a goal. To return home? To return to the apathy I cannot outrun.

The wind blows, I shudder, but I don't know if I'm cold or warm. I run. I run.

I have nothing to do but to run.

There's more to life than sports hype

When the football sailed into the air and through the goalposts in Nebraska's 34-32 victory over Colorado on Friday, everyone erupted. Even me. I was loud.



Dane Stickney

But I had to ask myself, "Why?" Why exactly do I care about a team full of players that I will never know and never really care about after they're gone? But it's not just me, it's an entire state, an entire world on some level.

Be it baseball, football, hockey, soccer, rugby — there are people who devote large portions of their lives to being fans of a sport.

Like I said, I'm just as guilty as anyone. I root for the Huskers in football and baseball, and I am an avid baseball fan. But there comes a point when it all comes into realization, when it all seems silly.

What seems silliest? Maybe the sea of red in Memorial Stadium. I think it's a bit strange that people are willing to pay \$40 to see a sloppy game between two mediocre teams, but nearly 77,000 have done it every game for the past 239 home football games.

There are only around six home games per year, so that means the stadium has sold out for the past 40 years. It's amazing that people across this state will pay that kind of money to see Nebraska play. It's a travesty on the university's part for charging that much, but they could probably charge \$100 and people would put up with it and go.

Or maybe it's the fact that it's no longer just a sport. Husker football is a business — and it's not set on manufacturing national championships and student athletes. It's all about the money.

The biggest examples are the HuskerVision screens. In between the incessant ads and blaring of "Who Let the Dogs Out," which took nearly three minutes at the end of the game, one can hope to see some replays.

With ads for Amigos, Jennie-O Farms, Runza and Fairbury hot dogs, a game more resembles a circus.

Or maybe it was an event unrelated to Husker games.

Maybe it was Neil Parry, a sophomore on the San Jose State football team. A little more than a month ago, Parry lined up on the kickoff team as San Jose played the University of Texas at El Paso. The ball sailed high into the air and landed in the hands of a UTEP return man.

Parry ran down the field, trying to make the tackle. As he approached the ball carrier, another UTEP player tried to block him. The blocker and Parry awkwardly collided and fell to the ground.

When Parry rolled over, the bottom of his right leg just hung there, fractured.

Like so many other times in sports, the crowd remained silent as team physicians huddled around him. After a long delay, they loaded him onto a stretcher, and the crowd cheered for Parry, willing him to be OK.

After undergoing surgery to repair a gruesome open leg fracture, Parry looked to be OK. But he had suffered a severe injury to a major artery and nerve in his lower leg, which began to swell and threaten the flow of blood to his lower leg and foot.

Because the bone had pierced the skin, Parry's wound became infected. With nothing left to do, doctors had to amputate his leg just above the ankle.

He'll never be the same, never walk normally again. Because of football.

Of course, there are worse examples, such as the high school football player that died in Omaha this fall.

It just leads me to think, "Why?" What does athletics really help?

I understand it can build leadership, interaction skills and promote a healthy lifestyle, but it all seems frivolous.

With so much else in life, it seems like a huge waste of time meant to fill egos. Nowhere else is this more apparent than at this university, where a far too large amount of emphasis is put on athletics instead of academics.

A few years ago, I wrote a story for the news section about a group of Rutgers students who wanted to stop all Division I athletics. Their faculty leader, William Dowling, compared athletes to prostitutes because they are paid through scholarships to play.

The group specifically attacked UNL because of its approach to athletics.

Dowling called the NU football program "a cancer that has taken over and turned the university into one big throbbing tumor."

He may be extreme, but I think he has a point. And I think it stretches far beyond the confines of Memorial Stadium.

Just ask Neil Parry.

