

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Big business

Future megaplex poses big change for downtown

If Douglas Theaters and some executives from various development agencies from Lincoln have their way, downtown Lincoln may be sporting a new look in upcoming years.

A gigantic megaplex, which could feature 14-16 movie theaters and 75,000 square feet of retail shops, could dominate downtown, possibly putting small businesses out of business.

It's likely the megaplex would consist of many corporate chain stores, which would put the squeeze on Lincoln-owned downtown businesses.

Small coffee houses may have to close their doors for good because they couldn't compete with a brand-new Starbucks. A Novel Idea could be gone forever because a Walden Bookstore stole its business. Avant Card could give way to a Hallmark. The list is endless.

While some downtown businesses such as Homer's have a strong enough following to continue to stay open even if a new Tower Records opens in the megaplex, many others may not. The result could drastically change the face of downtown, taking it from a quaint collection of off-beat stores to a corporate collection of businesses that sacrifice quality for quantity and lower prices.

The creation of the megaplex could pose another problem: Empty buildings. What will happen to the buildings the old Douglas Theaters leave behind when they move into the megaplex? Will they just be dingy concrete shells?

That sort of development would make downtown Lincoln look silly. One side of the block would feature a shiny, window-laden megaplex, while the other would display broken bricks, piles of trash and dirt.

Before Douglas jumps ship, it needs to already have other businesses ready to take over. Otherwise, the megaplex would be all for not - downtown would look no better.

There are certainly good things about a megaplex. It has the potential to make downtown Lincoln a viable place to shop, eat or just hang out.

That would be especially good for college students who want to go out at night but don't want to drink. They wouldn't have to drive all the way to SouthPointe or Gateway malls.

And, if downtown begins to thrive, we might actually get a grocery store near campus, so we could shop without the commute.

But lasting popularity may be a problem. Sure, initially, people will flock downtown to see the new stores and better movie theaters, but will they continue to come on a regular basis to keep the megaplex open?

If the past is used as a precedent, then the answer is no. The Centrum, which was located at 11th and O streets, was the late-1970s version of a megaplex. The shopping center lasted for about five years, but businesses began to leave the location, making the project an overall failure.

Perhaps downtown Lincoln has progressed since then and is able to provide the basis to support such a project.

But until the city is positively sure and can answer all the questions, there is still reason to be skeptical of such a project.

Editorial Board

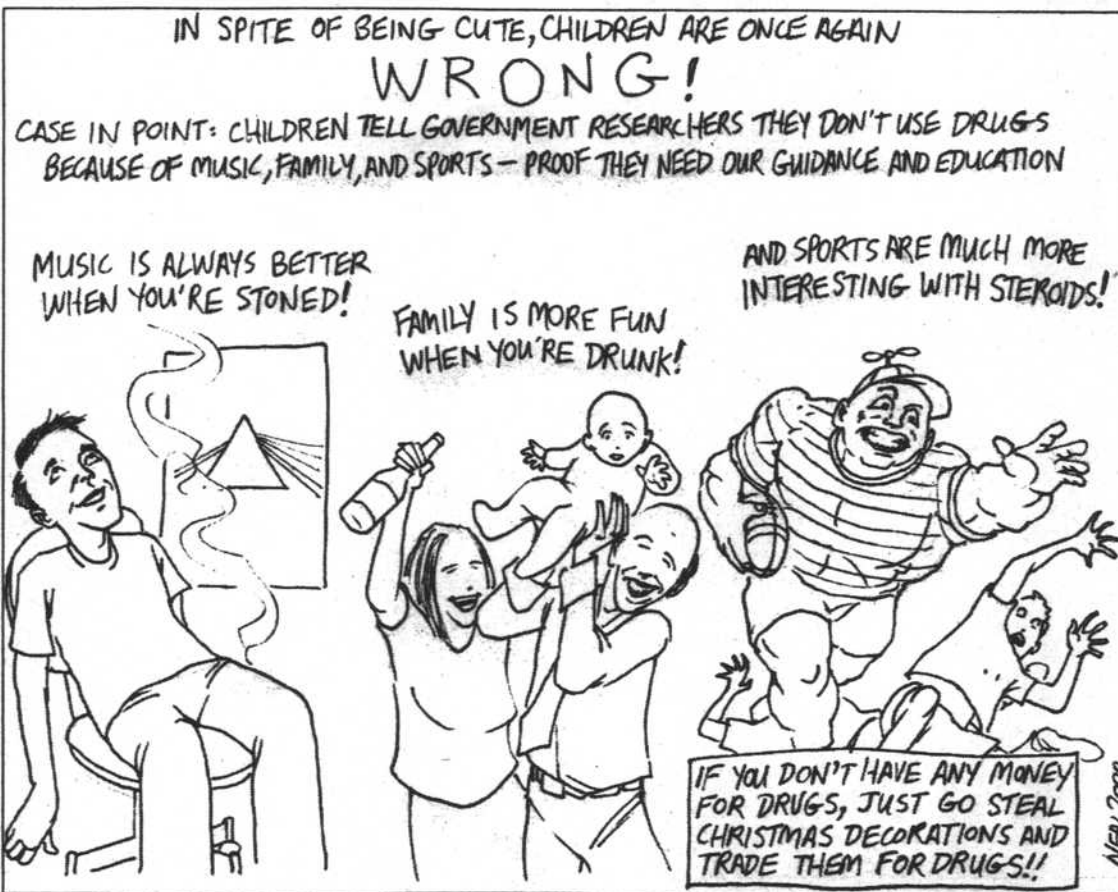
Sarah Baker, Bradley Davis, Josh Funk, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Dane Stickney, Kimberly Sweet

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Bush's brains don't match up for leader



Seth Felton

At first I thought it was the deluge of caffeine in my system, or the orgasmic joy of catching up on two months of readings in Russian history, but I finally have an explanation for my feverish palpitations: Al Gore will soon, very soon, shut up.

As the Christmas season descends upon us, a big pot of glad tidings is being poured by our beneficent courts. Al Gore is losing, the election is ending, and Bush will be president. All praises to God!

Of course, there are sacrifices to be made. The most obvious is that we now must resign ourselves to the reality of a president with an IQ comparable to the atomic weight of hydrogen.

Already, George W. Bush has kept us entertained with hilarious gaffes, enigmatic fragments and various malapropisms like these gems:

■ "I know how hard it is to put food on your family."

■ "The most important job is not to be governor, or first lady in my case."

■ "I know the human being and fish can coexist peacefully."

■ "If the terriers and bariffs are torn down, this economy will grow."

Bush may have inherited this trait from his father, who as president made such perplexing comments as "we're enjoying sluggish [economic] times, and not enjoying them very much."

To be sure, Gore isn't the smartest tack in the bin either, but it doesn't matter. He's not going to be president.

But I wonder if Bush Jr., who will be president, will have even a semblance of legitimacy in the eyes of the people. He will have won the presidency without a majority, and many take him to be a complete buffoon as well.

What is most troubling is that George W. Bush blatantly, though unwittingly, challenges ideologies and myths intrinsic to the American character.

Americans still love the old Horatio Alger myth that in America, anyone can be rich as long as he or she works hard. It's a nice coupling of capitalism and the Protestant work ethic, which basically says "If I work harder, bad shit won't happen."

Andrew Carnegie was the perfect example: A poor immigrant who pulled himself up by his own bootstraps and amassed a fortune through shrewd business tactics, then gave a fortune in philanthropy to build libraries and theaters all over the country.

Of course, what's ignored is that Carnegie, in order to get rich, shafted his workers every chance he got, but nevertheless, he is still upheld as an example of the American dream because he worked hard and got rich.

In contrast, Bush hasn't worked a day in his life. Every opportunity he received was not earned through hard work, but through name recognition, through Daddy's CIA buddies, through connections. And most of those opportunities he squandered or screwed up until he got lucky in baseball.

Until that deal, in which he made his millions, he used to say "I'm all name and no money."

I know the Horatio Alger myths are just that - myth. Aside from an isolated Carnegie, most Americans remain within their social classes. If they're born poor, they die poor. If they're born rich, they usually figure out how to stay that way.

I understand this, but it doesn't keep me from resenting Bush, whom I perceive as undeserving of his fortune.

For me and many others, Bush will be an illegitimate president because, in our eyes, he will not have earned his position by merit of intelligence or ability, or even through the will of the people.

Strangely, I am beginning to see where the Clinton-haters are coming from.

There are certain traits that people believe a leader should have in order to maintain his or her legitimacy as a leader.

For Clinton-haters, individual morality is most important. Since Clinton is a gross affront to that, the Clinton-haters see him as having lost his right to rule, so to speak.

Similarly, for me, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge and temperance are most important in a leader. Second comes hard work. Since Bush is an affront to all those things, he has in my eyes no right to lead.

But I can't hate him. I may mock him, ridicule his every move, but I refuse to hate him. After all, as George W. Bush would wisely say, "Welcome, Barbara Bush, and my fellow astronauts."

Letters to the editor

Community relations

I am writing in response to the Daily Nebraskan editorial of Nov. 29 which referred to the forthcoming visit of President Bill Clinton to Nebraska.

It has long been my contention that Nebraskans benefit significantly more from working together and acting as citizens with common interests than from the pursuit of divisive and parochial interests. As a small-population state, the key to our success is maximizing our potential by working cooperatively toward goals that will benefit the entire state.

And, what is true of the state of Nebraska is likewise true of the state's public university, the University of Nebraska, and our four campuses. Our success in maintaining the support of the people of Nebraska and its state government depends in great measure on our acting as one academic community.

I am proud that the President of the United States is visiting Nebraska and has chosen one of our University of Nebraska campuses for a major policy address. All of us should congratulate the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the Kearney community for being chosen to represent our university and our state in making a positive impression through the national news media coverage of this visit.

L. Dennis Smith
UNL President

No Nebraska big cities

In quoting Erin Brockovich, "Do they teach edi-

tors to apologize? Because you suck at it."

The Dec. 5 editorial, "See Cities Too" only reinforced the DN editors' naive view of western Nebraska. It appears to me that you, the editors, think that because you are from Lincoln and Omaha, you are not "small town hicks."

However, if you were to talk to any person from a legitimate big city, they would call you a hick for being from Nebraska, whether you are from Lincoln, Omaha or Kearney.

Omaha and Lincoln are not the thriving metropolises that we would all like to think. In fact, they are merely a suburb of a Chicago, a neighborhood of Los Angeles or a city block of New York City.

I do not feel sorry for the "large number of Nebraska's population misrepresented by that perception that we're all small-town farmers." God forbid people think you are a farmer, someone with no college education who works all day in the dirt and doesn't speak proper English.

In fact, if the editors of the DN would travel west of Lincoln, they would be proud to be thought of the hard-working, college educated, well-bred farmer who feeds the world.

Editors of the DN, I do not care where President Clinton visits, as I do not respect him as a man or a president. What I do care about is that the DN and people who read it know western Nebraska is nothing to be ashamed of, but the superior views as those living in Lincoln and Omaha is.

Courtney Bieck
senior
communication studies

petaluma watson revealed

It's safe, I think, to say you've completely, totally, sufficiently screwed things up beyond normal human recognition. Oh wait, check that ... are you human? Just barely, I'd guess. Just barely. The dildo part of you is human. I am mad now, so I'm going to say it and mean it.

Consider, please, what you've put me through during the course of one semester. And don't try to persuade me of a message. Oh God, my sweet asinine creator, there is no message to be spread here.

I'd know what you'd like them - whatever audience had not been repulsed by the end - to think. Oh, that it had a purpose by having none. That its descent into randomness, punctuated by a scene where you ... RAPE ME ... for no good reason is the reason itself, to rebuke any conventional ending and simply toss aside any coherence, and therein lies the coherence, the lack thereof, some sort of message that says "Hey! I'll take you right down this road and simply plunge into crap."

Don't even try and pretend you didn't fly by the seat of your pants on this one! Consider the others who knew ... Oh, you told them you'd this, you'd do that, that this twist was gonna happen, that twist was gonna, or whatever, and then it never did, and what? So you were lying? Or maybe telling the truth at the time and, oh, conveniently forgetting when you didn't have the material.

There's a row of my columns down there, in the bowels of your practical home, where some people - three girls, probably - wrote all over it smashing your ego to bits. One of them said: Get Therapy. Mmm ... yes, get it. You need it. And when you get it, stay as far away from me as possible.

Understand that I don't like you, I never have, though it's not like it matters, me as your slave and all, like I have SIGNIFICANT CHOICES in the situation. You tell me I have pimples, bloop, I got them. I got an eating disorder, bloop, I got one, I got two names, then really one again, bloop, that, too.

And then, please, for clarity's sake: who is petaluma watson? Could you, would you please explain to the person who's supposed to know - me? I mean, I speak to her in some weirdo format you dream up and then it ends with "Give it to the ugly



petaluma watson

girls" (oh, so profound there) as if, what, you've thrown down the gauntlet on the sexual politics. It takes from here to here to understand what kind of artsy-fartsy crap you've created here, a real doozy for the kids to swish around in their brain and cuddle up to. You are quite impressed with your snap-snap phrases, I know.

I suppose this is mercy, you giving me this time, in front of them to expose you. And see, there it is again, what is this you're doing, pulling the curtain? Is this some statement? Is this the end? What is this about, you and me, and you've hijacked this space to hash out your own subconscious differences?

I know what you heard from another columnist the other day, and it's kept with you since the first time your father said it: You can't count on other people for compliments.

Yeah, but stories, too? This a one person, three-mind show and while everybody was allowed to watch, what makes you think, or ever made you think, they wanted to? Was this a big screw you to the everyday set, who want human interest features and soft, cuddly humor columns that make 'em feel good? A puffing of your chest, an exercise in self-indulgence.

No, of course it wasn't because I know your stock answer: it was writing, it was art. It was a story. Nothing more. Strung a tree with a few dangling leaves to it for plot threads. The first lines of it that said you knew no greater purpose, that this all about reading me, reading you, a semester long game, a joke, an attempt.

Anyway I'm tired, though, my God, I know you're not done with me. The name - petaluma watson - if it's mine, that is, well, it's pretty good. Original, all the rest. Cutesy and weird, you heard one person say in a class. Yeah, that about corners it.

And, well, I guess you want them to go back, read everything in one sitting, get the full brunt of it, and then (you claim) a lot more becomes clear about all of this.

Since this is your opinion section, though, and you're the editor of it, you could and did plug this through the semester, and I guess I'm grateful for the publicity. You're softening me on purpose, I know, because you want this to end on a good note, something positive, something like you're a genius.

Well, you're not. But neither am I, and maybe in a weird fictional partnership, we can dance together in semi-decency. Maybe, one day, pretty damn good. Just remember I'm beautiful. I have no use for ugliness. You made me like that.

opinions wanted

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