Potomac Fever....3C

Editorials.....

DONALD KAUL

May 7, 1989



### New freeway? Who needs it?

HE IOWA Department of Transportation has issued a report recommending a \$300 million improvement of the Des Moines freeway. Everyone seems to be taking it seriously. I have a question: Why?

Tell me the last time a department of transportation made a study and found it didn't need another freeway, a wider freeway, a better freeway. The Pentagon will refuse a new weapons system before a department of transportation will say it has enough freeways.

I am aware that my paper, The Des Moines Register, has supported the IDOT report and that Rox Laird, a valued colleague and friend, has written lengthily in defense of it. They are

Rox is handicapped by knowing a lot about the subject. I, on the other hand, am a columnist; I never make the mistake of letting myself be snowed by the

#### OVER THE COFFEE

facts. Freeway proponents can always bring out traffic counts and population projections to prove that a city needs more and better freeways. I ignore

Freeways (and was there ever anything more ironically named?) do not solve problems, they create them. There is no record anywhere of a city being improved by carving a freeway into its heart. It doesn't make traffic better, it makes it worse; it doesn't revitalize cities, it kills them. You could look it up.

David DeBord of Des Moines, in a letter to the editor, suggested that the \$300 million would be better spent building housing near downtown Des Moines so that people wouldn't have to drive long distances to work. That's good thinking, but I have a better idea.

Tear up the freeway and return it to its natural state. Make a linear park of it where people could ride bicycles, walk dogs and jog.

London does not have a freeway cutting through its center, neither does Rome, and they do OK. They're congested with traffic but so are cities with freeways. The point is, they've remained cities. The cities with stateof-the-art freeways - Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland — have become unglued and spread over the landscape like so many stains. That's no accident. Freeways are the destroyers of cities.

Des Moines could become a pioneer in 21st-century urban planning by championing freeway avoidance. After all, what's in West Des Moines that's worth \$300 million to see? Sorry, Rox.

On another transportation front, three of us — all of whom fly into lowa on a fairly regular basis - were comparing notes the other day. It turned out that, between us, we'd been delayed by mechanical problems four of the past five times we'd flown to Des Moines. Four out of five! You can get a better success rate than that at the

On two occasions the airline personnel noticed something dripping from an engine just as it was getting ready to move from the loading area, on another red warning lights flashed on as the plane surged down the runway on take-off, on the fourth the plane never showed up. The shortest delay was two hours, the longest four.

It could be a coincidence, I suppose, but it at least suggests that the airlines are running old, worn-down planes into Des Moines. The planes used by this country's airlines tend to be older than those used by other countries anyway, but it begins to look as though Des Moines is getting the ones they hold together with Scotch tape and dirty string.

It's all part of the magic of deregulation. Ever since Jimmy Carter turned oose the forces of the marketplace on air travel, it has gone to hell. Some rates are cheaper, true, and more peoole fly, but in terms of comfort, convenience, service and feelings of well being air travel compares unfavorably with being trapped on an elevator.

I have a feeling that when Mr. Carter goes to his reward and meets St. Peter at the Pearly Gates, the saint will ask what his accomplishments on Earth were and Mr. Carter will say:

"I negotiated a peace between Egypt and Israel, I stood up for human rights n Latin America and I gave the Panana Canal back to its rightful owners." ou sound like the kind of person

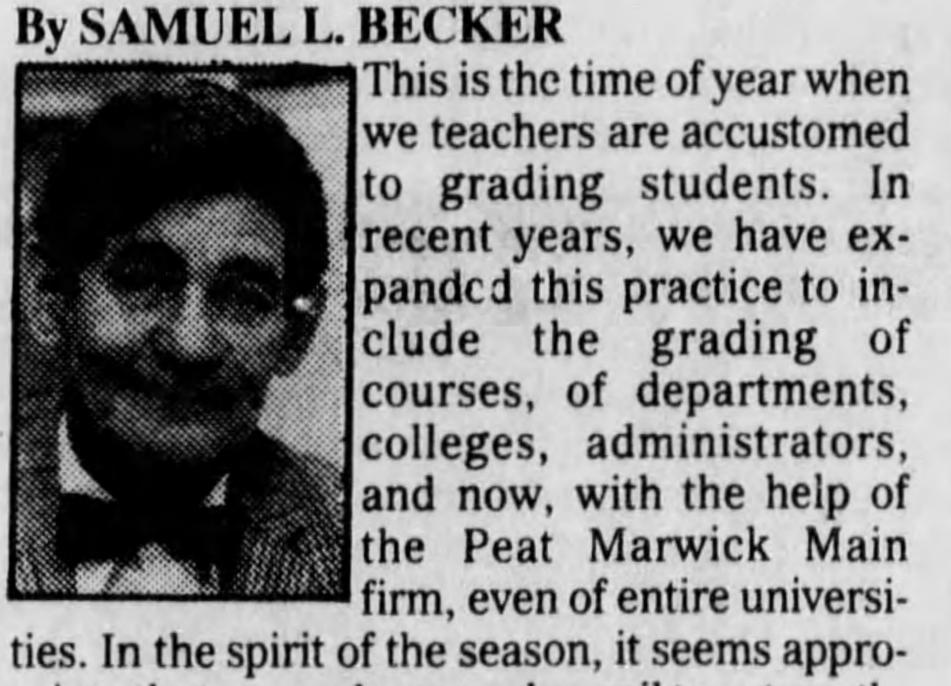
St. Peter will say: "That's wonderful, ve're looking for around here." "And I also deregulated the airline

ndustry." "What? The down escalator is over here, son. Cheer up, though. I under-

tand the fellow who invented freevays needs a roommate." I'm going to stop flying until they get perfected.

of the House of Representatives if he isn't

DEVON MITCHELL



ties. In the spirit of the season, it seems appropriate that we apply our red pencil to yet another important educational element in our society, the news media. And their performance over the past two months covering the Chicago trial of two sports agents provides ample grounds for evaluation.

I should stress at the outset that I do not condone the University of Iowa and Big Ten standards in effect in 1981 and 1982 when Ronnie Harmon and Devon Mitchell entered the university, standards that permitted these students to be eligible with some of the courses

See editorial on Page 2C.

and academic records they had. This is why we on the faculty and members of the administration supported the increases in academic requirements at Iowa in recent years, as well as every increase in the Big Ten's academic requirements. Most of us believe still further actions are needed by the NCAA and the university to increase the probability that all students at lowa gain as much as they possibly can from their college education.

I also want to make clear that I do not fault the media for reporting the true facts in this case; that is their job. I do fault them for presenting untruths and for giving the public a grossly distorted picture of athletics and academics at the University of Iowa today. They have done this by ignoring or downplaying many of the facts that might balance the negative, such as the increases since 1982 in the requirements for eligibility or a degree from the University of Iowa. I also fault them for failing to clearly correct themselves when they, presumably unknowingly, have presented false information. And I fault them for permitting their prejudices to bias their reporting.

Poor reporting is especially problematic when it appears in the pages of The Des Moines Register, as it has so often in this case, because the words of The Register echo through almost all the rest of the media in lowa and beyond. I do not know whether "Iowa depends upon" The Des Moines Register, but it is quite clear that most of the other newspapers and broadcasting stations in lowa do.

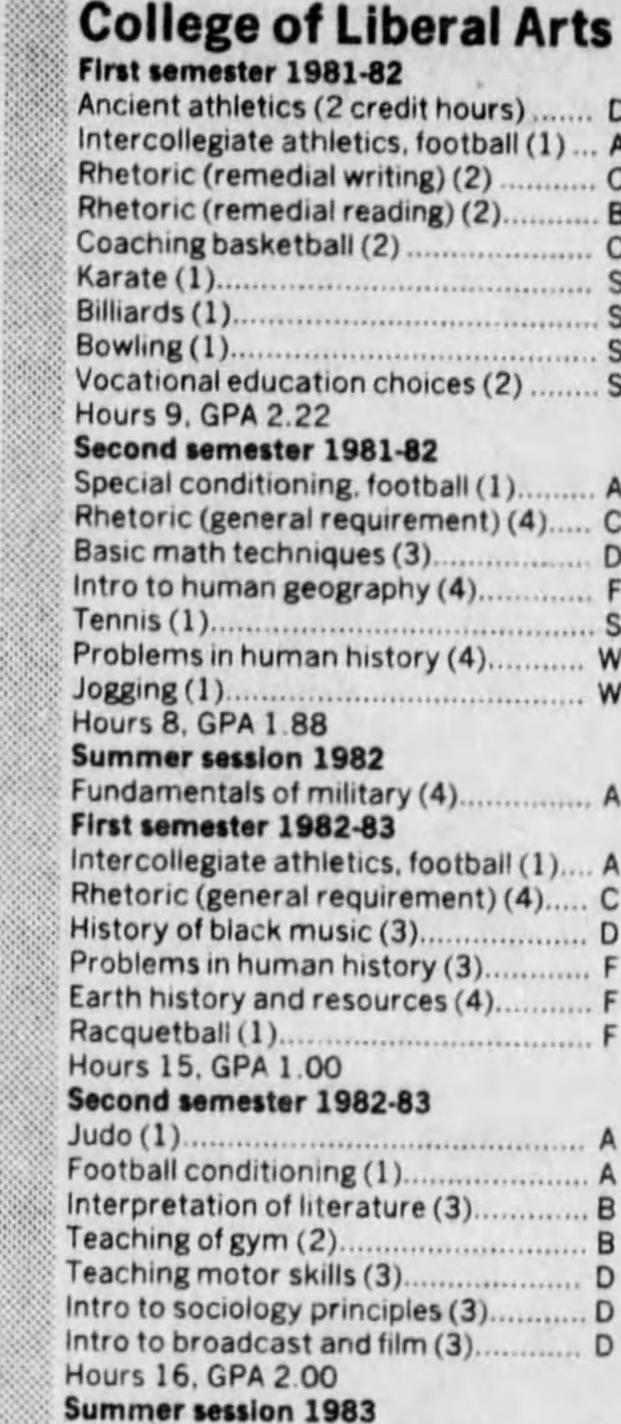
There are questions surrounding the coverage of the Walters-Bloom case for which the public deserves answers. Why were some 'facts' in and surrounding the case stressed in the media, while others were ignored or received only brief mention? Why was no effort made to verify claims or to provide background information that would help the public make valid judgments? Why were some bits of information echoed through the media, while others quickly and silently died?

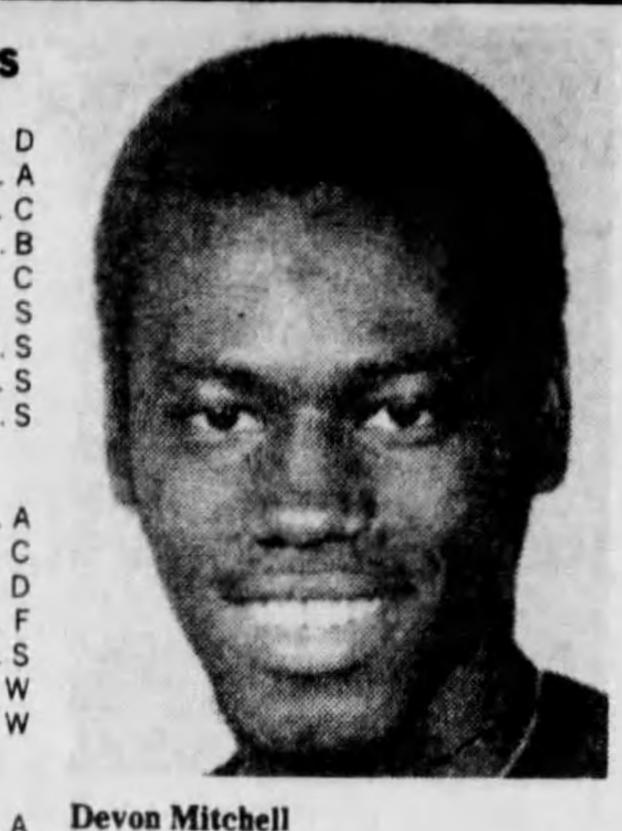
From the first day that sports agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom went on trial in Chicago for extortion, fraud and racketeering, it was clear their attorneys' major strategy was to try to persuade the jury by whatever means possible that America's colleges and universities were at least as corrupt as the defendants. Given the attitudes of many people toward higher education and college sports, it was an understandable, even shrewd, tactic.

Less understandable was the eagerness of many news media to be tools of that strategy, echoing and amplifying all charges that made higher education in general, and the University of Iowa in particular, look bad, while ignoring or muffling anything that might balance that view. I suspect many readers were so misled they did not even realize it was the sports agents who were on trial, not Harmon, Mitchell and the University of Iowa.

The only major Iowa newspaper I saw that made a substantial effort to get the facts so it could adequately inform its readers on at least some of the issues was the Cedar Rapids Gazette, but even it at times fell into the trap of simply passing on false or misleading information that originated in the pages of The Des Moines Register, such as the "fact" that "Ron nie Harmon and Devon Mitchell both quit

Samuel L. Becker is a professor of communication studies at the University of Iowa and is U of I faculty representative to the Big Ten Conference and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.





Professor grades U of I scandal stories

The American family (3). Speeded reading (1) Weight training (1). Individual study Literature for children (3). Hours 12, GPA 1.50 Summer session 1985 Skills, physed III (4). Hours 4, GPA 3.00 First semester 1985-86 First semester 1983-84 Coaching track and field (2) Social work and racism (2). Intro to military (1). Intercollegiate athletics, football (1). Administration of phys ed (2) Tai Ji Quan (1)... Intro to communication skills (1). American lives (3). Parent-child relations\* (3) Hours 11, GPA 1.82 Communication skills (1) Second semester 1985-86 Juvenile delinquency (3) Hours 12, GPA 2.42 First aid and CPR (1). Second semester 1983-84 Special conditioning, football (1). Methods and materials for teach. (3). Issues in recreation and leisure (3). The American family (3) Intro to human geography (4). Coaching football (2). S = satisfactory Colonial Africa (3). = incomplete Advanced bowling (1) W = withdrew Hours 16, GPA 1.94 = separate sections of same course

Advanced bowling (1) History of sports (3). Basketball (1)... Intercollegiate athletics, football (1).... A Earth history and resources (4). Hours 12, GPA 2.33 Second semester 1984-85 Special conditioning, football (1)... Soccer (1).. Fitness (1). Coaching baseball (2).. Marriage & family interaction (3). Practical college vocabulary (1)... The composer-improvisor in you (3)... Municipal government & politics (3).. Intercollegiate athletics, football (1).... Parent-child relations\* (115) (3). (Grades restricted; final delinquent) Marriage & family interaction (3). Administration of athletics (2). American Revolution, 1740-1789 (3).. W (On academic probation June/86)

Aging and society (3)

RONNIE HARMON

Advanced slow pitch softball\* (1).

Advanced slow pitch softball\* (1).

Intro to human geography (4).

College of Liberal Arts First semester 1982-83 Teaching of gym (2 credit hours) Rhetoric (remedial reading) (2) Rhetoric (remedial writing) (2). Officiating athletics (2). Intro to human geography (4). Coaching basketball (2). Soccer (1) Second semester 1982-83 Coaching football (2). Rhetoric (general requirement) (4). Basic math techniques (3). Intro to sociology principles (4) Billiards (1). Hours 13, GPA 1.62 Summer session 1983 Fundamentals of military (4). Hours 4, GPA 3.00 First semester 1983-84 Intercollegiate athletics, football (1). Rhetoric (general requirement) (4)... American issues (3). Math techniques (3)... Survey of computing (3)... Hours 14, GPA 1.93 Second semester 1983-84 Special conditioning, football (1). Interpretation of literature (3). Western civilization since 1792 (3). American values (3)

Human biology (4).

Hours 14, GPA 1.86



First semester 1984-85

Psych. of women's & men's roles (3).

First semester 1984-85 Psych. of women's & men's roles (3). Children & youth in America (3) Problems in human history (3). American lives (3). American film, 1927-60 (3) Hours 15, GPA 1.80 History of broadcasting (3). Theory & practice of argument (3). Hours 13, GPA 1.69

Special conditioning, football (1). Persuasion in society (3) Sex roles and communication (3) Family and sex roles (3). (On academic probation May/85) Summer session 1985 Watercolor painting (3). Elementary Spanish II (4) Hours 3, GPA 1.00 (On academic probation Aug/85) First semester 1985-86 The composer-improvisor in you (3)... B Business & professional speaking (3)... B Elementary Spanish I (4). Interpersonal communication (3). Mass communication, advertising (3). W Mass media & mass society (3)... Hours 13, GPA 2.46 (On academic probation Jan/86) Second semester 1985-86 Social work and racism (2). Coaching baseball (2). Administrative office systems (3). Administration of athletics (2). Learning & motivation of children (3).. W Hours 2, GPA 3.00 (In good standing May/86)

(Note: Only courses with letter grades

count toward grade-point average)

Second semester, 1984-85

S = satisfactory

school well short of graduation and with grades below a 'C' average" (April 10). In fact, Harmon's grade point average was not below C when he guit school, and Mitchell's was just 2/100 of a point below.

Even worse was the CBS Evening News with Dan Rather which reported that throughout the four years Harmon played at Iowa, he never had better than a D-average. The fact is that Harmon's cumulative grade point was at or

leading coverage of these and other facts associated with this case, I would suggest four possibilities, all of which I believe were at work in this case. One is the obvious explanation that wrongdoing in big-time athletics and at universities is simply more interesting to journalists, and attracts more readers and listeners, than stories showing simply that some students who play football are not as highly motivated academically as we would like them

66 There are questions surrounding the coverage of the Walters-Bloom case for which the public deserves answers. "

-Samuel Becker

above a C-level for three of his four years. For the other year, it was only 9/100 of a point below 2.0. Such grades do not qualify one for Phi Beta Kappa, but they are well above the Dlevel that CBS reported as fact. The New York Times, too, misinformed its readers with assertions on March 9 and again on March 19 that Harmon's grade point average for his freshman year was only 1.62. In fact, it was comfortably above a C-level, 2.16 to be precise.

The difference between the Gazette and these other news sources is that the Gazette took the pains to check the accuracy of The Register story and reported the next day that "both men were not that far from graduation," that Mitchell, for example, "had he stayed in school could have graduated in the spring of 1986 if his grades were satisfactory."

Although it is impossible to know with certainty the reasons for the inaccurate and misto be. Thus, reporters are more likely to focus

on such possibilities. A second explanation is the pressure reporters feel to rush their stories into print or on the air before someone scores a beat on them, even if it means risking incompleteness or inaccuracies. A third possibility is that some of the reporters on this case are not very good journalists and failed to check their facts as they should.

The fourth, and probably most important, explanation is what communication scholars have labelled "inferential structuring." This is the bias that results from selection and structuring of information by reporters based on their prior attitudes and expectations. Because many reporters and editors assume that college athletics are corrupt and that university faculties and administrators are, at the minimum, silent partners in the corruption, they

tend to see only information supporting that assumption. Even when the information they find fails to conform with their expectations, the reporting still tends to be structured around that prior belief. It takes skilled and dedicated journalists to avoid the trap of inferential structuring. Unfortunately, there appears to have been a dearth of such journalists covering this case.

Although innumerable examples can be found in the coverage of the Bloom and Walters case, a few examples should suffice to make the point clear.

The most frequently repeated information in the coverage of this case was the fact that Harmon took courses in billiards, bowling, soccer and watercolor painting. This was first reported in Tom Witosky's story in The Register on March 8 and repeated at regular intervals in The Register and other papers and broadcasting stations since. To this day, as far as I have been able to discover, not a single newspaper and only one television station (KCRG-TV in Cedar Rapids) has mentioned the fact that Har mon was taking the first three of those to fulfill the physical education skills requirement of the College of Liberal Arts for students pursuing the B.A. degree, and that he took no physical education skills courses beyond what was required. In fact, were Ronnie Harmon to return to Iowa to complete a B.A. degree, he would need to take one more physical education skills course to complete the requirement, perhaps the much-maligned Advanced Slow Pitch Softball.

This is somewhat ironic, given the publicity the media have given those courses. That list of courses takes on quite a different meaning for readers and listeners if they are told the courses meet requirements for a degree than if they are led to believe they were taken by football players only to keep themselves eligible. Few media chose to give their audience that important bit of context.

Many advisers at Iowa encourage their students to broaden their education by taking one or two of their elective courses in the university's outstanding arts departments. That Harmon chose to do so seems to me commendable, and not a cause for the derision it aroused from the press corps.

I find it odd also that none of the media mentioned, even though it was obvious from the academic transcript The Register published, that Harmon did not need the course in painting in order to be eligible; he had more than enough hours and an adequate grade point. Instead, he stayed in school the summer of 1985 to attempt, unsuccessfully as it turned out, the second semester course in Spanish and he took the painting course as an elective.

I cannot help but wonder why journalists find Ronnie Harmon taking a course in watercolor painting so newsworthy. Is it because of their stereotype of the kind of men who are interested in art, or of football players, or of black men? I see no other reason for reporters continuing to find it so amusing in their incessant comments from the time the course was first mentioned in the Witosky story on March 8 until at least as late as April 10 when David Yepsen levelled one more cheap shot in his Register column: "Taking politics out of the Legislature would be like taking watercolorpainting classes out of the academic program of a University of Iowa athlete." Dave Anderson in The New York Times on March 19 found it equally hilarious. "Watercolor painting?" he asked, "Isn't that what little kids do in kindergarten? Or in preschool?" These sorts of comments demonstrate seriously biased stereo-

typing of both athletes and art. Many of the media throughout this case have made judgments about the value of courses simply on the basis of their titles, or perhaps they thought that if football players were taking them they must be what my contemporaries in college called "gut courses." Thus, one of the courses taken by Mitchell that was prominently featured in stories purporting to emphasize the low standards at the University of Iowa was Ancient Athletics, mentioned most recently in the New York Times (April 16) in a

story headlined "Big-Time College Fraud." The fact is that this is a course in the Classics department that uses contemporary interest in athletics to introduce students to the culture and education of ancient Rome and Greece. In this course students read and write papers about Homer, the Odyssey, Pausanias and the Lucian dialogues.

In the trial of the sports agents, the defense

BECKER Please turn to Page 3C

# Who cares what other people think?

By LINDA ELLERBEE



If public opinion is defined as what we think other people think, then a publicopinion poll may be defined as what other people think we think other people think. The poppycock possibilities here are practically infinite. Oh, maybe not so much in the poll-conducting part, but certainly many things can

go wrong in the result-interpreting part. However, this is just one of those little risks you take when you reduce reality to a collective hunch. And call it science.

Not too long ago a poll was taken to find out what The American Public thinks of the reported wrongs of Mr. Wright. (Naturally, the part of The American Public was played by 1,203 people you and I never met, but never mind; they call that science, too.)

One question the pollsters asked people was: Should Jim Wright step down as speaker

cleared of all the ethics allegations against him? Forty-nine percent said he should. Forty-one percent said he shouldn't. Ten percent said they weren't sure. Those are the facts.

Now, pretend you're a reporter (don't worry; it gets easier with practice). The crusty but kind-hearted editor tosses a copy of this poll in the general direction of your tender parts, but gently, the way Goose

Gossage used to toss a baseball in the general AND SO IT GOES direction of some

batter's brain. If the crusty but kind-hearted editor misses, you have to write the poll story (if he doesn't miss, you still have to write the poll story but it will take longer). So we'll pretend he misses.

You've got the poll but before you can write your story, you have to figure out what your story is. All right, you've seen the question, read the answer. What do the numbers tell you? What's the most striking thing about these numbers? What's the most important conclusion we can draw from that?

What's your story?

Most reporters wrote: "According to a recent poll, nearly half of all Americans think Jim Wright should step down as speaker of the House of Representatives if he isn't cleared of all the ethics allegations against him." An accurate thing to say. Possibly an important thing to know. That is what we'd call a story.

However, as you are only pretending to be a reporter and therefore have a brain of your

own, you may have said this: "According to a recent poll, more than half of all Americans either do not think Jim Wright should step down as speaker of the House of Representatives if he isn't cleared of all ethics allegations against him - or they're not sure." Also a perfectly accurate thing to say. Probably a much more important thing to know.

And that is what I'd call the story - the kind that makes the little hairs on the back of my neck shimmy with shock. What were more than half the people they polled smoking, any-

way? If a man were to be found guilty on 69 separate counts of unethical conduct, what justification could anybody conceivably find for letting him remain leader of the largest legislative body in the United States government and two heartbeats away from the most powerful executive office in the world?

Well, the poll had an answer for that, too. It seems 75 percent of all Americans are strongly convinced other members of Congress frequently break the same rules. Should we conclude, then, that three-quarters of all Americans believe it's OK to cheat if all the other kids are doing it? Or that one-quarter of all Americans believe Tinkerbell took over the Capitol?

Excuse me but I think I'll go lie down someplace until my head stops hurting. It's my fault. I should have remembered that when you play the polls, any number can lose.

Or win. Or both. From now on, you can draw your own confusions. And call it science.

Linda Ellerbee writes a syndicated column

and is a television commentator.

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#### THE REGISTER'S EDITORIALS

### The U of I coverage

In an essay in this section, Samuel Becker of the University of Iowa takes issue with The Register's coverage of the Ronnie Harmon-Devon Mitchell affair.

Becker sets out to grade the coverage, but readers should bear in

### Jury said it all on U of I story.

mind that his credentials as a professor of communications studies are not the only ones he brings to the debate. Becker has been closely associated with University of lowa athletics and played a role in the Mitchell-Harmon story.

Thus, he is not a disinterested observer. It's rather like Bobby Knight complaining about the officiating at an Indiana basketball game. Maybe he has some points, but he's hardly an impartial judge.

Of course, we're not an impartial judge of our coverage either. We think that reporters Tom Witosky and John Carlson did an outstanding job covering a fast-breaking story of great importance and interest in Iowa, but readers will make their own decisions.

Our complaint with Becker's analysis is that he chose to focus on details but ignored the overall

thrust and substance of the articles. He analyzed some of the trees, but not the forest.

The substantive question raised by the Harmon-Mitchell revelations was whether the university kept two star football players eligible by making a mockery of higher education.

On that point, an impartial verdict is available. It came from the disinterested jurors who listened to both sides in the Chicago trial of two sports agents, the forum where the Harmon-Mitchell story unfolded.

Here's what the foreman of the jury said: "I thought it was a travesty of higher education. It is appalling. It was a joke, but it wasn't a funny joke. It was a sad joke."

The Harmon-Mitchell stories alerted Iowans to an embarrassing problem in a beloved state institution. One human response to such alerts is to wish they hadn't been sounded, or to lament the manner in which they were, or to say the problem happened in the past and things are better now.

Another response is to address the problem that the stories uncovered. Happily, university President Hunter Rawlings made that choice. The University of Iowa, and perhaps collegiate athletics nationally, will be the better for it.

### Yes, there is an lowa

I am 11 years old and in the fifth grade at Needam Elementary School in Durango, Colo. Our teacher assigned each of us states to study and do a notebook on. We wrote letters to the state tourist offices asking for any information about the state.

My state was Iowa. I am the only

### Dear Elizabeth, About your letter....

one in my class who did not get a letter back from the tourist office. I have found information about Iowa at the library but it would have been nice to get a letter from my state like everyone else.

My friends say there is nothing to see in Iowa, and that is why I didn't get a letter. I think there are probbly a lot of interesting things to see and do in Iowa, but the encyclopedia doesn't tell about things like

— Elizabeth Brassell, 408 Butte Drive, Durango, Colo.

Elizabeth, your little friends are wrong.

Nothing to see in Iowa? One might as well argue that there's nothing to see in a sunset from the ridge of the loess hills; nothing to eatch the eye in the delicacy of a primrose; no sparkle in the dancing waters of a northeast Iowa

We don't have scenery as spectacular as that along the Durango-Silverton narrow gauge railroad that enthralls so many visitors to your home town every year, Elizabeth, but we have rivers to canoe, trails to bike, hills to hike.

There's the Amana mystique, the woodsman's weekend at Lacy-Keosauqua State Park late every summer, the Hoover Library at West Bend, the botannical center in Des Moines. There's the Upper Iowa River in the spring, Waubonsee State Park in the fall, summer fun at the big lakes and winter fun on the hills, when the snow is right.

We talked to Mike Murwin at the Department of Economic Development's Bureau of Tourism. He's puzzled, too, as to why you didn't get a letter back. Before this fiscal year is out his department will have sent out 130,000 letters; requests from schoolchildren alone come in at the rate of 200 per day, and they are answered. (Yours will be, too, he said.) The mail comes to "Iowa Chamber of Commerce," 'Iowa Tourism, State Capitol," and with other oddball addresses,

So tell your teacher your report is still in the works, Elizabeth. There is plenty to see in Iowa. And we hope you come, and maybe fall in love with the state. We take pride in our state educational level, and we can always make room for another articulate enthusiast.

but it gets to the right place.

### The fusion fizzle

The intellectual heavyweights are back in control in the never-never world of theoretical physics. At a meeting of the American Physical Society in Baltimore, they punctured the balloon inflated with the expansive hopes of a couple of scientists working in Utah, who for six weeks turned the sci-

There ain't no Easter bunny, the

# The end of cold

heavies from the Ivy League and all the other erudite head shops have proclaimed smugly. No Santa, no Tooth Fairy, and certainly no room-temperature nuclear fusion; just sloppy experimental work by Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann, who claimed electrolysis packed hydrogen atoms so closely on a hunk of palladium that

them could duplicate the results elaimed by Pons and Fleischmann. Ergo, the Utah Miracle never happened, and the miracle workers are now labeled fakes, phonies and

rinky-dink school "out West" had accomplished what the heavies had not even theorized.

weights get shaken by the possibility of a revolutionary breakthrough. It helps broaden their

"He don't know one note from another," Charlie the Anvil Salesman told River City, and burst the bubble created by the spellbinding Music Man. But hasn't life been more fun since he came? asked Marian the Librarian. Hasn't it been more exciting? Wasn't River City pretty dull until Professor Harold Hill arrived? And his was a deliberate scam; the Utah scientists acted in good faith.

Apparently, Pons and Fleischmann erred. But let those in the sayers is an indication of how science world who can claim to badly they wanted Pons and have lit so many fires, induced so Fleischmann to fail, lest the heavy- much discussion, and caused the weights from the prestigious labs cross-fertilization of so many new

#### DAVID BRODER

# Reckless budget habits continue



The Washington I am leaving behind for a two-month assignment in The Washington Post's London bureau is a notably different place from what it was in January, when George Bush took over the presidency and the 101st Congress began work. The partisan, polarizing forces that had surged to tidal proportions late in the Reagan years have subsided.

While there have been a few battles, notably the confirmation fight over John Tower, nothing has reached the level of bitterness produced by Robert Bork's appointment to the Supreme Court, or the Iran-contra affair, or the 1988 election campaign.

When Bush said on the Inaugural stand that "the American people . . . didn't send us here to bicker,' he found a ready response from George Mitchell, the Democratic senator from Maine who was beginning his own tenure as Senate majority leader. And House Speaker Jim Wright, who might have proved a harder case for Bush to woo, has been so preoccupied with defending himself against ethics charges that he has been out of commission.

MR. PRESIDENT- DO YOU WANT THE MX

OR THE MIDGETMAN?

DO YOU WANT TO BAN ASSAULT

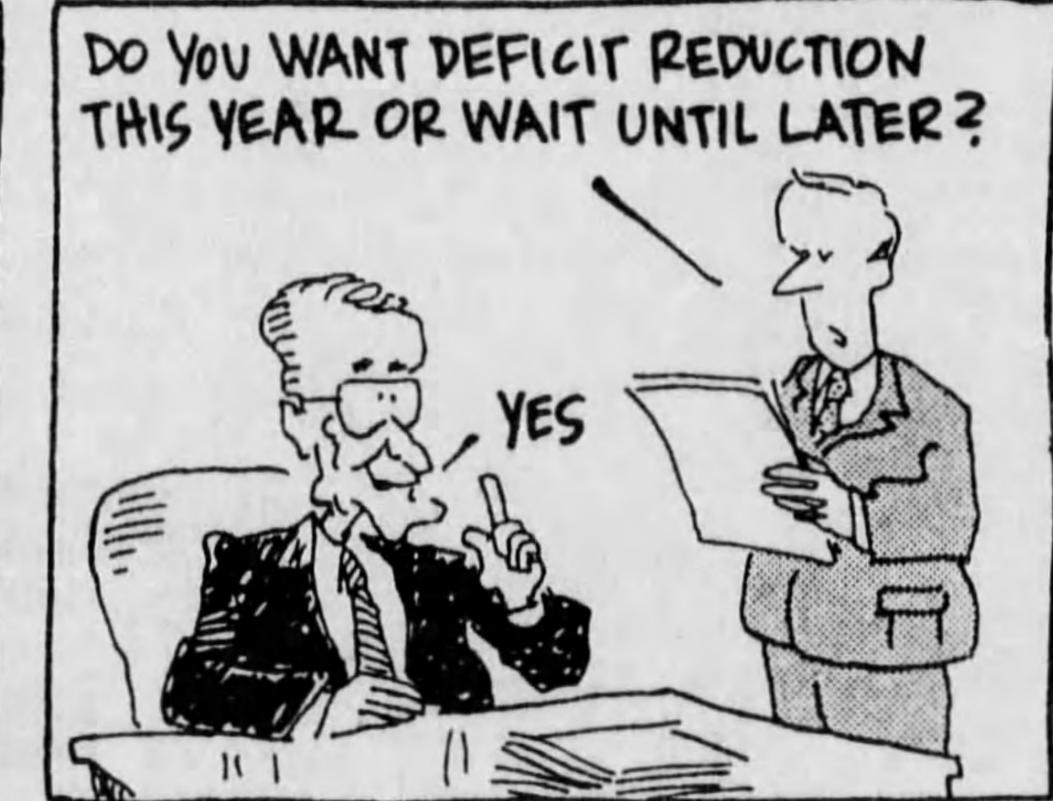
RIFLES OR KEEP THEM LEGAL ?

The simple gestures that come easily to a couple as hospitable as George and Barbara Bush - the invitations to informal visits in the White House living quarters — have won him incalculable good will on Capitol Hill. Reporters are purring because Bush has restored frequent, businesslike and often informative news conferences to the agenda.

With all these healthy signs, it would be easy to leave with a feeling of confidence about the capital and the nation to which I will return come July. But there are three things which cause serious misgivings about the long-term direction of events.

The first is the tendency to postpone hard choices on issues that cry out for action. The obvious example is the federal budget deficit. The "bipartisan agreement" between leaders of Congress and the Bush administration, hailed at a Rose Garden ceremony a couple of weeks ago, is a fraud. Cooked numbers, fairy-tale economic assumptions and blatant evasions (such as the scheme to keep the costs of the savings-and-loan bail-out "off-budget") permit the president and Congress to claim they are meeting the the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficitreduction target.

But the tidal wave of borrowing goes on. And





the day when the United States starts paying its bills is once again delayed.

Were this the only example, it would be bad enough. But procrastination is also the order of the the day on the choice of weapons systems, on the formulation of a diplomatic response to Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev's initiatives - and even on facing up to the cost of retaining capable men and women in key government jobs. Ducking decisions

is becoming a way of life.

The second worrisome trend is the weakening of the office at the center of government: the presidency. Bush suffered the indignity of being the first newly elected president to have a Cabinet choice rejected by the Senate. After the Tower fiasco, he acquiesced in an agreement on aid to the contras. It allows four separate congressional committees by their own action — to override the president's policy and suspend payments authorized by a statute passed by Congress and signed into law by the chief executive.

This evasion of the Constitution was so smelly it had to be accomplished through a side agreement, embodied in a letter from the secretary of state. But that subterfuge does not lessen the corrosive quality of Bush's capitulation.

A further source of weakness in this presidency is Bush's striking inability to capture the attention of the country and rally public support for his policies. Press conferences are important accountability devices, but in themselves they do not constitute an adequate communications strategy for a president.

Bush has not given an effective substantive speech that really shaped public opinion since his acceptance speech at the New Orleans convention last August. The reason may lie not in the shortcomings of the speech-writing staff since Peggy Noonan left, but in the fact that Bush doesn't have much to say to the country — or the world.

Up to the 1988 election, Bush maintained that Ronald Reagan had set the nation on a new and good path and that no major initiatives were needed. Just make minor course corrections to adapt to changing conditions and find ad hoc solutions to problems - like the savings-and-loan crisis - which surfaced too late for Reagan to solve, and everything will be hunky-dory, Bush said.

I think that analysis is wrong. Voters understand that we need to take major actions now to assure the future of this country in an international economy where other nations are out-competing us. And they understand that we need to start disciplining ourselves now — to start saving and investing instead of borrowing and spending - if there is not to be a fearful day of reckoning for our reckless habit of living beyond our means.

David Broder of The Washington Post writes a syndicated column.

#### MARY McGRORY

## Fuel of future is needed today



If there was a substance that could make cars go, something that would reduce the threat of beslimed sea otters and oildrenched sea birds, that would cut down on the need for expensive and perilous patrolling of the Persian Gulf, that would reduce smog and right the trade balance, people would stampede to get it, right? Wrong. There is an alter-

native fuel for America's 172 million cars and trucks. It's called methanol, and it's made from natural gas or coal. Mention it and people's eyes glaze over. There is also ethanol, made from corn, which does not burn quite so cleanly as methanol, but still beats gasoline. Last year in Iowa, candidate Michael Dukakis used to talk about it, and caused snickers

in the press corps. Methanol has a few well-placed friends. One of them is C. Boyden Gray, White House counsel, who has a methanol-powered car. Another is the scion of the country's first oil family, Senator Jay Rockefeller IV, who, with Congressman Phil Sharp, passed an alternative-fuels bill through Congress. President Bush is for methanol, too, although no more than he is for other alternative energy sources.

The arguments against the obvious good of methanol are circular. Detroit has been asking why it should manufacture a car for which no one is producing fuel. The entrepreneurs who might be expected to get methanol into major production say they're not manufacturing a fuel that has no gas tank waiting for it. After the Rockefeller-Sharp bill, which gives Detroit certain regulatory breaks if it gets off the dime on methanol fuel, passed, the auto companies began producing a few cars with the larger tanks that methanol requires.

A methanol marathon, run by teams of students from 15 engineering schools, is ending on the Capitol steps. They competed on finding the most-efficient fuel system for the methanol-gasoline combination, which so few seem to hope will be the fuel of the future in America's cars and trucks.

But the gridlock is easing, methanol fans say. That's because Southern California, where they often see the future despite the smog, has taken the wheel. Air pollution has reached intolerable levels, according to the South Coast Air Quality Management District. It has recommended breathtaking reforms that could make it possible for the inhabitants of Los Angeles to breathe again. Gasoline, it has decreed, must go - or, more specifically, it has got to go into the gas tank with methanol, even if it currently gives off formaldehyde emissions.

One of the things that frustrates alternative-fuel advocates is that they think the public would love methanol if it only knew it: if it knew that methanol is the fuel of the Indianapolis 500, not just because it doesn't explode on impact, but because it makes the car prance along at a much livelier pace.

Methanol will, initially, cost more than gasoline, but cars with tanks to accommodate it will cost only \$300 more than the present models. Most American drivers turn in their cars after seven years, but those who cannot bear to part with a beloved old heap can have it retrofitted at a cost of \$2,000.

What may juice up the lagging entrepreneurs is Japan, where carmakers see a potential driving population of 37 million in California. Although they compete fiercely among themselves, Japanese automakers are not prohibited by antitrust laws, as are their U.S. counterparts, from working together on technology. The Japanese have always seen around corners in regard to U.S. car needs. Detroit often does not look down the road.

Others who like to breathe hope they step on the gas this time. As Boyden Gray said, "There's never been a natural-gas spill."

Mary McGrory writes a syndicated column.

## The Old Reporter is back on the trail

shabby? Have the owners and operators lost their

• I want to catch up with the University of Iowa

Hunter Rawlings and ask him what he'd do differ-

• It's time I wander down to Van Buren County

Reports out of Sioux City say that IBP imports

a bunch of people whose physical condition allows

them to work only a couple weeks and then leaves

them for the welfare folks to take care of. That's

• Is a commission setting out to write a charter

and examine Ben Hendricks' latest scheme to

ently if he could handle his athletic story again.

make Bonaparte the playground of the Midwest.

FTER 25 YEARS in the reporters' trade, I began editing the editorial pages of The Register in December of 1982.

It's a magnificent job. Some think it's the best on the paper. But for me it has a shortcoming. I can't easily get out to see the people and things I want to

I suspected that before I took the job. My main strength in the trade was knowing the people and the territory, and if you don't keep up with their changes, you become a historian not a journalist. So my understanding was that I take the job for five years.

It's going on seven years, and I've asked to be relieved of my editorial-page duties and go to writing a column.

My idea is to concentrate the bulk of my efforts on local and state government — the areas where I've spent most of my adult life - but to draw no lines. I'm interested in a lot of things and fancy that I have something to say about them.

A lot of people and their stories fall through the cracks of daily journalism, and I have some hopes of spotting them and telling how they fit into the warp and woof of Iowa life.

Rather than describe posings and report what politicians and government officials and heavy-hitters say they're doing, I want to figure out what's really going and write about that. It's an arrogant undertaking but writing a col-

umn is itself an arrogant undertaking. How else can you describe someone who presumes to have something to say three times a week? I don't have any game plan. I'll just follow my

nose. But I'm sure it will lead me to a number of people and places I'm curious about. • Why, for example, have the neighborhood

shopping districts in Des Moines become so

for Polk County thinking of the entire metropolitan area or just the Courthouse crowd? Did Iowa State's Gordon Eaton set out to make his faculty angry or was it an accident?

worth talking about.

pride? Is it City Hall's fault?

 Why doesn't someone do something to promote commercial development of Lake Rathbun? What do the people of the 3rd Congressional District have to say about Dave Nagle's cheerleading for Speaker Jim Wright?

• Is there any evidence saying that the various Democratic candidates for governor would be any different than Terry Branstad?

• Where does Branstad think Iowa has been, where does he think it is, and where does he think it's going? Why does John Ruan want new skywalks that lead people away from - rather than to - the

main retail activity in downtown Des Moines? What's James Van Allen doing these days, what's his guess on cold fusion, and what does he

think of freshman eligibility for athletics? Have those pari-mutuel tracks helped or hurt Dubuque, Council Bluffs, Waterloo and Des

Why are some small towns thriving and others.

seeming no different, withering away? How is Cornell College doing with its program

of a student taking one course at a time? What's driving Des Moines Police Chief Bill Moulder? Does he really believe his department is free of racism and sexism?

 Mount Pleasant has gotten a lot of new businesses and industries over the past few years. Do the folks there see that as success or failure?

• Why is it that politicians always want to build something new instead of take care of what we already have?

Well, that's a taste of some things that interest me. In between looking at them, I suppose I'll be offering what I think are insights on state and national politics and public affairs.

Somewhere along the line, I hope to catch up with a guy down at Anita - I've lost his name and ask him how his philosophy applies to foreign affairs, national security and education policy.

"If I won the lottery," he told me once, "I'd spend half of it on wine, women and song. The other half I'd just plain squander."

### stream.

entific world on its ear.

# fusion -- for now.

the atoms fused. No way, say the heavies. None of

fabricators. The sarcastic fervor of the naybe forced to admit that a couple of ideas cast the first stones.

unknowns operating out of some

(Among eggheads in the Ivy League, the existence of Utah is still accepted only as a theoretical possibility.)

Among other things, the Utah experimenters got the public involved in the exciting possibility of fusion energy. And it is good that society becomes aware of the chance for an energy source with an endless, cheap supply of fuel and minor waste problems.

It is good, too, that the heavyperspectives.

### JAMES FLANSBURG



#### POTOMAC FEVER



### Iowa still is first despite California

OWA'S PRESIDENTIAL caucuses probably will be the first in the nation in 1992, but their influence will be substantially reduced by an early primary in California.

That was the spin last week from Ron Brown, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, at a breakfast with reporters. In between sips of orange juice and questions about Jesse Jackson's possible bid for mayor of the District of Columbia, Brown offered a few thoughts about the presidentialnominating process.

Brown stressed again that he is not interested in "bloody and divisive" warfare among Democrats over changes in the nominating rules. He made that statement before he was elected, and he made it at a press conference in April — adding at the time that he has the votes among committee members to back him up.

That ban on changes extends to the "window" that keeps states from selecting delegates too early, a window from which Iowa and New Hampshire are exempt. But states still might make changes on their own that would fit in that framework, Brown pointed out.

"I would expect California is going to move up to March and that has a profound impact on the nominating process," said Brown. "I frankly think a good impact."

Why? "I think it tends to diminish what some people think is the disproportionately large impact" of early states, he said. "I think the candidates who last time spent 130 days in Iowa would have to take part of that time and spend it in California."

Brown is referring to a bill in the California legislature that would move up the state's presidential primary.

The governor has said he will sign it, and the Iowa Democratic Party's Bonnie Campbell assumes it's a done deal. "Candidates are not going to like it," she said, because of the large pots of money it takes to campaign in a state the size of California.

But Californians have been brooding for some time about Iowa's influence on the process, and this is their response. "I have to assume Iowa will be affected by that," Campbell said, unless some candidates decide to skip California the same way Senator Al Gore decided to skip Iowa.

Campbell sees no other clouds on Iowa's horizon, despite the periodic grumblings from some Democratic strategists. "I think we are reaching the stage where Iowa and New Hampshire are institutionalized in the process," she said.

SOME FIENDS have even been calling Campbell and requesting analysis on how the caucuses would be affected if Jackson drops out of the presidential race. This query is pretty mystifying even for Campbell, who has had to come up with a lot of fodder for reporters during the last two years.

Just the thought of the '92 version of the caucuses produces shooting pains and low moans of misery among those who have not yet recovered from 1988. Maybe there ought to be a window for caucus projections.

VISITORS: A political-science class from Wartburg College in Waverly is in Washington for a couple of weeks to see the real thing in action. They were struck by the appearance of the stores near their youth hostel at 11th and K streets — all those bars on the windows.

Three Iowans testified last week before Senator Tom Harkin's appropriations subcommittee. David Maranville from the Dension Job Corps Center told the panel that \$761 million proposed by the Bush administration for the national corps is inadequate, and corps operations accounts already face a shortfall.

Merle Wilson, representing the American Association of Retired Persons, discussed funds for low-income heating assistance, the Older Americans Act and the Medicare state nursing home certification program.

And Dr. Thomas Weingeist, head of opthamology at the University of Iowa's college of medicine, asked for \$312 million for the Eye Institute at the National Institutes of Health. The university is active in research paid for by government grants.

ROGER PORTER, chief domestic adviser to President Bush (and childhood resident of Ames, Ia.), was at a lunch recently discussing the great issues of the day with a group of half-

attentive reporters. Suddenly, the room came alive. Reporters began scribbling furiously. Had he leaked a new deal on the budget? Would the president renege

on his "read my lips" pledge? No. In making a point on how there are still incentives to save money, Porter was giving detailed instructions on how reporters could invest their money in tax-deferred instruments.

"That's the most important thing that's been said at this table in years," said the Washington Post's David — Jane Norman Broder.

# Values we can learn from Third World

By DON MITCHELL

WAS DOING belated homework on an airplane recently on my way to Mexico City, and learned from a guidebook that the population is 18-20 million, and that the counting of heads is so inexact that there may be many more. It ranks with Tokyo for size, and may actually be the largest city on Earth.

Well, for my purposes, size didn't make all that much difference. I was going just because it was there.

What an exceptionally pleasant place it is, with broad treelined boulevards, shops as smart as Park Avenue in the downtown area; energized with the rebuilding of much of the histori-

cal area because of earthquake damage.

By way of fair warning, it should be pointed out that the week before Easter Sunday when I was there at least half of the population had gone to the beach. I had the place to myself. Even so, the air pollution was memorable. Had all the cars been in town, it would have been hard to cut the air with a sword.

That, of course, is why everyone went to the beach. In consequence of the diminished population, the shops were not crowded, hotel service was excellent, taxi service easy, tourist spots accessible. In short, if you go at any other time, you will find wall-to-wall people, even though I did not.

It can be a chore to get around if you don't speak Spanish. While the taxi drivers may have their way with you, it is not worse in that regard than Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City or Ogden. Once you get your bearings you can get to a great many places on an excellent, hospital-clean subway system.

There are the ancient Aztec temples to be awed by, great old churches, a sudden realization that Mexico City was a thriving place 90 years before the Pilgrims got to Plymouth Rock. It is easy to be awed.

Perhaps the most stunning thing to me was the complete safety of the streets after dark. The economy is not like ours, there is not nearly so much loose pocket money, and in the evening, in fact until midnight and after, couples can be seen walking the streets. They go slowly, hand-in-hand, looking in shop windows, talking about time-honored subjects, all peacefully. I do not know of any large or mid-sized city in the United States where this practice could be enjoyed without looking over your shoulder.

The original downtown park in Mexico City, called the Alameda, roughly eight blocks square, remains as a monument to civilization. It was once full of almond trees, but the air pollution has taken its toll, and more hardy but not as pretty trees take their place. Still, there were lavender blossoms on the jacarandas. The park makes a square to front several of the oldest large churches in the city, and is bounded on one end by the Palace of Fine Arts.

The Alameda is the meeting place of young lovers who in the evening are behaving in enthusiastic and still modest fashion. The place is well-enough lighted that you could read a book on a park bench, provided you got stood up. There are small children playing in the daytimes, and not so many at night. Perfectly peaceful, perfectly lovely. It is an ancient custom to go there for courtship.

I don't know of any such place in the United States, though my expertise may be insufficient to make a sweeping judgment. Think of it for a moment: a place for courting couples to go unhindered, no muggings, no gunfire, the music is live when there is any — a small forest glen in the midst of what is one of the largest cities to ever exist. And, if it so happened your daughter was there, you probably would not mind.

Twenty-five blocks away in the modern downtown area, the jazz clubs and discos are orderly at a late hour, the customers have come for the music rather than rowdiness. Many people are simply out for a walk. Policemen go by in their patrol cars, but are not there in any great presence.

Perhaps we have some things to learn from the Third World about some values we once thought were ours.

I was thinking of these things one evening walking back to the hotel, and remembered suddenly that I had not seen any homeless on the streets. No one living in a cardboard castle. There are the requisite Third World beggars in some parts of town, of course. In a week full of very long walks, one man bummed me for a cigarette, none for money. In Southern California it is hard to get coffee in a cafe, or walk six or seven



blocks to work without getting bummed a half-dozen times; in a very affluent part of the country.

It is not that Mexico City has no crime, nor any poor. It is surrounded in the hills with the poor who are building shanties

in which to live, where there is no running water or sewers. You can see them on the buses and subways, carrying a few bricks each day to their squatter homesteads. They are there by the hundreds of thousands. But there is a transportation system to serve them, too.

It was odd, because it triggered old and perhaps naive memories of the United States. But in Mexico City in seven days I saw fewer down-and-outers on the streets, any streets, than you

could find on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., or Park Avenue in New York between 10 and 12 in the morning any day of the week. Different cultural patterns, perhaps.

Or perhaps it is political necessity in Mexico to care for the

Whatever it is, human dignity seems to the visitor to be held in higher esteem.

I loved it and expect to go back from time to time.

Don Mitchell is a former lowan now living in Santa Ana,

### A tour of Mexico City by subway

OME RIDE WITH me for a while on the subways of Mexico City, among the cleanest, cheapest and most efficient on Earth. For a nickel one can ride to the corners of the largest city in the world. One can see a dozen different countries reflected in the faces and clothing of the other riders. The tourist, the foreigner, can ride with relative ease -- routes are clearly marked, maps and diagrams easy to come by.

The subway trains run on rubber tires, are computerized and cleaner than city buses in the United States. It is ironic that a Yank might enjoy them. All citizens strive in my hometown to ride alone in expensive automobiles, no matter what the cost. In Mexico City, one is never alone, the ride is cheap. However odd it was, it made sense.

Each subway stop has a different facet of town, little communities — in fact, there are governments, akin to county governments at every third stop or so. The city is too large for a single governing body. (It is also too large for a proper tax base, and it sucks money from the public coffers of all the rest of the nation.)

One might stop often to surface, to sight-see and to get away from the heat of the subways. Windows are opened for more air, only to accommodate more noise.

The air everywhere is awful. About four tons of lead go into the air every day; it is added to carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide to make 5 million tons of chemicals and suspended particles each year.

The inside of shirt collars and cuff rims turn the color

of lamp black in a few hours.

On the west end of Mexico City I surfaced from the subway during a March vacation just to sight-see. Pleasant, Mediterranean community, I thought. There is a very light rain falling. It looks like a foreign film to me. Walking along narrow sidewalks, curving streets that end abruptly and turn into other curving streets. Old cars are parked along the way. There are benches and other elements of neighborhood life on the sidewalks, and I take to the street sometimes, and then back to the sidewalk.

Suddenly there is the cacophonous barking of a dozen dogs. Before I can turn, one hurls himself at the back of my legs and I yell. I turn and see a stampede of dogs bearing down on me in deadly earnest. I am running backward now, calling on schoolyard Spanish to growl back at the dogs. Memory fails. Number and gender will not agree. Panic leads to poor grammar.

I keep stumbling, hitting parked cars along the sidewalk. There is no time for the obvious humor. All week I have worried slightly and needlessly about my throat being cut. Not at all. It's the dogs I should have worried about. They are going to eat me alive. A woman comes out of a house and yells at the dogs.

All but one return to her; he chases me another block. The rain picks up, the neighborhood regains its Mediterranean look. I make it finally back to the subway, pay

another nickel, and take off for more adventures.

- Don Mitchell Nothing like it in Kansas City.

# Professor grades U of I scandal stories

BECKER

Continued from Page 1C

attorney attempted to persuade the jury, apparently successfully, that Ronnie Harmon was permitted to compete at lowa despite grades that should have made him ineligible. That charge was repeated by Tom Witosky's story in The Register on March 8 and periodically on succeeding days. In fact, he amplified on the attorney's charge by misstating the Big Ten rule that applied to Harmon. Witosky claimed that the Big Ten required a 2.0 for a student to compete in his fourth year.

That was not true for Harmon. The applicable rule that applied to students who entered college in 1982 was a 1.85 for the fourth year of competition, which Witosky should have known because he is The Register's expert on

the Big Ten and has a copy of the rule book. As officials of the Big Ten and the university have said repeatedly since the trial began, neither Harmon nor Mitchell ever competed when ineligible. I find it inexplicable that Witosky and other reporters appeared to give more credence to the charges of the lawyers for the agents charged with fraud and to the misleading testimony they evoked than they gave to responsible people knowledgeable of the facts. In the few instances when the correct information was published, it never received the headline treatment or stress that the untrue information did. Why?

Another point stressed in media coverage was that Harmon had taken only one course in his major. This information was first reported as a "charge" made during the trial.

Within a few days, it had been transformed to the status of fact in a Register editorial: "But the poor kid took one course in his major area of study in three years" (March 12). As Har mon's transcript, later published in The Register, showed, he took six courses in his major, passing five of them, before transferring to the Bachelor of General Studies degree which had no major nor, at the time Harmon and Mitchell entered the university, general education requirements. To this day, I have seen no acknowledgement in The Register or any other paper of the fact that it misled its readers when it published this information.

Nor have I seen corrections or apologies printed for other untrue information that was published: the headline on March 9 charging that I "Knew Harmon Graduation Unlikely" when, in fact, I expected him to complete his degree, or the headline of April 9 charging "Harmon, Mitchell Fell Far Shy of U of I Academic Requirements," when the fact is that Mitchell could have completed his degree the semester he dropped out, if he had done well in mer athlete who has made a profession of such

Harmon, although in school only 3½ years, was within 25 to 28 hours of his degree, depending upon whether he chose to complete the B.A. or B.G.S. degree.

If Tom Witosky and John Carlson, the authors of that story, had checked the transcripts they had in hand with any knowledgeable academic adviser at the university, they could have discovered these facts. Instead, even as late as April 16, long after the Cedar Rapids Gazette reported the facts accurately, Register reporter Kenneth Pins announced that Harmon and Mitchell "were more than 30 credit hours short of graduating when they completed their athletic eligibility and joined

Carlson to comment on the Bloom-Walters case and on the University of Iowa's treatment of its student-athletes.

It was no surprise to anyone that Edwards would provide material for Carlson's headline, "U of I Called 'Plantation' That Exploits Black Players." Nowhere in the story is it mentioned that Harry Edwards has never set foot on the University of Iowa campus nor interviewed any of its black student-athletes. That fact did not prevent Carlson from quoting Edwards' assertion that the University of Iowa doesn't "give a damn about these kids. They have absolutely no conscience in terms of their unethical behavior."

sity. Readers and listeners to all of the news stories that appeared about Iowa athletics since the Chicago trial began would find it almost impossible to learn that many of the problems headlined during this case were long ago corrected and others are being worked on. Information about all of these changes was

released as they occurred and released again to the media on March 28 of this year. This information was buried in an extremely brief story on an inside page of The Register on March 29, so as not to distract from the banner headlines about wrongdoing on Page I, I assume, and was totally ignored by all but a few other media.

I believe firmly in freedom of the press. But I also believe that freedom carries with it responsibility.

lowans should not expect that responsibility from columnists such as Donald Kaul, because his purpose is to amuse rather than inform. Nor should we expect it from the columns and editorials in the Daily lowan, the student newspaper at the university, since these youngsters are just learning the business and some are only playing at being journalists.

We should expect it from the professional journalists who control the news and editorial pages and newscasts of the major media on which we depend.

In the Bloom-Walters affair, many of these media have fallen far short of that expectation. This failure leads me to worry about the validity of their reports on cases where I have no independent means of knowing the facts.

Another problem is that when incorrect information is printed in a newspaper such as The Register or The New York Times, It is more difficult to eradicate than crabgrass from an lowa lawn.

Not only do other media pick it up and diffuse it, reporters and editors on the same papers come back to it again and again for background as they write related stories or updates. So it is critical that major newspapers get the facts straight from the outset, a standard they failed to meet in this instance.

For their total performance in the present case, the bulk of the media have earned about the same grade Ronnie Harmon did in watercolor painting.

One last point. The usual response of the media to critics who point out their flaws is to charge, as The Register did to President Rawlings in an editorial on March 17, that criticism of the press is simply a way to avoid facing the hard facts. I suspect that will be journalists' and editors' response to this critique.

However, given their poor performance in this case, another comment in that same Register editorial seems appropriate: "None of that will wash."

66 Many of the problems headlined during this case were long ago corrected and others

are being worked on. ?? -Samuel Becker

the National Football League."

For some reason, many journalists today seem intent on preventing facts from getting in

the way of a good story.

Even worse, some in this case have made up facts to enliven their columns. A case in point is Matt Trowbridge, sports reporter for the lowa City Press-Citizen who charged on March 17 that I had "stamped Harmon's drop slips, which basically guaranteed that Harmon would not graduate."

The truth is that I did sign a drop slip early in the fall semester of 1985 when Harmon chose to drop my course and pick up another instead I believe he erred in choosing not to stay in my course to benefit from my wit and wisdom, but this change of courses neither slowed nor hastened his progress toward his degree. It seems to me readers of the Press-Citizen deserve an answer to why one of its employees reports invented "facts."

In all the coverage of the Harmon-Mitchell case that appeared in Iowa and elsewhere, the clearest evidence of inferential structuring the searching for evidence to fit a prior prejudice - was the story by John Carlson in the March 12 Register. Anyone who has been even casually following sports coverage during the past decade knows that if one wants some good quotations damning universities for their treatment of black athletes, the one sure source is Harry Edwards, a sociologist and forthe courses for which he was registered, and criticism. This is the source sought out by

All of this is especially interesting in light of the fact that Register reporters knew of two responsible men who had been on the university campus this past fall, invited by the Board in Control of Athletics to interview coaches and black athletes, to study the advising system for athletes and the problems and potential problems for blacks on campus, and to advise the board on changes that might be helpful to black students.

These men, both black, are Andrew Hankins, a former varsity basketball player with a B.S. degree from lowa, M.D. degree from Michigan, and now chair of the radiology department at Southwest Hospital in Detroit, and Forest Farmer, former varsity football player at Purdue and now president of ACUSTAR, Inc., a Ford Motor company subsidiary in Michigan. A Register reporter was present when these two men reported that they were impressed with the efforts being made at the University of Iowa to provide the best possible academic and social counseling for black athletes. That information did not produce a headline at the time. Hankins and Farmer were probably not contacted by journalists during the present case because their comments would not have produced a headline condemn-

ing the university now. The other relevant information largely suppressed by the news media throughout the flurry of charges is the strengthening of university and Big Ten academic requirements since Harmon and Mitchell entered the univer-