



Some give boosters a bad name

by Gena Atkinson

A group of overzealous, misguided Tarkanian supporters have stolen the show in the never-ending drama/tragedy being acted out on UNLV's campus. But even as a drama group, these supporters/actors have overlooked the prime rule of the theatre: respect one's audience. In their performances at rallies on campus, Board of Regents meetings and just recently, picketing on Maryland Parkway, these actors have alienated their audience and would-be supporters by parading their lack of intelligence, dignity and ability to reason.

In February, the faculty sponsored a "rally for academics," which was turned into a three-ring circus by basketball program supporters with their color-coordinated Gucci apparel and "Fire Maxson" T-shirts. Loud, obnoxious and completely unappealing, any of their relevant viewpoints were tainted by their overall attitude.

Like a scary flashback, these monsters reared their ugly heads again at the Board of Regents meeting. When the floor was opened to the public, their lack of manners was pronounced with heck-

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ling and threats made to Maxson and several regents. With enviable eloquence, the attention-hogging monsters shouted, "You're dogmeat" and "You better hope I don't see you at the (basketball, of course) games!"

Two thumbs up! How did this group get overlooked at the Academy Awards? They could win a new category entitled, Best Overly-Dramatic Acting Group, although their performance would be in close competition with "The Gong Show."

It is important to mention that these few are not representative of all boosters. Most boosters are proud of their involvement in the basketball program's success, but even more exalted to have had a hand in UNLV's overall success. These generous folks have contributed money and have been loyal supporters of UNLV's athletic program for many years.

An alumnus, and basketball booster, Mark Rich, contributes to the basketball pro-

gram and receives season tickets to the games, but notes, "The face value of the tickets is only a fraction of the cost contributed. Of course some boosters consider good seats a status symbol, but in general are supporters of the entire school."

There is always an exception to the rule, and in this case, some are ruining the image of all boosters. At the Board of Regents meeting, an obviously ill-advised "booster" proved the point by saying, "I will not donate any money until Maxson is fired. Not even my taxes should go to the university."

This elite group is giving well-meaning individuals a bad name. They're obviously not suited as boosters, or for that matter, the theatre. Students should grab hold of that cane and pull these egotistical thespians off the stage before too many people begin to identify UNLV's true supporters with this villainous cast in need of a better agent.

'Gucci Row' should be returned to the students

by Ched Whitney

Earlier this semester, President Robert Maxson quietly made Athletic Director Jim Weaver Director of the Thomas & Mack Center. Weaver now oversees the building's operations. (He also will be in charge of the Silver Bowl.)

Weaver's appointment—together with Coach Jerry Tarkanian's departure—provides the T&M and the athletic department a perfect opportunity to turn over a new leaf in its basketball game seating policy.

The rule in the past has been clear: gold outweighs books in regard to good seats. The front rows at UNLV basketball games, billed "The hottest ticket in town," have been filled with boosters and other equally opulent members of the Las Vegas community.

This is fine for the National Basketball Association's Los Angeles Lakers, but UNLV is an institution of higher learning, not a professional franchise. Jack Nicholson pays big money for his front-row seats at the Great Western Forum; but he's not competing with students there. Here the university's first obligation is to look out for the rights of students even if it means the loss of a couple of bucks or a political ally.

At UNLV, the whole idea of boosterism has seemingly been

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perverted to mean: "the almighty dollar rules all." The point of donating to an institution such as this one is to help build the pride one feels for it in others. With regard to athletics—specifically basketball—pride does not seem to be enough for boosters. The money comes with strings attached: "give us good seats."

Certainly boosters are a huge benefit for a university. Many of this nation's oldest institutions have risen to prominence with help from the pocketbooks of generous boosters.

In some cases, UNLV has been blessed in the same way. But some people have lost the fact that the whole point of being a booster is the love of an academic institution not the institution of an elitist basketball fan club.

Now President Maxson can start a new chapter in UNLV history. In which direction will we go?

Weaver and Maxson can send a message that we aren't going back to the old days by getting rid of "Gucci Row" and putting the students down front.