



Dictator of

The following essay is taken from the "Proceedings of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences" for their 93rd annual meeting in April. It was written by UNL freshman Mary Liz Jameson, the first Nebraska Academy of Sciences Loren Eiseley Memorial Scholarship winner, and was presented at the "Friends of Loren Eiseley Celebration" in Lincoln on Sept. 2, 1982. The scholarship and the celebration honor 1933 Nebraska graduate Eiseley, an internationally-recognized scientist, writer and poet who died in 1977.

by **Mary Liz Jameson, '86**

Far away in the universe exists a star revolving against the velvety smooth darkness. The star illuminates the black, casting its translucent beams upon a hazed sphere. Through the beams, the star sees a space—occupied by Nature—beautiful, clear, and peaceful. As the star probes further into the space, it finds a feature of Nature—Man. Such a fascinating yet perplexing creature he is, trying to overpower the element which sustains him. He has clouded the sky, cluttered the grounds, littered the streams, and abolished the wilds. What is Man's relation to Nature? Man may be part of Nature, yet he separates himself from it. He may be aside from it and on common grounds with it, yet Man seems to rule Nature. Possibly, Man may be a dominant part of Nature, trying to dictate its mysteries.

As a ruler of the planet earth, Man has little sense of equilibrium. He strips the forests and converts them into condominiums, he blows craters into mountainsides so he may make Ford Pintos, he pumps a thick fluid from the earth's core and uses it to light the neon signs along the Vegas Strip. Man uses his environment to bask in the luxury of push-button ease. If Man was to look upon the world, he would see the environment depleted with each new industrial innovation. Turn around and part of Nature has died; replacing it is a cement slab with windows. Man is the dictator of a diminishing environment; diminishing at his profit, and expense.

Nature's Mysteries

With the swiftness of a signature, Man can raise a skyscraper upon a rolling prairie. Man calls it progress—rearranging Nature into a more convenient and profitable form. He pushes Nature aside to build a house; he pushes a house aside to build a grocery store; he pushes a grocery store aside to build a shopping center; he pushes a shopping center aside to build a garbage dump. There is no progress—it is merely a cycle of rise and fall, build and destroy, which infinitely goes 'round and 'round.

Once wild life frolicked on the rolling prairie where expansions of lifeless glass, steel, and concrete now age in the air. Buildings may simply be the rearranged resources of yesterday, yet natural resources and wilderness are an irreparable and irreplaceable pair—they are neither increasing nor can they multiply to perpetuate themselves as Man. If Man does not monitor his use and conserve Nature, the needs and desires for more, more, more will exceed the amount of the limited natural resources. Even now, the overuse and dependency upon oil is constricting. Man has drained the core of the earth until the once ubiquitous resource is on the edge of extinction. He has run Nature dry. Now man faces the struggle of maintaining the small plot of remaining wilderness frontier from the growing public demands.

Though Man seems to be in command of the environment, he is totally dependent upon it. All of his needs are derived from the environment: the water, sun, earth, and air. These give life and sustain Man. If one of the elements was to disappear, Man's life (as well as other forms of life) would be in jeopardy. The world is like a great chain-linked fence which must bend and flex to the ever changing environmental factors. When an animal becomes extinct, a gap is made in the fence. Now the surrounding links must bear the weight which it once upheld,

weakening the entire network. The abolished habitat, the streams inundated with waste, and the polluted air tear the links and stress every organism still occupying the great chain-linked fence. Man doesn't seem to realize the necessity of his wild lands. "Do they understand that as man subdues nature he subdues himself—that man, being an animal, is as dependent upon the operation of natural laws as an amoeba or a frog? Let the balance necessary to man's existence be destroyed, and it is quite possible that he will go the way of the wild horse and the passenger pigeon." (MOMENT IN THE SUN by Robert Rienow)

If a Man could look down upon his home, would he see earth in the same light as the star? Or would Man look down upon his home and applaud his "progress," remaining in the dark? If Man could peer at the world from behind a glass window, could he see himself as the dictator of a dwindling world? Could he see beyond his protected haven into a space of

nothingness with vast acres devastated by groveling dozers, the sky tainted with a malignant cesspool, streets littered with cootied vagrants, the mind blemished by society's hand, and Nature gently disappearing, gently vanishing, gently fading into Man's rampant past? But Man stands behind the window where he is protected from the space. He can stare through the dirt on the window ignoring its presence, ignoring its worth, ignoring its meaning. He can stare into the window searching for clues of existence, searching for tales of the past, searching for solemn, deep thoughts. Man is an observer encased by a window which reveals the contaminants of the space. He holds no solutions—nor does the space. If Man could jump down from his throne and grasp Nature's hand, then there would be environmental equity. The haze surrounding the earth would lift and a million delicate lights would glow from the earth, shining harmoniously with a million delicate lights from the velvety darkness above.



Mary Liz Jameson, a 1982 graduate of Lincoln Southeast High School, "practices what she preaches."

Locally she is active in the Raptor Recovery Center and Wildlife Rescue Team, and she recently returned from a National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association meeting. All three groups deal with orphaned and injured animals, preparing them for release back into their natural habitats.

Mary Liz is also a camping enthusiast and has participated in a number of Nebraska Outdoor Encounter trips stressing environmental awareness.

With an educational background in science which she credits to encouragement from Southeast teachers Tim Golden, '77, and Gerry Saunders, the UNL freshman has selected life science as her college major. (In a review of the first "Friends of Eiseley Celebration" last September, Lincoln Journal & Star columnist Herb Hyde said, "I would suggest to folks at UNL that they have a potential Eiseley in Mary Liz Jameson. Four years hence it will be interesting to see what they have turned out.")

Mary Liz is the daughter of Dean, '53, and Jane Carpender Jameson, '54, of Lincoln.