

Editorial

'Star's' dreams die Community mourns athlete, not man

He had a family. He had friends. He had a mind. He had dreams for the future.

But after a .22-caliber pistol killed Ben Wilson, 17, last week in Chicago, he was only the "basketball star" who met an unfair and tragic end.

One Neil F. Simeon Vocational High School official said Wilson's death was tragic and surely the two 16-year-old gunmen didn't realize they were shooting one of the nation's top high school basketball players.

A college basketball recruiter said Wilson was not only a good person, he had the potential to be a good college player.

Several schoolmates, between sobs, gasped that Wilson was the greatest high school basketball player ever.

Even Wilson's father, fighting back tears, said, "I don't understand it. He was a great basketball player."

I am certain that away from the camera, Wilson's father had more to say — maybe that it wasn't fair to murder a young man about to embark on a promising career, or simply to murder his son. But the statement that was shown on television revealed a great deal. In essence, the media showed that it was incomprehensible that someone would want to murder Wilson the athlete, not Wilson the human being.

This warped perception of who and what Wilson was prevails in society as well as in the media. The school official seems to think that the gunmen would have had second thoughts about firing the shots had they realized they were about to kill an American hero, rather than an ordinary Joe. The recruiter admired Wilson's character, but add to it his basketball prowess and Wilson became a far better person. And students mourned the school's star athlete and idol, not their friend.

The statements reflect one of society's attitudes: An athlete is made of better stuff than a D-average student, a drug addict, or a kid simply trying to survive on the streets.

Several of these less-famous kids have been killed on Chicago's streets recently — the same streets Wilson roamed. These kids had family and friends who loved them, who miss them, who feel empty as a result of their loss and who are struggling to understand the deaths. But did the national media pick up on these stories? Did an entire student body sob and literally stumble across the gym floor in hysterics over their deaths? Probably not. The others weren't made of the right stuff in society's eyes. They probably couldn't dunk a basketball, run fast, jump high or flex a muscle. They could only lend a shoulder to a crying friend, laugh at Dad's stupid jokes and pester sis.

Wilson probably did these same things, but that is not how he will be remembered. He'll always be the star, the one whose death was a greater loss to society because he may have led some lucky university to a national basketball title.

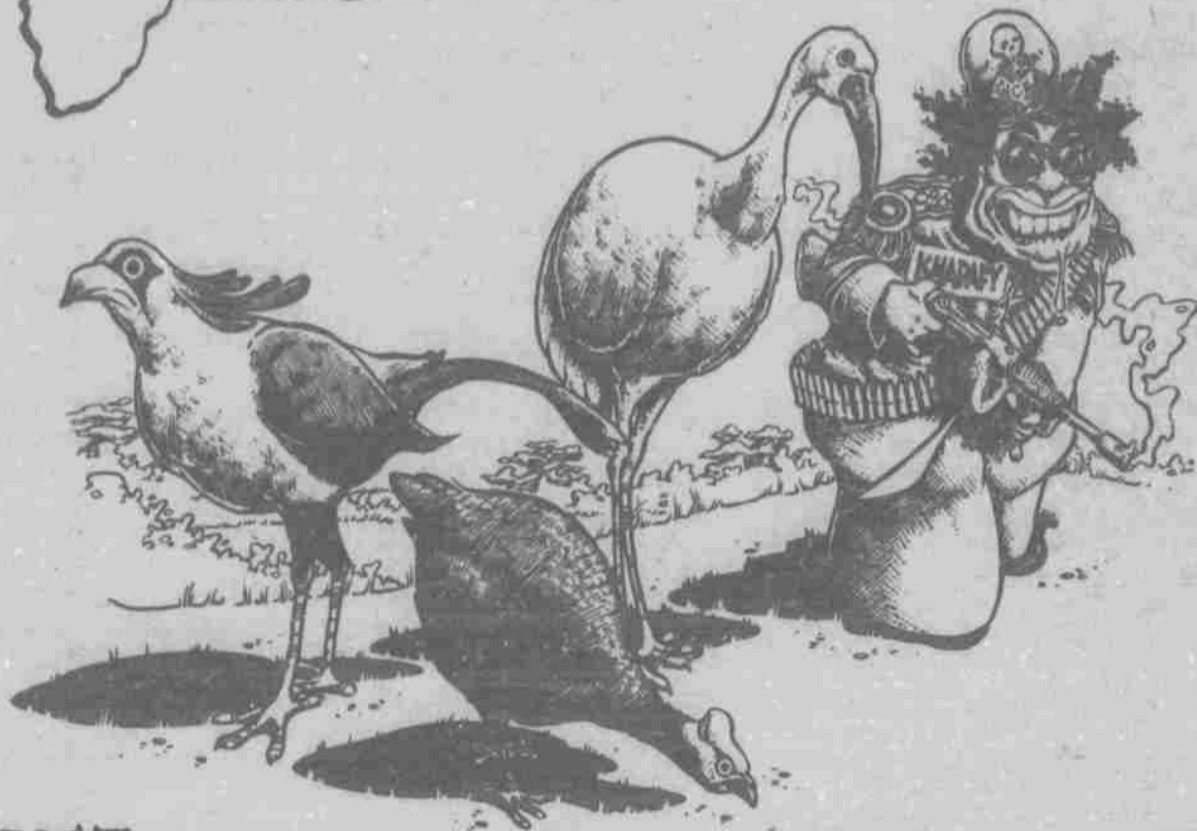
Wilson should not be remembered in this way. He was neither greater nor lesser for his athletic ability. He was a human being, who like all the other Chicago youths killed on the streets, died needlessly.

Wilson's death will always be a tragedy, but some good could result if it prods school and city officials to work together to prevent more murders. It's a pity, though, that we as a society don't place the same value on all life. If we did, an angered community may have demanded action after the first teen-age murder and Wilson could still be dreaming of a bright future.

Judi Nygren
Daily Nebraskan Senior Editor



(L to R, the Secretary Bird, the Guinea Fowl, the Scarlet Ibis, the Malevolent Loon...)



BEN SARGENT
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Kirkpatrick's strong nerves, skills indispensable to United Nations

The maxim "the more cooks, the worse the broth" does not apply to the making of U.S. foreign policy. Too few cooks produce the bland cuisine of the State Department's policy cafeteria. That department has an unreasonably high ratio of interests to ideas, which is why the Reagan administration needs to be leavened by Jeane Kirkpatrick.

She has served a four-year sentence as ambassador to the United Nations. She would like to pass back through the looking glass, to a more reasonable world and a better office.



George Will

However, until such an office — secretary of state or national security adviser — becomes vacant, she should stay at the United Nations. Otherwise, she will relinquish her "seat at the table." It is the table where the president, vice president, chairman of the joint chiefs, CIA director, secretaries of state and defense and — gloriously — Kirkpatrick deliberate about policy. The fact that she must, for now, sit amidst irrationality in New York in order to retain a role in Washington's reasoning is just one paradox in Kirkpatrick's public life, a life rich in paradoxes.

Here are two more: She is indispensable to American policy-making because she is somewhat un-American. And although her temperament is said to test the patience of Secretary of State Shultz, his temperament is why she should stay at "the table."

Ronald Reagan is no intellectual, but he first insisted on meeting Kirkpatrick because he had read one of her articles. Then he employed this woman whose intellectual gifts and attainments at least match those of Dean Acheson and Henry Kissinger.

Reagan is an elemental political force because he is utterly at one with his countrymen. He is pure American, to the center of all his cells. But that means he is inclined to indiscriminate optimism. In foreign policy, that pro-

duces a reluctance, even an inability, to understand that problems will not be dissolved by better communication, that the Cold War is not just a misunderstanding, that all human beings are not "basically alike."

Most citizens of tranquil, liberal democracies have difficulty understanding different national characters, and the radically different motives and goals of the world's governing elites. Kirkpatrick does not. Churchill said, sincerely and truly, "The Almighty in his infinite wisdom has not seen fit to create Frenchmen in the image of Englishmen." Kirkpatrick has a deeper understanding of the fact that Soviet leaders are not "like us."

Reagan, unlike FDR, does not relish conflict among subordinates. But for an intellectual of Kirkpatrick's stripe, conflict — civil but sharp — is like oxygen: essential to life. The sainted Edmund Burke said that antagonists are helpers because they strengthen our nerves and sharpen our skills. At the United Nations, Kirkpatrick has been surrounded by antagonists.

Kirkpatrick went there with strong nerves and sharp skills, and today they are stronger and sharper. Perhaps that is why many other foreign policy officials in the administration are reportedly not eager to see more of her. Why? Why does butter avoid a sword?

Secretary Shultz is not butter. He is a mature, experienced man. But Kirkpatrick is a necessary complement to him. He has had a "British" career, moving through a succession of quite different high offices. (He has been head of what now is the Office of Management and Budget, and secre-

tary of labor, then of treasury, then of state.) But "British" careers are apt to require, as they do in Britain, the departmental head to become habituated to dependence on the "permanent government."

This is the bureaucracy, with its inertia and conventional thinking. Shultz, the quintessential "government man," is necessarily dependent on the State Department bureaucracy that is the part of the permanent government most ill-atuned to the president's professed vision of the world.

Furthermore, Irving Kristol argues that economists, businessmen and lawyers are ill-suited to diplomacy. Shultz is an economist and businessman surrounded by lawyers.

Economists think in terms of rational behavior models. But in international relations, cost-benefit analyses often are difficult, and such calculations often are rendered irrelevant by animal spirits, national atavisms and ideological frenzies. Businessmen live in a world of ordered, regulated, almost decorous competition. Nations do not.

For lawyers, a negotiated outcome is normally presupposed, and winning is measured in adjustments at the margins of a dispute. Relations between superpower adversaries are not so mild. A capitalist country, where one person's gain can also profit another, is apt to underestimate the extent to which the game of nations is a zero-sum game, where one nation's gain is an adversary's symmetrical loss.

Kirkpatrick is a precious commodity precisely because she is not like economists, businessmen or lawyers.

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Scientists fight terrorism with comic-strip proposals

Scientists at the Los Alamos National Laboratory have apparently been reading comic strips. They've submitted some proposals for anti-terrorist devices that seem to have come off the drawing boards of pseudo-scientific cartoonists.

other twitchy types who may be planning an attack on the president.

The scientists don't say how the scanner would distinguish between nervous assassins and, say, someone whose lunch is fighting back, who needs to go to the bathroom or who simply had a bad day at the office.

- "Human Performance Enhancement (or Degradation) in a Counter-Terrorist Context." The idea here is to inject chemicals into either the food, drink or air ingested by the bad guys, which will knock them out.

"For example," the study explains, "hostages and guards could be overwhelmed by sleep in a hostage-barricade situation by some substance in the air they breathed, the food they ate or the water they drank. The hazards inherent in this (hostage) situation could be quickly overcome without risk of injury or death."

The Los Alamos scientists say they don't have the capability yet, "but it is an exciting avenue to explore." We might point out that the idea occurred more than 15 years ago to radicals, who threatened to dump LSD into municipal water supplies.

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Jack Anderson and Joseph Spear

The far-out ideas are contained in an internal study, "Concepts for Assisting the Federal Emergency Management Agency in Its Various Missions." Our associates Donald Goldberg and Indy Badhwar have seen a copy of the report sent to FEMA. Here are some of the wilder proposals:

- "Identification of Stressed Individuals." The study points out that "a potential assassin entering the White House for a tour or reception or standing in a crowd waiting for a presidential appearance...is likely to be under stress."

To pick up the signs of what it calls the "manifest symptoms" of this stress, the study proposes development of a sort of "metal detector" for nail biters, teeth grinders, shifty-eyed sweaters and

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