

Game-show winner cites skill

Luck not involved with win, he says

By Shannon Uehling
Staff Reporter

Joe Ryan doesn't have much faith in luck.

Ryan, a senior political science student, competed and won on MTV's "Remote Control" game show in December 1988.

Ryan only partially attributes getting on the show to luck. But his success was a product of skill and positive attitude, he said.

"I don't think I was lucky," he said. "I went out and expected to win."

That attitude paid off, he said. Big. Ryan won several expensive prizes, such as a 1989 Mitsubishi Montero, a stereo, a television, a Soloflex machine, a Karaoke-type machine, a bike, a camera, some compact discs and "some sort of musical instrument," he said.

The odyssey to Orlando, Fla., began at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where Ryan competed against 100 potential contestants.

He first had to take a written quiz, identify nine rock videos and prove he had "personality" before the group was cut down to 20 and, eventually, to the five contestants. MTV flew those five to Florida for the game show.

The trip itself was a quick one, Ryan said. He spent one evening in Orlando and was on his way back to Nebraska the same day as the taping of the show.

Ryan said he wasn't very nervous about being on television. The people at MTV

took the time to show the contestants around the studio and let them practice the game before the taping.

As soon as the practice was over, three of the five contestants were put on the set to begin the taping "and 22 minutes later it was over," Ryan said.

The best part of the experience, Ryan said, was meeting the people on the show and the other contestants.

Ryan said that show member Collin Quinn was a pretty nice guy, even though Quinn said something rude about Ryan.

"He ragged on me," Ryan said. Ryan said Quinn commented that Ryan was the type of guy to be the first in a crowd to point out a foul smell.

Another perk to being on "Remote Control," Ryan said, was staying at Orlando's Peabody Hotel. MTV paid for all the contestants' expenses except food.


Although the "vacation" lasted only one day, Ryan said it was nice to get away. The weather in Florida was considerably warmer than in Nebraska.

Ryan said he also prepared for "Remote Control" through another game: the old ESPN show, "Superbowl of Sports Trivia."

He said he was concerned that being on the sports trivia show would disqualify him for "Remote Control." But nothing came of his apprehension.

Although Ryan had the good fortune to be among the first 100 contestants and the final three to be selected, he put more of his faith in himself.

"The questions are easy and the people you go against are pretty much idiots," he said.

"You go out and blow their socks off. Or you don't get any points at all." And that is anything but luck. 

Flash of fright

Lightning strikes too close to home

By Thomas Clouse
Senior Editor

Many people may be feeling lucky this St. Patrick's Day, but there are some who have been struck by misfortune.

Struck by lightning, to be exact. For those who are unfortunate enough to be too close to where lightning strikes, the consequences sometimes can be deadly. But regardless of whether people are injured when lightning strikes, they will never forget it.

One person who was unfortunate enough to be too close to a lightning strike was Gene McKenzie of Fremont.

About seven years ago, McKenzie was sitting next to his fireplace, which had a steel chimney, when lightning struck it, and the electricity jumped onto his back.

"It didn't burn my back, but I was worried about my heart," McKenzie said.

The surge did not hurt, he said, but he suffered minor shock afterwards.

"I felt a little weak and a little drawn, like all my energy was pulled out of me," he said.

Although getting struck by lightning would seem very unlucky, McKenzie said he didn't see it that way.

"I would say that I am lucky that I survived and have had no side effects," McKenzie said.

The only way to have avoided the blast would have been to sit farther away from the fireplace, he said.

"Looking back, I guess that wasn't the smartest place to be sitting during a thunderstorm," McKenzie said.

Although lightning is said never to strike in the same place twice, McKenzie said he

still respected lightning.

"I worry about not having lightning rods on my house," he said.

But lightning and thunder are cool. They are like natural fireworks in reverse. The flash comes first, then comes the blast.

As children, my brothers and sisters used to try to figure out what caused thunder and lightning.

One educated theory was that lightning came from clouds colliding with each other and thunder came from angels wrestling.


We would sit around, trying to scare each other by telling stories: Thunder was God's way of saying that we had been bad.

Thunder storms can be scary if you are in a dark, lonely room. But as children, your parents always seemed to have enough room in their big, warm bed to chase the evil thunder away.

Then you became too old and too "big" to be scared of such wimpy things like thunder, and you reached the stage of challenging lightning to strike where you are.

But as you grew older, you learned to respect the power of nature and the danger involved. We learned in junior-high science class that lightning was actually a discharge of atmospheric electricity from one cloud to another or between a cloud and the earth.

We were also taught that the thunder blast was caused by the sudden heating and expansion of air by an electrical discharge.

Then after you found out what it was, you reached the stage where lightning could again frighten you — when you're alone at night and you awaken to that big flash of blue light. 

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