

There's more to life than politics

The other day some of my friends asked me the topic of my column.

"It wouldn't be politics, would it?" they asked.



They thought that was a funny joke — pointing out to me the limits of my writing. I was less than amused.

I have to admit I intended to write about government or politics. About President Bush or Campaign '92 or something.

Not because I thought those topics would captivate or spellbind readers. I certainly did not imagine that.

But because government and politics are the sort of things I know about. It only makes sense that I can best write about them.

My writing on topics other than politics often resembles bad country music - it's hard to listen to for long.

So I am writing today for my friends.

When they read this column, I think they will ask me to write about government next time. Please.

Now I must decide the topic of my writing experiment.

How about sports? I can write about that.

On sports:

Sports, like politics, is easy to understand. Or so I used to think.

It has not been very simple for me lately. Take football, for instance.

The approach of fall is usually an exciting time, as it brings back college football to Nebraska. The air is full of hope that victory and glory will finally fall on the Cornhuskers.

I used to breathe that air deeply — used to think that nothing could be more perfect than a fall day in Memorial Stadium.

This year will be different.

The worst thing that can happen to someone with heroes has happened to me: I came face to face with them.

I am covering sports for the Daily Nebraskan this year. The job requires

me to interview NU football players. I have not been impressed.

The players do not resemble the heroes who meant so much to me when I was younger. Those same men who I've seen run for touchdowns on Saturdays for years are real people with real flaws.

I feel like the characters in the Wizard of Oz when they looked behind the curtain and discovered the great Oz was a fraud.

Reality is sometimes not a pretty thing.

So it goes, as Kurt Vonnegut, my favorite author, likes to say.

On Kurt Vonnegut:

You should read his books. He is one of the most brilliant writers I have come across.

His books are good because they are true.

Vonnegut has given some advice on writing that I have never been able to follow:

"Do not ramble," he said.

What else can I write about besides politics and sports? Well, I suppose I should introduce myself.

On me:

"Hello, my name is Jeremy Fitzpatrick. I am a very average person."

What more could you want to know?

Someone I have never even met — a very average reader — has a better idea of who I am.

The person sent me a letter in response to my column last week. In the column, I said we shouldn't hate or fear homosexuals, like Pat Buchanan had done at the Republican National Convention.

The letter writer seems to know all about me.

He informed me that I was an ultra left-wing liberal, a boy still wet behind the ears. I have my "left-wing agenda mapped out for years," he said.

When I read that to my friends, we had a good laugh. They don't think I'm very liberal.

The letter writer also told me I was a coward and wouldn't have the cour-

age to defend my country in war. They didn't sign the letter.

How brave.

On war:

I would fight, by the way, if the war was just like World War II. I would hate it, but I would fight if it was the only way to protect the lives and human rights of innocent people.

My grandfather was in World War II, where he saw people literally blown up around him in the South Pacific. He does not like to talk about it, but he has told me enough for me to know it was a terrible thing.

He would laugh to hear my letter-writing friend calling me a boy who would be afraid to fight. My grandfather was only a boy when he had to fight, younger than I am.

Boys, not men, fight wars. The men in wars are usually officers who are safe behind the lines.

I thank the letter writer for taking the time, though. The letter made me laugh, and at least I know someone read my column.

My pen pal would probably rather I did not write a column, or at least that I couldn't say whatever I wanted here.

On censorship:

Censorship might appeal to him as a way to keep "ultra left-wing liberals" from speaking.

Unfortunately for my pen pal, we have the Bill of Rights in this country. Americans can say whatever they wish, which is just about the greatest idea anyone ever had.

So deal with it.

Regarding censorship, Woodrow Wilson said this:

"I have always believed that the greatest freedom of speech was the greatest safety, because if a man is a fool the best thing to do is encourage him to advertise the fact by speaking."

I hope I won't prove his point here this semester. But if I do, please write and let me know.

On mail:

I like getting it.

Fitzpatrick is a junior political science major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



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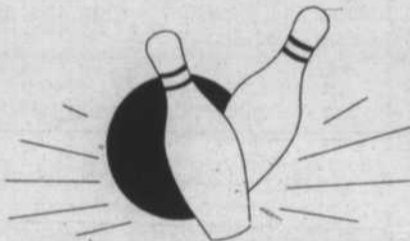
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