

**SAM KEPFIELD**

# Cost of success in life is high

A word of warning to those in the class of 1993 who are only now beginning to think about a job search: You might as well resign yourselves to working at McDonald's for a while before you land that first job.

As May draws near, we will be treated to hard-luck stories of MBAs working in warehouses and psychology majors working as poorly paid secretaries. We will be bombarded with statistics from the Labor Department bemoaning the fact that graduates face the toughest job market in 20 or 30 years.

This is being tied in with the term "generation war." Twentysomethings feel left out and dumped on, while their elders — baby boomers, the World War II generation — get all the jobs and benefits. Founders of the "Lead or Leave" movement make the talk-show rounds and square off with their opposite numbers in the Gray Panthers and the American Association of Retired Persons.

I thought we got rid of generational angst when "Thirtysomething" went off the air. I get tired of the legions of former mall rats whining that "my life didn't turn out the way I wanted it to." Neither has mine. Life is tough. Live with it.

What success in this world comes down to is attitude and hard work. The mistake too many grads make is assuming that a \$40,000-a-year job will be waiting for them the minute they get their sheepskin and that they're entitled to it. If they send out a dozen resumes with no result, it's OK to give up. With this kind of attitude, grads deserve to work in a "McJob" for eternity. Perseverance pays off.

My two college careers are examples of this. My first, from 1982 to 1986, was an orgy of drunkenness. I spent most of my time partying, doing what was needed to pass and little else. Law school, from 1986 to 1989,



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was much the same story. I worried about getting drunk, not getting grades.

Two words summed it all up: wasted potential. Like Marlon Brando in "On the Waterfront," I could have been a contender instead of a bum.

As a result of such a sterling record, I got few job offers after law school. The one I did take was as an assistant district attorney in a small western Kansas town for an abysmally low salary. Fortunately, it didn't last long; I might have lost my mind otherwise.

After drifting around for a few years, taking a few McJobs, I decided — after much serious thought — that I wanted to teach history at the university level. Three years after I thought I'd taken my last final, I subjected myself to the rigors of a master's program.

There was a difference this time. I got religion. I gave up boozing and have recently become engaged to a wonderful woman, thereby removing my two largest early impediments to

success.

I also developed an attitude that far too few of my generational cohorts have. I learned that I have to rely on myself — that depending on the government or anyone else in any large part for my success is setting myself up for failure. I'm not sitting around complaining about how life isn't fair; I know it's not. It's inherently unfair. I resolved to do everything necessary to succeed and let nothing stand in my way. If it comes off as arrogance at times, so be it. It works.

For the past year, my life has been a frenzy of activity with the promise of a payoff several years down the road. I am making two presentations to conferences this semester, and have one more ready for June. In addition to my thesis, I have a major independent research project in the works for publication.

I'm submitting papers left and right for publication, for fellowships, for scholarships, you name it. The last month alone left me frazzled and feeling overextended, because some cosmic conspiracy dictated that every application I've filled out be due on March 1 or March 15.

Do I have to do any of this? Except for the thesis, strictly speaking, I do not. I choose to run myself ragged now because I know that it will pay off when I'm looking at Ph.D. programs, and later for a teaching job. Those with the most achievements demonstrating excellence get the jobs. All others fall by the wayside. It's a truism in any job market.

No one is going to give anything away, and it's not going to be easy. Success comes from thorough preparation and hard work, from telling yourself that you will not be beaten, that momentary hardship will pass, that sincere effort will be rewarded.

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**DEB McADAMS**

# Birthday is chance to reflect

This may be an ordinary Wednesday for everyone else, but not for me. I face the prospect of finding cards in my mail that say things like, "You're at that special age! If you were a lizard, you'd be a belt!"

It's my thirtysomething birthday. Not a milestone, mind you. Merely another opportunity to reflect upon the many things that I forgot to do by now.

I forgot to be driving a restored 1956 ragtop T-bird. I forgot to be living in a luxurious, self-sufficient earth home near Sedona, Ariz., where some of my frequent guests would be Tom Robbins, Eric Clapton and Al Gore. I forgot to be riding the crest of international fame that could transport me safely to the heart of Tibet, or even Mecca.

Most of all, I forgot to have kids. It was a calculated omission. For 10 years, I've been eating little hormone pills that are perfectly safe until I take a drag off a Camel Light. Then a little hose in my brain will explode and my friends will get to wipe spittle from the corners of my mouth when they visit me.

That's the price you pay to be a globally ecological woman. After all, the underlying source of all of our environmental crises appears to be us. We are the only things that there are too many of. There are 5.5 billion of us now. If we continue to reproduce like bunnies, that number could nearly double by 2025, when I'm sixtysomething, and society is dropping us old farts like pigeons off a barn.

About 11 million people is nearly enough to buy all of the brand new vehicles parked on acres of arable land across this country, but I suspect that many will fall into the income group that demands keys at gunpoint.

Twice as many people may not seem like much of a threat here in the bread basket where you can hike for a couple of hours and find yourself in the middle of the wilderness. The



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consequences of population explosion are more evident in China, where they have to cultivate everything that isn't solid rock to feed themselves, or in Calcutta, where they can't sit down.

Now, I don't mean to frighten anyone, but for the sake of perspective, let's imagine twice as many people, here in Lincoln, at Shopko on Christmas Eve day.

The problem with my environmentally responsible childlessness is that it's due to something more mundane than global concern.

I'm terrified of having children. It began long ago with my mother's frustrated battle cry, "Just wait until you have kids of your own!"

My father automatically cursed anyone under 20. They were "damn kids!"

I was unimpressed with the joys of parenthood.

Later, when my friends began to have babies because they could, I'd sit in their distinctly baby-smelling houses and listen to childbirth conversations. A graphic discussion of childbirth can subdue a maternal instinct for a couple of years.

Besides the apparent excruciation of giving birth, most women, except for a half dozen that the rest of us would like to kill, look like a steamrollered, heroin-addicted sack of wet marshmallows after childbirth.

Not that I normally look much better, but I can't afford to lose any ground. Not at my age.

Women used to be safe by thirtysomething. Years ago, I would have been reaching the age when I was too old to have kids. Now, thanks to modern technology, I can wrestle with my innate urges well into my forties. The dirty little secret about those innate urges is that they grow stronger. Someone once gave us the erstwhile image of a "biological clock, ticking away."

For a while, I wasn't aware of the way I looked at babies in high chairs at Village Inn. I paid no attention when my heart liquified if one of them plastered their giant eyes on me, and maybe smiled. Not me, Iron Maiden of childlessness.

I didn't pick up on it when my friend's little girl answered the phone and said, "I love you aunt Debbie," and I levitated for the rest of the day.

It began to dawn on me when I found myself writing out a list of names and settled on Elvis Bob for my first born.

I sought help. I went to Kmart, where there are usually so many screaming children that I go home and lock myself in the bathroom in fear of holding my boyfriend's hand. But no, when I needed their screams most, they smiled at me.

Then, when I need a childbirth horror story, my cousin gives birth to twins like falling off a log. She sent me a picture of her new family right after the fact. She looks like the sack of wet marshmallows, for sure, but she's smiling.

There's only one thing left for me to do to maintain my environmentally protective status as a barren woman.

I'll call my mom and ask her again what I was like as a kid. I just hope she can keep talking until I hit menopause.

*McAdams is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.*

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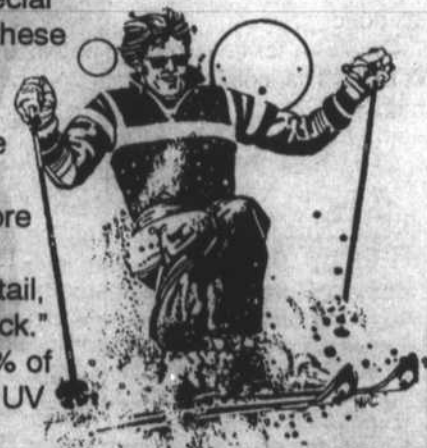
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