

MICHELLE PAULMAN

Dreams demand taking risks

To this day I still cry for my grandfather.

Roger W. Paulman was laid to rest on a bright, cold January day in Sutherland, his hometown and mine.

In this small town, the cemetery lay at the bottom of a high hill on Highway 25, a winding road that cut its way around the reservoir to my family's farm. From third grade through eighth, I had traveled this road every weekday on the school bus. "Hold your breath — hold it 'til we get past the cemetery," was part of the game we played.

And in this cemetery were the stones of names I knew — Reitz, Fleets, Baker and Applegate. I had held my breath past the cemetery with their children and grandchildren.

Grandpa had known them, too. He now lay among them, alongside his own son, my uncle, dead seven years ago on a day not unlike that one.

Should I cry hysterically? Should I look somber? I huddled in my overcoat, feeling the prairie wind rip through me, feeling lost, feeling a strange sense of déjà vu.

"You'd think one of us would have the decency to die when it's warm," my father said to me with dry humor. I couldn't help but let a small chuckle escape the ice that seemed to enclose my heart.

A long time had passed since I'd played silly school bus games. The town and the names were the same, but nothing seemed right. Then my father made a sarcastic crack that eased the pain, and my old world came together again.

Later that day, my cousins and I, all grown up, looked through photo albums and laughed at 20-year-old memories. We rushed down to the basement and dredged through the old toy chest, cooing over things like broken plastic cars, a tattered woman's glove and a green Comet bottle.

We had gone back to the old days,



We were almost children again, and I could taste the bittersweet of nostalgia — the sweetness of the good times I'd had and the bitterness that life would never be the same again.

when we were content to play with junk in the cold basement at grandma and grandpa's house. We were almost children again, and I could taste the bittersweet of nostalgia — the sweetness of the good times I'd had and the bitterness that life would never be the same again.

And I'm sure I will taste it again soon.

In two weeks my friends and I go our separate ways for the summer. Summer is only three months long, more or less. Summer alone is nothing.

But I have a nagging sense that this summer will be a watershed in my life, that everything will be incredibly different when I return in January or next June or whenever.

Come this summer, my friends will never have been so far away from

me. Come this summer, we will never have been so unsure when we would see each other again.

This summer scares the daylights out of me.

The friends I've found in the past few years are the dearest I've ever had and I don't want to lose them. The thought of being away from them for what could be a year or an eternity paralyzes me to the point where I could stand in this spot for the rest of my life.

Like in the small town, where the names never change but the faces do, I fantasize about living next door to my best friends, watching their kids and grandkids grow up, laughing with them over old memories until I'm laid to rest at the bottom of the hill.

But my dreams are in the way.

My dreams are the only things more dear to me than the ones I love. My dreams led me away from my hometown, they will take me from this place and they will separate me from the best friends I've ever had.

What my dreams are doesn't matter so much as just having them. Be it changing diapers or changing the world, a purpose in life helps us keep track of what's important to us.

Half of me doesn't want to leave. But I have to go. I need to go. The final score: 2 1/2 to 1/2. So I'll go, though it breaks my heart. This is the price my dreams demand.

Instead of trying to spend the rest of my life in this moment in time, I'll hope better ones come along.

I will cry for my friends, for the times we shared and the miles between us. Through bittersweet tears, I will turn my face to the road and let out my breath.

Paulman is a senior news-editorial and history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist and photographer.

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Conservative effort deplorable

I'm thinking about forming a new student group at UNL: Students for the former Soviet Union. We'd get together, lament the collapse of communism and dream of the day when the red menace will be back in power.

Actually, I'm not. That idea has already been taken by a group called Students for America. They get together, lament the fall of conservatism and dream of the day when the Republican menace will be back in power.

They even publish a nice little newsletter, *The Ideal*. The first issue came out yesterday.

The newsletter reminded me of a publication my grandmother helps put out every month for a retirement community in Arizona. Real quality.

Among the incredible insights I found reading *The Ideal* was the question: "Did the staff of the Women's Resource Center really head to the Amazon for spring break?" I think that pretty much sums up the level of intelligence, or lack thereof, that can be found spread throughout *The Ideal*.

And really, calling this newsletter *The Ideal* is too much. From now on I will just call it *The Joke*.

What other wonderful news did I read in *The Joke*?

● On the "faculty watch" page, I see that *The Joke* awarded Eric Jolly, director of UNL's Affirmative Action Office, with the "Adolf Hitler award for racism awareness."

● UNL Chancellor Graham Spanier "seems to have a rather bizarre obsession with promoting homosexuality." Spanier's "pro-gay silliness," according to *The Joke*, "is just that: silly."

● A solution to Bill Clinton's presidency is to "Change your name to Matilda Globaski (or any blind lesbian member of the ACLU) so you may qualify for millions in financial



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aid. . . .

● "NE SPORTS ROCK!"
● "AIDS activists have bombarded everyone for a decade with this strident 'sky is falling' rhetoric; this double standard reiterates what an invention their AIDS scare really is."

The Joke staff needs to brush up on its editing. I guess being a conservative doesn't mean you can spell "faculty" or "wether."

Overall, the contents of *The Joke* impressed me as what some ultra-conservatives might say if they were drunk and knew they wouldn't have to be around to stand behind what they believe in.

But I'm happy to see that Students for America has formed and is publishing *The Joke*. I think the group can serve as a kind of Alcoholics Anonymous for ultra-conservatives who are in withdrawal after George Bush's

defeat in November.

With Bill Clinton's election, conservatives have no rallies to go to. They have no causes left. If they are not careful, they might become another lost generation.

But don't despair. Conservatives now have Students for America. They can get together and plot the return of Ronald Reagan and publish their newsletter. They can even hold potluck dinners if they get too lonely.

I can almost hear the support group sessions now:

"Hello, my name is Bob, and... yes, I voted for George Bush."

The first step, as they say, is admitting you have a problem.

I shouldn't be so hard on the poor Students for America. Any group committed to truth, justice and ensuring they have the right to offend and walk on anyone they wish can't be all bad. And any group that thinks Don Stenberg will be Nebraska's next governor must really know something the rest of us don't.

Besides, with budget deficits, industrial decline and more gridlock in Washington, America needs all the support it can get. Even from conservative groups who can't spell and claim Rush Limbaugh as their guiding light.

Well, things aren't that bad yet. But in 10 years, who knows?

I think the best argument against Students for America and its newsletter is their own words. If you want to know what to expect from this group, just read the "Declaration of Independence" in the first issue of *The Joke*:

"Get ready for the campus cultural equivalent of a drive-by shooting."

God bless America. The conservative tide is rolling again.

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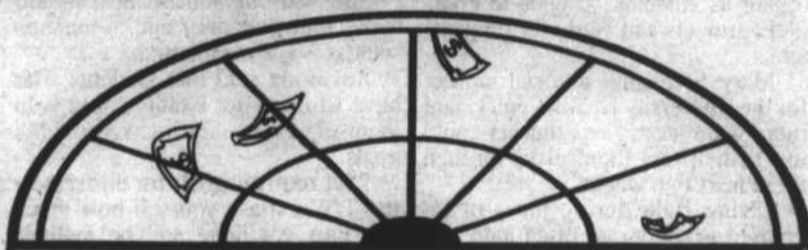
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