

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

# Kennedy politics return again

A couple of gunshots 25 years ago this summer killed more than one man. The shots killed Robert Kennedy, who had just won the California primary and was headed to Chicago to attempt to secure the Democratic party's nomination for president.



**Perhaps we can now start worrying as much about the world we will have to live in tomorrow as the one we live in today.**

I wasn't even born then. Most of us at UNL probably weren't. But I am intrigued by the life of Robert Kennedy, anyway. What is most interesting about Robert Kennedy? It has been said before, but I will repeat it here: Kennedy was someone who had everything, and he cared about people who had nothing.

A millionaire who had every advantage in life, Kennedy concerned himself most as a senator with racial and social justice, with helping those who had not been born with the advantages he had.

No man is perfect, and Kennedy certainly wasn't. But it is interesting to think of what may have become of the United States if Kennedy had been nominated and become president instead of Richard Nixon in 1968.

He could hardly have done worse than resigning in disgrace.

Now the United States seems to be turning back to the type of politics that faded after Kennedy died. We have elected a Democratic president. We have passed a budget that requires some sacrifice. We are considering national health insurance.

There is no clear consensus of where America should go. But there does seem to be an understanding that individual interest is not enough to move a nation. We can only go forward if we are willing to work together and accept a general responsibility for our future.

Robert Kennedy understood that we should help disadvantaged people in America because it is the right thing to do and also because it is vital to the future of our country. He understood that the future of people who are poor and hopeless cannot be separated from the future of those who are not.

We are all one country. Half of us cannot go forward while the other half stays behind.

During the 1980s, we turned away from that logic. That time period should not be exaggerated as good or bad, but it is true that people who were in trouble in this country were generally ignored.

Ronald Reagan symbolized the period when he said homeless people were that way because they wanted to be. Reagan was also someone who had everything. He was a millionaire. But he did not seem to care very much about those who had nothing.

When the president takes an a general attitude of indifference towards those in need, that attitude becomes

legitimized. And whatever else Reagan did, he did little to help those in need.

The legacy of the 1980s is the largest debt in the history of our country and social problems that are worse than they have been in 20 years.

It is true that some profited during the 1980s. But is our country better? Are we a better people? Should the success of a nation be measured in terms of its wealthiest citizens, or by the welfare of all its people?

It is perhaps significant that on the 25th anniversary of Robert Kennedy's death the United States is in a transition period. We are moving away from the conservatism of the 1980s to something new.

What we will become is not clear yet. But the most exciting part is that we will decide.

You and I will decide what kind of country the United States will be. It is our turn to help make that decision.

Ronald Reagan was an older man, and older men shaped the course of our country in the 1980s. Now we have a young president, and the policies of our government have taken on a younger tone as well.

Perhaps we can now start worrying as much about the world we will have to live in tomorrow as the one we live in today.

Robert Kennedy, who was only 42 when he died 25 years ago this summer, said he wanted the U.S. to be a nation that cared about all its citizens. He had a compassion that cared about people who had nothing.

We don't have to make the United States that kind of country. But we could.

Fitzpatrick is a senior political science major and the Summer Daily Nebraskan features editor.

## WHAT DOES UNL THINK?

**"What do you think of Sen. Kerrey's vote last week endorsing President Clinton's budget deficit reduction plan?"**

"I'm all for it. There is a lot of misinformation, but Kerrey made the right decision."

Jeff Argov  
Sophomore  
Civil Engineering

"Sen. Kerrey was in a real tough spot. The big thing about having a political office is to represent your constituents. If you look at the agricultural sector, most farmers and Nebraskans are against it. At the same time, I have to give him credit because he was in the public limelight."

Kyle Gilster  
Senior  
Political Science

"Quite frankly, the whole thing scares me. I don't agree with Kerrey because I don't have confidence in politicians in general, and I don't have confidence that the promised cuts will happen."

Teresa Eske  
Sophomore  
Psychology

—compiled by Derek Samson

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Prayer

I see by the article in the August 5 Daily Nebraskan ("Prayer reinstated at graduation ceremonies") that we are to have prayers at commencements once again.

I have been opposed to this action, for many of the reasons given by Dr. James McShane in his letter to the faculty committee last December (and I wonder how many members of ASUN seriously read that letter!).

However, if we are to have prayer, I urge two specific policies:

One: if this is to be a community in which public prayer is appropriate,

then let the prayers be given by members of the community — students, faculty and staff. Do not ask some professional prayer from off campus to come in and decorate the occasion.

Two: if one of the purposes of the prayers is to be a testimony to the pluralism of religious life among the people of this community, then do not only ask persons of different religious persuasions to pray. Let those different persons pray in the fullness and particularity of who they are. Don't ask them to dissolve the tradition from which they come into some innocuous "least common denominator" of

civil religion. Where is the pluralism in that? Let the Jew pray as a Jew, the Moslem as who or she is, the Hindu the same and the Christian as whatever style of denomination they may be. "...in the name of Jesus Christ" is the basic expression of a Christian's identity. Religious conviction comes in particularities, not vague generalities. If you don't want those particularities, then at least drop the pointless rationale of pluralism.

Larry Doerr  
campus pastor  
Cornerstone-UMHE

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