

PAULA LAVIGNE

No presents for deadbeat dads

Right now, fathers across America are eagerly awaiting for tacky ties, cheap cologne and mechanized shaving kits to be bestowed upon them this Sunday — Father's Day.



So many children — too many children — grow up without a decent, loving father and therefore don't know what a male role model should be.

However, I have long since dispensed with this tradition since I will not admit to having a father anymore. What I have had for the past five years is delayed child support checks and the haunting memory of someone who made my life a living hell.

That's all over now. The only thing my beloved "daddy" and I have in common is a last name — and that's not even permanent.

It's not worth pouring over all the nasty incidents that led up to today. I have control of my life. I don't regret not having a father.

This is why Father's Day comes as no great loss to me. However venomous I am, in a nation where more than 60 percent of marriages end up in divorce, I'm not alone.

I spoke with a 14-year-old Lincoln girl this year about life after her parent's divorce. Her story was almost parallel to mine.

This young girl, who should be full of memories of her first kiss, summer carnivals and family pets, told me something that really struck home. She said she vividly remembers only three things from her childhood — knee surgery, a tonsillectomy and the night her dad left.

According to statistics from the Nebraska Department of Social Services, out of their 115,000 child support cases, with court orders, 250 million dollars is owed in delinquent support. This is only half the picture. Nationally, only 50 percent of families who receive support receive the whole amount.

There are men out there, married and divorced, who don't fall into this category. They are loving, faithful and devoted fathers and husbands who deserve all the tacky ties they can get this weekend. Kudos to them, but unfortunately these Ward Cleavers aren't always the norm.

And although there are also mothers out there who have abandoned their families and refused to pay child support, there remains an overwhelming male majority — an estimated 90

percent.

I just don't understand how these men think they can depend on the continual support of their wife and children and one day just up and leave because they can't handle the responsibility anymore. Worse yet, many then take on a new wife, start another family and go through the whole scenario again.

The tales of child abuse run much deeper than this. Too often a beaten child will suffer years of agony under the belt whips and beating of a father's scornful hand.

If you can't handle raising children and remaining faithful to your spouse, you're not fit to be a father and shouldn't expect much in return. Raising children shouldn't be a sacrifice, it should be an honor.

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A young boy without a father may make up for that void in his life through isolation or seeking acceptance with his "friends" who often take the shape of a gang. A young girl may encounter problems while dating or trying to start her own family with fears that her husband will walk out on her.

As stereotypical as that may sound, too often it's the case, unless there is a remedy to this void — such as a good mother.

Obviously, the void of my father doesn't hold a great deal of weight over my head. My life is just as whole and complete without that father figure present.

I've done well in all aspects of my life and am a generally happy person, contrary to the belief that a single-parent family or "broken home" was a bad influence on me. And, like me, I'm sure that 14-year-old girl I mentioned will succeed in her life, too.

Why? Because her mother picked up both ends of raising her daughter and worked day and night at the local discount store to make sure her family had food, clothing and shelter. She looks toward her mother for full support.

All those fathers out there who abandoned their families for their own self-serving needs should take a look at themselves and wonder what their children will think of them several years from now when those children themselves are parents.

I hope these children will learn from the mistake their fathers made and rebel against it. It's the most tactful, yet powerful way, to seek revenge.

This is why, on Father's Day, my father deserves no credit. He wasn't there to teach me how to drive. He didn't clean up after me when I had food poisoning. He didn't take me on endless college visits. He forgot my birthday a long time ago. He hasn't done a lot of things for me a normal father would.

And honestly, I don't want him to. He, and several other ex-fathers out there, blew their chance for a cubic zirconium tie tack and hedge trimmers many years ago.

So, on this upcoming Father's Day I'd like to honor the person who sat through endless banquets, ceremonies and concerts, baked cookies for hundreds of school functions, and helped me carry all my belongings up 10 flights of stairs in my residence hall when I moved in an out my freshman year.

One person did all this and much more and I owe her a lot. Thanks Mom, you're great — and I don't need to give you a weed whacker to prove it.

Paula Lavigne is a Freshman News-Editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Parking hysteria

In my four years at NU it has certainly been tiresome to hear all the constant whining and bellyaching about parking. In fact, except for the brief but brilliant protests against the Gulf War, parking has always been the number one political concern among UNL students. Therefore, it came as quite a shock to me to see a serious proposal, coming from the usually hide-bound regents, of all people, that tells these obnoxious parking activists where to go.

Investing in free busing is a lot cheaper than investing in a \$4.5 million parking-garage eyesore. It also

sends over-pampered students the message that they don't have to all have their own cars. Parking is not the only problem on this campus. Cars are a major one, too. Cars aren't just responsible for esoteric problems like increased air pollution (although from the anti-smoking hysteria on campus, one would think the emission of fumes was a cardinal sin). When you have to walk past two football fields of parked cars in order to get to the next building this is an inconvenience — one which bicyclists and bus-riders do not cause. The proliferation of parking lots on campus also contributes to a sense of disorder — the feeling that the campus is simply a hodgepodge of buildings

and vehicles (and perhaps disciplines as well!) strewn haphazardly here and there without any forethought or coherence.

Since the very word "university" comes from "universe", which is a translation of the Greek kosmos — or "order" — the opposite of chaos — this is especially troubling. And in any case, when did students quite being idealists? There are people in Bosnia dying for what they believe in and our biggest worry is that we have to park four blocks from class?

Chas Baylor
Graduate Student
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