

JAMIE KARL

# '50s morals needed in '90s

The decade known as "the '50s" has drawn a lot of attention in recent years. Lately, there have been movies, documentaries and books all about the 1950s. And there has been debate.

In general, liberals and "progressivists" tend to despise the '50s and everything they stood for, even if those liberals weren't around back then. Elder conservatives, on the other hand, are always referring to the glory days of the '50s.

The 1950s were again in the spotlight last week, as critics attacked Republicans — still fresh from Tuesday's congressional takeover — for wanting to return to the ways and days of the past.

"The 1950s are long gone," a Daily Nebraskan editorial cried. "We have a lot to worry about today."

Indeed we do. This past week, syndicated columnist Edward Grimsley of Creators Syndicate compared our worries of today to those of the '50s — the years he deems "the happiest decade in the nation's history."

"Forty years ago," Grimsley writes, "most urban Americans could walk to the neighborhood store, even after dark, without running a high risk of being mugged or killed."

"Children who played in their front yards were in little danger ... even the public parks were safe."

Adding to the current morbidity, Grimsley notes that back then, schools were safe places that taught children reading, writing and arithmetic — not how to put on a condom. He also notes that fewer than 6 percent of the children in the '50s were born out of wedlock. Today, the illegitimacy rate is almost 30 percent.

The '50s passed before America's sexual revolution, and Grimsley notes that "most of the



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men and women who lived together then were married. Only slightly more than half are today.

"In the '50s, nobody dreamed that within 40 years, college officials and society would become more tolerant of sex than of cigarettes on campus."

Grimsley concludes by saying: "America started to grow irritable, contentious, promiscuous and sloppy in the 1960s, and it has been downhill ever since. How wonderful it would be if there was a political leader with the courage to promise and restore some of the golden features of the 1950s."

Indeed, the '50s were of another time — and of another America.

It was a time when the boys were coming home from World War II. Having crushed the Japanese empire and Hitler's Third Reich, these young men were heroes who brought the nation together.

It was a time when the "silent generation," those who grew up during the Depression and carried the country through that Second World War, suddenly was paving the way for the nation.

The '50s found Americans of all walks of life enjoying unprecedented prosperity. And it was a time of hope for all Americans.

But times change. Today, while more materially prosperous than the America of the '50s, we are a weaker society. Today, the sense of national unity

and purpose, for which America was notorious in the Eisenhower and Kennedy years, is gone.

Back then, we are told, Americans all adhered to the same faith, the same code of morality, the same public philosophy. Truly, America was a national community.

But in the 1990s, we are a divided people, focusing more on our differences than our similarities.

In the '50s, America undoubtedly knew less about science, technology and economics than the America of 1994. But it seems in the 1950s, America knew more about human nature. Back then, the lessons of home and church and school were what mattered.

"You can't turn back the clock" is the old cliché constantly thrown to conservatives, and there is great truth to it. Neither the world nor the United States will ever again be what it was after the Second World War. The American high probably is over.

But much of what has been lost during the past 30 years still can be retrieved. Those ideas and ideals that made America a uniquely good country in the 1950s have not withered away with time.

They still are attainable and begging to be embraced again.

Karl is a junior news-editorial and political science major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

RAINBOW ROWELL

# Don't let me down, Mr. Lucas

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away (the third grade), I believed I was Princess Leia.

Maybe I didn't believe I was Princess Leia, but I did believe IN Princess Leia. And I clung to the hope that maybe, just maybe, we were distant relatives.

Needless to say, "Star Wars" left a huge impression on me, even though I didn't get to see it until after "The Empire Strikes Back" hit the theaters for the second time.

My mother was against "Star Wars." She deemed it morally corrupt. I can't remember why, now. I think she thought Darth Vader was spooky. And when "Empire" came out, she called Yoda "a little demon." She made us cover our eyes when the commercial came on.

But my dad caved in and took us to see "Empire" during the re-release.

I was blown away. Born again. Born free.

Something about that movie, which remains my favorite of the trilogy, touched me inside. I don't know how or why. Never mind sex, drugs, food, roller coasters and back rubs. I was 8 years old, and all I ever wanted, all I ever needed, was "Star Wars."

I couldn't understand how George Lucas could produce a film so perfect. A pact with the devil, maybe? I didn't care.

I quickly made friends with a rare VCR owner who had both "Star Wars" and "Empire" on tape. I spent a whole summer at her house, watching them again and again.

We memorized our favorite scenes — the romantic ones, of course. I never got caught up in the technological aspects. I never memorized the names of all the aliens or the spaceships.

I was more attracted to the drama, the tension, the struggle between good and evil ... and, of course, the men. The "Star Wars" movies were about as romantic as I



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could imagine.

At first, I was hot for Luke. He seemed so young and innocent and, like me, he wanted to be treated as an adult. But Luke got weird in a hurry once he started messing with that Jedi stuff.

As I matured, Han started to look pretty dang good. He had it going on in those tight black pants with the yellow stripes — ai yi yi.

Sometimes we'd spend entire afternoons torturing ourselves with the scene in which Han gets frozen.

When we weren't watching "Star Wars," we were playing "Star Wars." Playing "Star Wars" was a challenge for girls, because there was only one female character.

We argued about who got to be Leia, but the same person always won. She had the darkest hair and a battery-operated light saber that went "woooo, woooo" when you waved it around.

I always had to be her long-lost sister or cousin, Princess Leah or Princess Lia, if there were three of us. Luckily, we made up brothers for Han Solo, too — Juan Polo, Don Pardo.

My mom softened her anti-"Star Wars" resolve for a while. Then "Return of the Jedi" came out with Carrie Fisher wearing a bikini and being tied to a big, alien sex fiend. I had to throw away my entire collection of "Empire" trading cards.

I resent her to this day. For me, "Jedi" was a disappointment, especially the ending. It was too pat, too contrived. And worse, it

didn't promise a sequel.

After "Jedi," I went through "Star Wars" withdrawal. Every few years, sequel rumors would circulate, but nothing ever happened.

I had "Misery"-like fantasies in which I forced Lucas to make a sequel with lots of Harrison Ford close-ups and maybe even a cameo for moi. (I never broke his ankles, though.)

As the years passed, I became more worried about being a teenager than finding Endor. But "Star Wars" remained the basis on which I judged my peers. I simply wouldn't associate with people who didn't like "Star Wars."

And people who'd never seen "Star Wars"? As if.

My freshman year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, my roommate dated a guy who'd never seen "Star Wars." It was ugly.

Well, the grapevine is abuzz with "Star Wars" rumors again. Mr. Lucas, George, if you're out there, listen to me, please.

Don't tease me this way. I can't take much more. You get my hopes up, and then you let me down, over and over and over again, ever since I was a little girl.

I don't even care if it's a prequel (Harrison Ford says he won't play Han Solo anymore anyway). Please, I'll be your best friend. Just do this one thing for me, please.

George, make the damn movie.

Rowell is a senior news-editorial, advertising and English major and a Daily Nebraskan associate news editor.

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