

## Rescue attempt restores faith

These days, things can get downright frustrating. As a society, we are bombarded with bad news day in and day out. In the newspapers and on television, there seems to be no such thing as good news anymore.

We hear stories of a mother strapping her two children into a car and rolling it into a lake. We hear stories of murders so brutal that they defy our sensibilities. We hear allegations of misconduct by our elected officials at every level of government. Gang warfare makes the front page — people with no respect for human life shoot into crowds, not caring or even knowing about the pain they cause. Lying, cheating, stealing and killing are the dominant elements of what we call news, and we seem to have been numbed by it all.

It has gotten so bad that many people have begun to give up on our species. It becomes difficult to believe that the horrors of our world could exist if the nature of humankind were good. News of people doing good things becomes the exception rather than the rule — a pleasant surprise, like finding a \$20 bill in the middle of the city dump.

Just when we are tempted to give up all hope, however, someone, somewhere, does something to give all of us faith.

Three days ago, 12-year-old Kyle Hippen and 11-year-old Ryan Harrison were out enjoying the spring-like weather in Carter Lake, Iowa. As children sometimes do, they made a foolish decision: They decided to ride their bikes across the frozen waters of Carter Lake.

They didn't make it. The ice, which had become



**Doug Peters**

deceptively thin in places, gave way beneath them, and both boys fell into the frigid water. Ryan lost hold of the ice and went under.

Hearing the boys' screams, 33-year-old Michael Barrow, who was out walking his dog, went onto the ice and made his way toward the boys.

He didn't make it, either.

Kyle was able to scramble out of the water to safety. Barrow and Ryan weren't. By the time the rescue squad pulled Barrow from the water, he had been submerged for more than an hour. Ryan was brought to the surface about 15 minutes later. Both were rushed to St. Joseph Hospital in Omaha. Neither survived.

Many people would read this story and see more bad news. I don't. It is a tragedy that young Ryan's life has ended. It is also tragic that a stranger, acting out of compassion and unselfishness, was killed in the prime of his life. If you look deeper than that, however — if you peel off all the outer layers of the story and go right to the heart — this story is good news of the highest order.

It tells us that no matter how bad things seem, there are still heroes in the world. It tells us that it is possible to be unselfish and

compassionate in a time of the most dire emergency. It tells us that we have the capacity to do good — even if it means paying the ultimate price.

Michael Barrow was described by his sister, Debbie Dickson, as "a free spirit."

"Of course I'm shocked by his death," Dickson told the Omaha World-Herald. "But it was so like him. He was spontaneous. ... He never thought about himself. He gave everything and would take nothing."

Whoever, whatever Barrow was before his death — drifter, free spirit, success or failure — at the core of his being were virtues to which we all should aspire: love, compassion, self-sacrifice and goodness.

If he had survived, I imagine he may have said something like this: "It's not something you think about. I heard screams for help, and I just went. It was like an impulse — it's something anyone would have done."

"It's something anyone would have done."

With all the bad news we are spoon-fed every day, with all the tragedy and mayhem, with all the people who can take life without even flinching, it's hard to have faith in the goodness of people.

Before Saturday, I had started to wonder about it myself — are people good or evil by nature? Is there hope for us?

I wasn't sure before, but I think I know now.

Thank you, Michael Barrow, for restoring my faith.

Peters is a graduate student and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

## Society has duty to defend its young

Do you ever get the feeling that someone is missing from the debate about welfare reform? The other parent? The father? The sperm donor? Men?

As Congress writes ever-more-punitive scenarios for mothers and children, the male of the species barely gets a cameo role. The only part he plays is as deadbeat dad. The only interest the lawmakers have shown is in establishing his DNA. The only policy they are talking about is getting a better grip on his wallet.

I have no problem with these proposals. But much of the welfare debate is focused on the never-married poor mothers — the women who get on welfare the earliest and stay the longest. The men in their lives don't exactly have deep pockets.

The favorite proposal of the moment, to deny cash benefits to any minor mother, comes with a prayer that it will prevent other pregnancies. The theory is that if the government gives girls an economic reason to say no, they'll control male sexual behavior.

But in real life, as opposed to think tanks and hearing rooms, the picture is a little different.

In real life, three-quarters of the girls who have sex before they are 14 say they were coerced. In real life, two out of every three teen-age mothers are impregnated by a man over 20. In real life, 400 teen-agers are impregnated by men over 25 every day. And in real life, 30 percent of the 15-year-old mothers have partners who are at least six years older.

We are not talking about powerful girls in equal relationships. In the inner-city culture that sociologist Elijah Anderson describes with terrible poignancy, a sexual "game" goes on.

"The girls have a dream," he says, "the boys have a desire. The girls dream of being carried off by a Prince Charming who will love them, provide for them, and give them a family. The boys often desire sex without commitment or babies without responsibility for them."

To put it bluntly, a substantial number of the men are what can only be called sexual predators. A substantial number of the teen-age mothers are what we used to call jailbait.

Remember jailbait? Maybe we ought to think about changing the sexual behavior of men as well as women. Maybe men — fathers as well as mothers — ought to face consequences. Maybe statutory rape is an idea whose time should return.



**Ellen Goodman**

Statutory rape was the creation of a double standard. It implied that a girl below a certain age was too young to consent to sex. The object of the law was to protect female virtue. The subject of the law was likely to be a 17-year-old boy hauled to court by the irate parents of a 15-year-old girl.

But in the era of sexual liberation and equality, the old laws were rewritten. We went from a double standard of gender to a single standard of power.

Today the object of the law is not female chastity but sexual abuse. And the subject is generally an older man or woman who has sex with an underage child.

Statutory rape laws are still used in some bizarre cases. We all remember Joey Buttafuoco, 37, who was convicted for having sex with Amy Fisher, 16. They're still offered as a plea bargain for men charged with violent rape. But they're used rarely, and usually against adults — such as teachers — who violate society's belief that they should protect, not exploit, the young.

I know dusting off the laws and applying them to men who father children with young teens has its limits. We have different views of coercion and of consent than we used to. Teen-age mothers could become more reluctant to point the paternity finger. I'm wary of matching a policy that throws mothers on the streets with one that throws fathers in jail.

But look at the figures. Look at the culture. We're talking about adult men and adolescent girls. We're talking about "the game." You don't have to be a Victorian to believe that society has an obligation to defend our young. Or that we have an obligation to state this clearly, publicly, unequivocally.

These days we are quick to attack teen-age mothers. How about trying to protect them? Tell the girls they're too young. But send the word out to men. The word is "jailbait."

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## Administrators are people, too

Eureka! I've finally been able to nail down one of life's greatest mysteries. No, I didn't find the lost city of Atlantis, nor did I solve UNL's parking problems.

What I have done is prove that one college administrator actually is human. Yep, I finally did it.

Through careful placement of hidden cameras and secret microphones, I've been able to catalog the movements of an administrator and prove this once-unthinkable idea. I know you'll be just as enlightened as I have been.

Here's the day of one University of Nebraska-Lincoln administrator, who will remain nameless for my safety:

6:30 a.m. His alarm goes off, and he's ready to begin another great day of college administration. He knows he has time to take a good shower, look professional and read the paper over a well-balanced meal.

6:40 a.m. The alarm goes off again, and now it'll be a short shower.

6:50 a.m. He's still in bed, and decides that he'll skim the paper over a bowl of cereal.

7:30 a.m. Finally, he gets out of bed. Our administrator throws water on his face and wears yesterday's clothes with a lot of deodorant. He tears open the paper to read his horoscope and comic-page hero Dilbert. He grabs a pop-tart and runs out to his car.

8:00 a.m. He arrives at UNL with horn blaring and students flying as he sweeps into his parking stall next to the Administration Building.

8:03 a.m. He enters his office and begins work three minutes late, because hey, the students do it.

8:05 a.m. He reads the Daily Nebraskan.

8:24 a.m. He puts the Daily Nebraskan away after feeling satisfied with completing 20 percent of the crossword puzzle, which is about 10 percent more than the average person.

8:25 a.m. He goes to the



**Robb Goff**

commons area to get the first cup of coffee and a doughnut.

8:27 a.m. He returns to the commons area after finding out the doughnut was not jelly-filled.

8:30 a.m. He starts his morning paperwork, denying student requests for just about anything.

9:37 a.m. He approves a student's final plea for help, just to give the impression that he still has a heart. Then this administrator notices that his stomach still is grumbling, so he heads out to get another jelly doughnut. Finding that Chancellor Spanier has hoarded the box again, he heads over to the Nebraska Union to get a cinnamon roll.

10:00 a.m. The first nap of the day occurs during a meeting with the ASUN president over some insignificant, but probably important, item.

10:36 a.m. After waking up, he realizes that he's late for a meeting with the chancellor about ways to cut student fees and buy more doughnuts.

11:30 a.m. The hardest question of the day now materializes: It's time to decide whether to have a Whopper or Chinese food for lunch.

1:03 p.m. Our administrator returns to work and tries to explain to his supervisor how a supernatural force slammed him down on the ground and dragged him to Crane River, whereupon his mouth was pried open and beer was poured down his helpless throat.

1:05 p.m. He arrives back at his own office to make sure his resume is updated and to get the ringing out of his ears.

1:07 p.m. He opens the top drawer of his desk to get at the often-used bottle of Extra Strength Tylenol to cure those recurring encounters with space aliens.

1:15 p.m. He begins the afternoon paperwork regarding why students should not be allowed to do anything because they probably will screw it up.

1:27 p.m. The administrator is rudely interrupted by a whining student complaining about why his tuition is not yet paid. After hearing about the piano falling off the moving truck going through the Appalachians on the way to the new house that a distant uncle won in the recent Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes, he defers the student to a co-worker so he can compare notes later on who got the better story. He then returns to paperwork.

3:53 p.m. He successfully completes four shots in a row from across the room into wastepaper basket, better than any Husker men's basketball player.

4:00 p.m. He goes to final meetings of the day to discuss tomorrow's agenda, which will be on how to change as many student request forms as possible, just to keep them on their toes.

5:05 p.m. He leaves the office to go home, thinking that since it's five minutes past leaving time, he really worked hard.

5:32 p.m. He pulls into his garage and ceases to be a college administrator for another day and methodically becomes a human being again.

There it is. Administrators do become human at one time during the day. Albeit it's not when they're at work, but I guess it's a start.

Now only if we can train them to actually take up and care about issues about which the students are intrigued question — whether or not they have a heart!

Goff is a senior secondary education major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Popular, bipartisan proposal for ending baseball strike.



**Mike Luckovich**