

## Glory of 'base' will never die

One hundred fifty springs ago, in the bustling city of Brooklyn, a newspaper man watched children play a game never before seen by his aged eyes. He put into words the unfamiliar sights and sounds that suddenly filled the town's once-vacant lots:

"In our sundown perambulations of late, through the outer parts of Brooklyn, we have observed several parties of youngsters playing 'base,' a certain game of ball."

Walt Whitman, that Brooklyn newspaper man, could have never then fathomed that this game called "base" would become one of America's most important attributes.

Since the first organized baseball game in 1846, the sport has shaped our nation and her culture. The famous philosopher Jacques Barzun once wrote, "Whoever wants to know the heart and mind of America had better learn baseball."

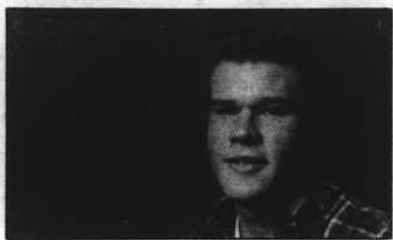
Truly, the game is uniquely ours, because baseball is so much like America herself — consistently strong, rich in tradition, full of life. No other sport so accurately represents a people as baseball portrays the country that gave it life.

But the grand old game has seen its better days.

Today, baseball is crippled by a group of professional players — considered the world's best — who have refused to play because of "labor" disputes. This latest and longest major-league strike, which seems to have been settled for now, has led some to ask if the game will ever be the same.

The pessimists are right to ask the question. Along with the strikes, baseball now has more competition — at both the professional and youth ranks.

The emergence of soccer, along with summer league basketball, has drawn youngsters away from the



**Jamie Karl**

fields of dreams. In 1995, children list football or basketball as their favorite sport, with baseball at a distant third.

But this is not the first time baseball has been in rough waters. Throughout its history, the game has stood firm and proud, enduring the country's darkest days.

Baseball has lived through the Great Depression and two World Wars. It has rode through the Black Sox scandal of 1919, and survived the "dead-ball" years, when loosely wound balls made for low-scoring pitching duels.

And major-league strikes are nothing new. In 1981, players were on strike for two months, demanding more multimillion-dollar salaries. Then, too, the analysts said the game would be forever wounded. Yet by 1989, attendance reached 55 million for a season — a record for the sport, and a figure football or basketball could never touch.

Nothing can shake the grand old game. Even when its carping critics have pronounced it dead, baseball keeps coming back — like the country that calls the game its own; obviously, there is something about the sport its adversaries cannot comprehend.

Baseball is not about players who refuse to take the field because of salaries. Baseball is bigger than that.

Instead, baseball is about a time when parents tucked their children

into bed at night and reminded them to pray, "God bless Mommy and Daddy, and God bless Babe Ruth."

Baseball is about a time when teen-age girls carried cards of Mickey Mantle in their purses, while the boys did their best to imitate "The Natural."

Baseball is about a time when there were real role models, with names such as Joltin' Joe and The Say-Hey Kid.

Baseball has given America some of her fondest memories: when the Great Bambino called his shot; when Bobby Thompson's shot heard 'round the world made radio announcer Russ Hodges yell, "The Giants win the pennant!"; when the game's first black player, Jackie Robinson, walked onto the green diamond of Ebbets Field, ending athletic segregation in America.

In the words of poet Donald Hall, baseball is continuous, like nothing else among American things. It's an endless game of repeated summers, joining the long generations of all the fathers and all the sons.

Put simply, the sport is different from all the rest. The grand old game has a soul all its own, a spirit bigger than that of any one player.

It is no surprise that baseball has overcome yet another obstacle. The sport will remain the nation's pastime — a game to be played, admired and respected for generations to come. And while time will march on, and the names and faces of the game will surely change, one thing stays the same: There will always be baseball.

As Walt Whitman wrote 150 springs ago: "Let us go forth awhile and get better air in our lungs. Let us leave our close rooms.

"The game of ball is glorious."

**Karl is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist and night news editor.**

## Gun-control laws not a simple subject

When the subject is guns, we definitely have a failure to communicate.

Those who hate guns seem to believe that those who don't are a lot of lowbrow, beady-eyed, beer-guzzling neo-fascists who are constantly leaving pistols around the house so children can find them and shoot their siblings.

Those who defend gun ownership seem to think that gun-control advocates are a bunch of left-wing, government-loving, wine-sipping sissies who believe that the best way to handle a criminal is to kneel at his feet and blubber: "Don't hurt me. Take my money. I know you had a disadvantaged childhood, and I share your pain."

That's why I seldom write about the endless struggle between gun owners and gun haters, even though I think I understand them better than they understand each other.

For example, many gun lovers seem to believe that any gun-control law that imposes any restriction on gun ownership is a bad law.

If you carry that to its illogical conclusion, we would have no gun laws and no restrictions. It would be legal for anyone — responsible citizen or nut — to buy a gun as easily as a bottle of root beer. And for anyone to carry it everywhere and anywhere, openly or concealed.

We need gun laws. How restrictive they should be, I don't know. But reasonable people should be able to agree on terms that would help keep guns away from dangerous hands while letting decent people protect themselves.

"Protect themselves?" someone is scornfully saying. "They don't protect themselves or anyone else. They just let their guns fall into the hands of children or criminals."

That's the response of many of those who dislike guns and want a European approach: Nobody has them but the cops or the rigidly controlled sportsmen. And I think they truly believe that hardly anyone ever uses a gun to shoot or fend off a criminal.

Maybe that's the fault of the media. We seldom overlook a story about a child using his dad's gun to shoot his older sister.

But we aren't as alert to stories about people who ping a crook.

There are sources for both kinds of stories.



**Mike Royko**

The gun-control advocates keep large files on every case of careless gun use they can find.

But they don't have any records of people successfully defending themselves against criminals.

At the same time, the National Rifle Association has thick files of honest citizens using guns to kill, wound or capture criminals.

Chances are you didn't read about the great jewelry store shootout in Richmond, Va., a couple of months ago. I know about it only because a friend in Virginia called me.

This is what happened:

Two gunmen barged into the Beverly Jewelry Store. Both were career criminals with long records for stickups, burglaries, drug-running and other crimes across the South and Southeast. One was being sought on a murder rap. He was later described by an acquaintance this way: "He won't kill you unless he has to. But if he has to, he will."

They had picked the wrong jewelry store. The owner is a gutsy guy and an expert marksman. His employees had all been trained in using guns and had so many guns hidden in the store that he and his salespeople were never more than an outstretched arm away from one.

So when one of the gunmen jumped on a display case and let loose with a warning blast from his shotgun, the owner and his five employees all reached down and came up shooting. Six guns going at the same time.

The robbers got off a few shots that didn't hit anyone, but within seconds, both were dead.

The owner of the store said he doesn't believe in being passive when someone threatens his life with a sawed-off shotgun.

So if the police can't protect people from murderers — and they admit that is beyond them — who will? That jewelry store owner knew. He and his employees were on their own, as most of us are.

It's not a simple subject.

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## Land-loving lug lets ship pass

Do you see that? That little speck on the horizon? If you squint really hard, you can see it on the water, bobbing slowly and happily. That's the boat. I missed it.

I am set to graduate in May. It is coming up very rapidly, and I am now realizing that I should be on that happy, bobbing boat so far away on the horizon.

The boat is the S.S. Employment. Apparently, people on this boat have worked very hard for their boarding passes, and I've been standing on the pier, looking the other way, waiting for my ship to come in to me.

Friends and classmates of mine have been planning for quite some time to board the S.S. Employment. They've had internships, revised and sharpened their résumés and prepared for their voyage on the open sea.

I've been in the lounge, sipping piña colodas, waiting for the bell captain to take my luggage to my cabin.

I've heard more than one time, from others about to graduate, that this last semester is no more than a formality. I've heard more than one time that others have jobs lined up and careers set to go the very moment after they flip their tassels to the left side of their funny caps and descend the left side of the stage.

All I know is that after I am handed my diploma by the Pope or Tom Osborne or whoever gives them out, I will descend the stairs on the left side of the stage straight into the water. No poop deck will be under my land-loving feet, and to be honest, I'm not sure how good of a swimmer I am.

The concept of the job interview frightens the poop deck out of me, too. And I know I'll have to go through this routine sometime in



**Todd Elwood**

the near future.

I would like to write for a newspaper after I graduate, and that can only mean I will eventually have to talk to an editor of some sort.

I'll have to shake his or her hand. He or she will then have to wipe his or her hand on something very absorbent. I know that will be my first mistake of the interview. My palms tend to moisten when I get nervous. Actually, they moisten to the point that I can grow rice on them.

He or she will think, "I can't hire this guy. He will electrocute himself on our equipment. There would probably be a lawsuit."

If I am not immediately escorted out of the building, away from any of the equipment, I will most assuredly have to answer his or her questions about myself.

"So Todd," he or she will say after drying off, "what experience do you have in newspapers?"

Of course, I will have anticipated such a question, so I will have a perfect answer prepared.

But then, two things will happen. I will realize that I do not have a lot of experience with newspapers. I delivered them as a kid, but that's probably not going to impress the poop deck out of him or her. The second thing that will happen is that my brain will suddenly be in Alaska.

I am not knocking Alaska. I'm sure it's a lovely state, and I've heard wonderful things about its bears and its snow, but I will be in an editor's office somewhere other than Alaska, and I will probably need it to answer the questions.

"Well," I'll timidly say to him or her, "I delivered them as a kid. Ha ha."

"OK, funny-boy, let's just get to it," he or she will say in frustration, through clenched teeth. "Just tell me why you think I should hire you."

At this point, my brain will decide that Alaska isn't quite cold enough, and it will travel to the North Pole. It may be trying to find Santa Claus. He'd give me a job; I'm sure of it.

"Todd good writer guy!" I will bellow my response. "Me make good worker guy! You like me! Really, really!"

I will then break down in uncontrollable sobs until security is called to haul me off, making sure to keep me away from the equipment.

I think it's safe to say that I have not only missed the boat, but there are times when I don't even know the way to the sea.

All of this should worry me, and my palms should be dripping in anticipation of the next few months. But the truth of it is that I just want to graduate. I believe that after President Clinton or Madonna or whoever hands me my diploma, I will have plenty of time to worry about it.

And if all else fails, I can stow away. Just let me know if the bell captain comes for my luggage.

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**Mike Luckovich**