

OPINION

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Page 4

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Invincible

Youth guarantees no automatic safety

At times, adolescents feel they are not susceptible to the dangers of society. One's youth breeds a safety net-like arrogance that many feel can't be broken.

Two separate accidents in Nebraska this weekend are sobering reminders of our mortality.

A 19-year-old Grand Island man was killed Saturday when the car he was driving collided with a motor home on the city's west side.

A 18-year-old Walthill woman was killed Friday when the car she was riding in hit an oncoming garbage truck.

The circumstances of both accidents were different. But the tragedies are related in one way — neither teen was wearing a safety belt.

Students, as summer approaches and classes wind down, take notice of these two weekend accidents. Take notice of everyone's vulnerability.

Remember — you have a lot to live for.

Declining Dollar

Currency crisis may cause recession

As summer approaches, college students traveling abroad will come face-to-face with one of the United States' growing economic problems — the falling dollar.

Travelers who haven't paid much attention to the sickly dollar will raise an eyebrow when their afternoon snack at a German cafe costs more than a full meal back home.

But the pale U.S. currency is potentially a bigger problem than simply buying cookies in Europe.

The dollar has fallen to its lowest point against the German deutsche mark since World War II.

And a dollar that continues to decline will mean increasing inflation and a resulting raise in interest rates.

As America's economic recovery sped up last year, the Federal Reserve and its chairman, Alan Greenspan, continually pushed up interest rates — much to the dismay of the American public. Now that the U.S. economy has slowed down, Greenspan has quit fueling the flame underneath interest rates.

But Greenspan and his Fed cronies are now confronted with a problem they have nearly ignored up to now.

Coupled with the United States' commitment to a \$50 million bailout of the Mexican peso, this crisis in currency could potentially cause a recession, should the dollar plunge even further.

The dollar's decline right now is not much more than a problem for the world's currency markets and investors. But if Greenspan and U.S. policy makers continue to ignore the dollar's decline, the American economy could be headed down with it.

So while lounging streetside across the Atlantic this summer, complain all you want about American currency because you might have to get used to it upon returning home.

Editorial policy

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Letter policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68582-0448.



Father imparts legacy of life

My mother and I talk about the misguided attitude people often show when they tell us how "sorry" they are about my father having Alzheimer's disease. We lament for them when they tell us how "terrible" it is that he "isn't himself" anymore. They don't know him like we do. They think the things he can't do anymore are all that made him who he was. He still is who he was. He's never stopped giving, and we haven't stopped benefiting from what he gives.

There are lots of things that make him who he is that have nothing to do with whether he can tie his shoes, which he can no longer do. These are some of the things that make me who I am. Things I couldn't give myself. Simple things.

I've probably spent more time thinking about things he's given me and is still giving than what I might have lost. He's given me a lot.

There are four things that stick out in my mind:

- Style: When I wear a hat, I wear it his way.
- A name: I have a name that only he could've given to me.
- Freedom: He gave me a special kind of freedom that only he could have given.
- Fighting: He taught how me to fight.

He used to tilt his hat a certain way. His own characteristic tilt (now mine) was as flashy as he ever got. I used to love the way he did that. It was all he needed, too. No frills. He still tilts it the same way now.

Each morning that I take him to adult day care, I tilt his hat for him a second time. It has become a kind of joke with some of the more lucid clients, who laugh when I do it, and with some of the day-care staff. While leading him to his seat, I push his hat forward. Much more than he ever did himself. They think I'm poking fun at him when I do that. They don't understand. He will always correct it with the precise tilt I remember as a boy. And that gives me joy.

Since he already leaves the house in the morning with his hat tilted, I could just leave it alone. But I don't. By re-tilting it so he has to do it again, I get to see that characteristic



E. Hughes Shanks

tilt done twice. It's a double dose of a special style of his that he gives me.

I gained a kind of freedom when I looked into his family tree. My father's first name is also my middle name. I always liked having it, even before it had any real meaning to me. The name not only gave me my own personal freedom, it gave me strength far beyond what I could've gained on my own.

The Hughes family name is the only part of our family tree that I've looked up on my own. After doing that, I'm even more glad to have been given the name. It gave me concrete proof that my people were more than just the descendants of freed slaves. As is the case with all African Americans, slavery is only a part of who we are.

I knew my father acted differently, but I didn't know why. I realize now that he knew he was special, but he just didn't go around saying it. In his mind he was free from the slave mentality. Learning this has helped me feel stronger. His people's people owned land and went to college. They were truly free. I gain strength from that.

When I dropped my first name and started using my middle name, I was screaming loud and high, "Hey, we ain't all just a bunch of expatriated Africans! We're landed and educated, too!" That's something more to be proud of.

I learned how to fight from watching my father go through life. He fought many battles, large and small. They seemed to give him headaches, which he welcomed as part of the deal. I thought he was so cool because he never stopped fighting. He never quit trying.

I used his example when I decided to quit coffee. Caffeine would be my last chemical addiction — knock on wood. It seemed simple

enough. Looking back, that's probably how I quit other things that weren't good for me.

He quit cigarettes cold turkey. That's the only way. But quitting coffee causes some painful headaches from caffeine withdrawal. They crushed in on my head from my temples. I felt small and helpless.

I knew it was going to be a hard fight. I knew that if I could make it through, I could stand and watch as a world of addicts passed me by. But I felt weak. I suppose my father felt weak at times, too. He wasn't addicted to alcohol or drugs (except nicotine), but I bet he knew just how to fight them.

In addiction, there isn't any winning outright. There is only fighting. Even when you've stopped, the fighting continues. When people say they've won a battle against addiction, they're lying. Winning is too close-ended a concept for that. Just like my father having Alzheimer's disease — he's winning because he's alive. Whether he can hold a conversation or not doesn't mean squat.

Wanting to quit caffeine is actually bigger than whether I actually quit it or not, just like the valuable things I've learned from my father. They didn't stop being valuable because he has Alzheimer's. In fact, they became more valuable. It's because I wanted to quit that the headaches came. I knew that. But then I got mad. I remembered that the fight is the real victory.

"Who's stronger, me or the caffeine?" I asked. The caffeine said, "I am!" Pound, pound, pound.

I said, "No you're not!" Yet still, the headaches came. Pound, pound, pound. The pounding may make me feel small and weak now, but it can make me feel bigger and stronger later.

"There is no progress without struggle," someone said. And that person was right. Wanting to quit and having the headaches are part of that struggle. Having Alzheimer's is part of the same struggle. I bet my father would agree.

Shanks is a graduate student and Daily Nebraskan columnist.