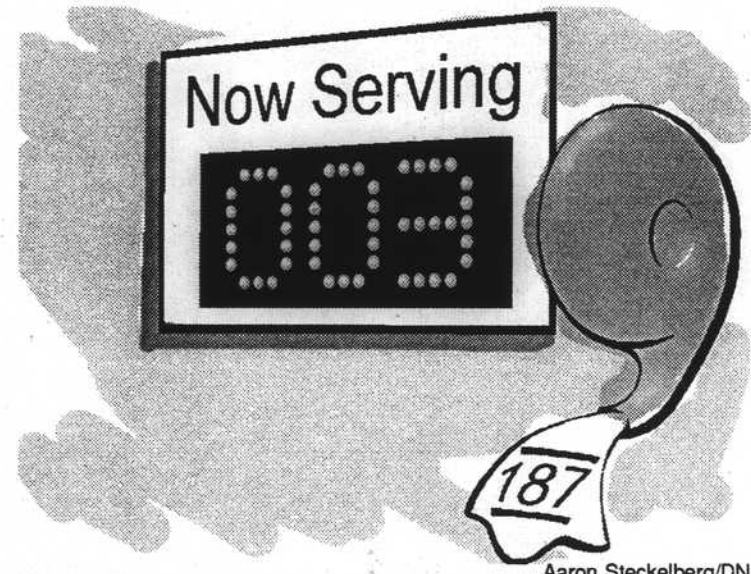


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Service, please

Customer-oriented workers slack off

Have you ever been blown off? Have you ever been ignored, forgotten, snubbed, denied or lied to? Chances are it was in a restaurant or retail store.

The death of customer service came quietly. It snuck up on us while we were reading the menu. And it's frustrating.

You used to be able to walk into a restaurant, take your seat, and before picking up a menu, a tall glass of ice water was sitting in front of you, droplets dripping down the side. You'd take a drink, then open the menu.

Now, before you're even able to ask for water — and you do have to ask, you risk being slighted by a host, a waitress or even a busser. All these people are there to serve you, and they're not doing their jobs. It seems as though there are too many non-people individuals working in customer service.

Servers will snub you if they don't think you'll tip big. That's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When something goes wrong at a restaurant, workers can't seem to stop and utter two simple words: "I'm sorry." When a restaurant has messed up and ruined someone's evening, that customer doesn't want to hear: "Oh well, everyone's human." That customer wants to hear how sorry the manager is.

It's gotten so that going to dinner has made you want to eat at home. These days, you have to dress up to go shopping. If you don't look like a million bucks, workers in a clothing store aren't willing to waste their time for such a measly sales commission.

Big chain stores are the worst. They're like the government. And we all know what terrible service the government gives. The worst part isn't that service personnel aren't helping you, it's that they aren't helping anyone. Employees are either talking on the phone, talking to each other or doing one of the many extra chores given to them by management.

And management is part of the problem. Do they realize what poor service their employees are giving? Maybe they're too busy filling out forms mandated by the corporate office. Instead, what they need to be doing is holding more service training, respecting customers, hiring secret shoppers or working at the service counter every once in a while.

But maybe they just don't care. They're not going out of business.

As big retail chains and restaurants buy up every little ma-and-pa store in the country, let's hope they aren't also buying all the customer service and locking it in a vault at the corporate headquarters.

Editorial policy

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Spring 1996 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents. Editorial columns represent the opinion of the author. The regents publish the Daily Nebraskan. They establish the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.

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. 68588-0448.



MEHSLING ^{DN} DAILY NEBRASKAN

Knowing Brook

Funeral an introduction to the real Berringer

GOODLAND, Kan. — Members of the Nebraska football team boarded the bus at 5:30 a.m. Monday, when Lincoln was still shrouded by darkness. Ten hours later, the sun high, bright and warm. But somehow, the darkness remained.

This was not the typical road trip for the Huskers. It did not begin with anticipation and end in triumph. Instead, it began and ended in sorrow.

When the bus stopped outside the Max L. Jones Fieldhouse here at 11:37 a.m. MDT, players filed out, their faces drawn and somber — drained from the pain of the past several days and the anticipation of more to come.

They all knew Brook Berringer. Some knew him well.

I didn't.

I never met Brook Berringer. To me, number 18 was just that, another face half hidden by eyeblack and face mask. A body perpetually obscured by pads and constantly clad in the red and white uniform of a Nebraska football player.

But, for some reason, it hurt.

It hurt being here in Goodland, seeing the pain on the faces of his friends and family and hearing the testimony of his former coaches and friends.

It hurt watching the tribute video that showed the face behind the mask, the man that lay just behind the label "football player."

And it hurt knowing how close he was to his dreams and how easily it could have happened to someone I really did know and love.

I found myself wishing I would have approached Brook Berringer the time I saw him with his knee bandaged, crutching down the sidewalk by Oldfather Hall and said, as I wanted to, "How're you doing," or "Hang in there, Brook."

I didn't, and I wished I had.

I wished I had known him, just briefly.



Doug Peters

"I wished I had known Brook Berringer, really. And low and behold, as the three-hour funeral went on, I began to."

You would have, too. If you could have heard them talk about him. His coaches: the stoic Tom Osborne, whose voice cracked as he talked about a young man who died with no regrets. Turner Gill, whose pain I could feel, as though it were a real object, resting its weight on my shoulders, but whose joy at having known Brook Berringer was just as impossible to conceal.

I wished I had known him. If you could have heard receivers coach Ron Brown, or Brook's friend and Bible study partner, Art Lindsay, who called him "the greatest man I'll ever know," you would have wished the same thing.

Before Monday, I knew this: Brook Berringer was a quarterback from Kansas. No, he was a backup quarterback from Kansas. He got to play when we were ahead or Tommie Frazier was hurt. He was good — good enough to earn a scholarship at Nebraska and win seven games when the chips were down and the pressure was on, but

he was still a backup quarterback. I thought that was about all I needed to know.

I was wrong. I wished I had known how much he loved his long-departed father; how much he loved to fly; how much he loved his friends, his hometown, the outdoors, his hunting dogs.

I wished I had known Brook Berringer, really.

And low and behold, as the three-hour funeral went on, I began to.

For those of you who don't know him, this is what I learned.

Brook Berringer was a great high-school athlete who epitomized teamwork and did what it took to win. He was a patient role player at Nebraska who worked hard and persevered when many others would have quit, eventually playing a key role in two national championships.

But more than that, he was a real person. A person who overcame doubts to live to his fullest potential, in athletics and in life. He was a friend to all who knew him and gladly sacrificed for those who needed him.

He was someone who shed light on countless lives, from those he knew well to those he saw just briefly.

He was someone, Tom Osborne said late last week, people would want their sons to be like; someone, I'm saying now, people should want themselves to be like. Even in death, Brook Berringer made me realize some things about life and how it should be lived.

Monday's funeral was difficult — it hurt. But I got my wish — I got to know Brook Berringer, just a little bit. And Brook did something for me that he'd done for people all his life — he's made my life a little better, just by knowing him.

Peters is a graduate student of journalism and Daily Nebraskan opinion page editor.



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