

Take a look

We can learn from Berringer's generosity

I know that, statistically, people are more likely to die in automobile accidents than plane crashes. Logically then, it follows that automobile accidents should have more of an effect on my life than plane crashes. But that extension of logic was completely wrong this year.

Twice, a small plane crashed outside of Lincoln, killing the outdoorsmen inside.

The pilot in the first crash, Mike, was a generous, big-hearted man who owned "Mike's Guns." I remember him most for giving a dog named Brandy to my husband in exchange for nothing but the pick of Brandy's first litter.

Brandy was a wild, one-person springer spaniel. She loved attention from everyone, but actually obeyed only Shawn, my husband. Despite her faults, she was a great hunting dog.

Once, she had gone after a pheasant in some brush. She was down there long enough that Shawn started calling her back, cursing her for not working.

Shawn got tears in his eyes here as he was recounting the experience.

After another two minutes, Brandy burst out of the brush with nothing but pheasant showing in her mouth.

Two weeks later, the man who gave her to us was suddenly gone. Now he'll never have the chance to own the pup he was promised.

Brook Berringer, whether we knew him personally or not, influenced the lives of every Husker fan. He consistently gave the effort needed to become a starting quarterback at any other school.

Brook also contributed off the field.

I don't know much about him personally. I think I saw him three or



Kristl Kohl

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four times on campus. I do know that he was a hero to at least two kids from Oshkosh, Neb., population 1,200.

While reading the Garden County News, my hometown newspaper, I came across two letters from grade school students who had just come back from the School is Cool Jam in North Platte.

Kelli Krauter wrote: "I liked Tanya Crevier the best. She dribbled basketballs three at a time and spun ten basketballs on her body. Brook Berringer was there too!" It's exciting to know that your heroes care enough to come talk to you.

Kristin Cross also mentioned Brook Berringer as one of her Nebraska heroes. She wrote: "We learned that most of these heroes came from small towns just like

Oshkosh. Even though they are from small towns, it didn't mean they couldn't achieve as much as anyone else. So they kept their minds to something, set a goal, and they reached it. They told us that when we want to do something, we need to keep our minds to it, and achieve our goal."

This is what makes me cry every time I read about Brook Berringer's life being cut short. It's the loss of an example, of someone who made the world better just by being who he was.

Another sports hero with a character to match his or her athletic ability is Billie Winsett. I liked her before I knew her, watching her encourage her teammates on the volleyball court. I actually met her this summer at Cedar Point.

One day, I had my 1-year old son with me at lunch for some reason. He was being a turkey as I went through the line, juggling the food with him balanced on my shoulders. Billie offered to watch him until I was through. It wasn't a big thing, simply an act of kindness from a generous person.

I wish that Brook Berringer had the opportunity to prove himself in the NFL as Brandy did, flying out of the brush with the pheasant in her mouth.

But it's impossible now.

In memory of Brook Berringer and others whose lives have been taken too soon, I propose that we take a look at their lives. Take the generosity and the love that they showed in their lives and make it a point to reach out and give somebody one of the gifts that could have died with those people. That's the best memorial anyone could ask for.

Kohl is a junior biology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Political scrutiny destroys careers

Her name was Mary, and she was middle-aged, worked as a domestic, had little money and no medical plan, and was in need of some serious and expensive life-saving surgery.

But she had lived in her Northwest Side Chicago neighborhood for most of her life. And she knew somebody who knew a politician of considerable importance.

Some calls were made, the most important coming from the office of the politician.

The result was that Mary went to a good hospital, was treated by skilled physicians, was cured and went home with a bill of \$0.00.

How the politician arranged this, I don't know. I assume that the hospital and the doctors owed him favors. That's the way things have always worked in Chicago, which can be good or bad. In this case, it was good.

And it wasn't the only time the politician did something like that. Using his political muscle to help out people was part of his trade. That's the good side of what used to be called machine politics.

I like to think of the late alderman Vito Marzullo, who usually placed one or two young lawyers in city or county patronage jobs. And one night every week, the lawyers came to Vito's ward office and handled legal chores for low-income people from the neighborhood. Free, of course.

In Mary's case, the politician who took care of her medical needs was Dan Rostenkowski, whose career in public service has just ended in a most tragic way.

Before anyone leaps for the phone, stationery or e-mail device, let me say that Rostenkowski and I are not pals. Far from it. We've never particularly liked each other, and our longest conversation has been about two minutes.

Many years ago, we sat together at a banquet honoring up-and-coming young Chicagoans in various fields. He was the young politician with a future, and I was the young columnist.

He was aloof and wary of talking to someone who just might stick it to him down the line. Which shows he was smart because later I did exactly that.

That was a pity, really, because we had a lot in common besides our ethnicity. We came from the same neighborhood. My family once owned a tavern within a short walk of Rostenkowski's house. And his precinct captain never once hustled us for a fast buck.

We have mutual friends and share some of the same bad habits. But when he was grabbed for a DUI in Wisconsin some years ago, he had the good sense to be polite to the cops.

We share having had kid problems, which can be agonizing for any parent. And if you are in public life, the minor foibles of your kids wind up in the newspapers while the neighbors of Joe the Bricklayer don't even know his kid was mugging old ladies.

Being a public figure, he is



Mike Royko

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held to a higher standard. And sometimes, it isn't exactly fair.

What I'm stumbling into saying is that nobody should be taking pleasure from Rostenkowski's misfortune. Not unless you have never, ever, broken even a minor law and gotten away with it, fudged a bit on your taxes or violated any of the Ten Commandments.

Only a few decades ago, none of this would have been happening. That's because the rules he was nailed for would have been legal and common or, at worst, nickel-dime offenses when he began his career in Congress.

That's the way it is in our society. The rules keep changing. Maybe he didn't notice. Or

maybe he didn't see the danger. The danger was that he was a big political fish — the kind of trophy that an ambitious federal prosecutor loves to stuff and hang on his wall.

There is no one in our society more powerful — judge, governor, mayor, legislator or even president — than a prosecutor. Local or federal.

At the federal level, they have a compliant grand jury and all the investigative tools they need, the agents of the FBI, Internal Revenue Service and every other federal agency. Plus eager assistants who will send their own grannies up the river to enhance their careers.

And the most dangerous and ruthless are those prosecutors who have political ambitions that are most easily fulfilled by hanging a well-known public figure.

That's what did in Rostenkowski — a federal prosecutor's personal ambitions. If I could put those federal prosecutors on a lie box and ask: "Do you really believe that what he did was a terrible crime?" and they said "Yes," the needle would clang when it went past the marking for "liar, liar, pants on fire."

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This year in history ...

A combination of the good, bad and the ugly

Much has happened the past two semesters of our lives.

Far too much has happened for any columnist to try to jam into 70 lines, but hey, the Mountain Dew's still flowing through this columnist's veins, so we'll give it a shot.

This year was one of successes, failures, scandal, tragedy and hope.

From Aug. 17 to the present, it has been a year of successes. The University of Nebraska picked up five national championships — football, volleyball, another for the men's bowling team and one for the basketball team, well, sort of.

For one man, it became a year that would place his name in the history books. And after taking off his cap to a roaring crowd at Camden Yards, a quiet Cal Ripken humbly put the cap back on and played his 2,131st consecutive baseball game.

But as often occurs, this year's failures overshadowed the successes.

We watched as the government shut down.

This year, the weather took its wrath out on Nebraska. Cold temperatures put a damper on spirits and on the lives of some.

Yet local failures struck us with more force than any icy wind. We watched as violent crimes grew in number. Marijuana use soared. And more teens made the choice to join a gang. Yep, we watched these things happen.

It was a year of scandal.

Lawrence Phillips pleaded guilty to assault charges and was booted off the team for six games and then returned. Was it enough? Controversy never lets the question submerge below a layer of doubt.

The Athletic Department was brought into the bitter limelight as it faced heat for booting Herbie Husker as mascot, for its distribution of Fiesta Bowl tickets and even more for considering an unfavorable shift of student seating.



Kasey Kerber

"Each of us learned a little, forgot a lot and walked away with memories we'll someday recall while we're talking to ourselves in a retirement home."

The largest controversy caused not only Lincoln, but the entire country, to come to a virtual standstill. For a moment, thousands of eyes remained glued to the nearest television. No, it wasn't the Apollo Moon landing or Kennedy's death. Instead, we listened as the words came: "Not Guilty."

Tragedy also found its way into two semesters of Nebraskans' lives.

We remembered tragically slain Martina McMenamin and Omaha police officer Jimmy Wilson. We were shocked as four intoxicated teens lost their lives in a driving accident. We could not help but to ask the question: "Why?" Again, we asked that question when Brook Berringer died in a plane accident. Again, the answers do not come easily. And even if they did, in our hearts, we would never truly understand.

Yet we should never forget that it was a year of hope.

We witnessed the "Million Man March." It never did reach a million marchers, but it made a strong statement for African-American men around the nation.

Bosnia continued to be a regular spot on the evening news. Yet, with the deployment of U.S. troops, there was hope. Hope that fighting may cease. Hope that men and women may soon come out of shell-torn homes while their children play in the streets — no fear in their hearts.

It has also proved to be a year of new beginnings.

We witnessed the painful demise of Calvin and Hobbes. Yet we now cope with Dilbert and four new comics.

We also learned that Broyhill Fountain will meet a timely death. Yet we used our student voice to decide what will replace it.

We also watched a new beginning occur in elections. The Republican nomination war ended with Bob Dole as the sole survivor, and ASUN elections ended with the ACTION party taking control.

It was one hell of a year all right.

Each of us learned a little, forgot a lot and walked away with memories we'll someday recall while we're talking to ourselves in a retirement home.

To those leaving UNL for the next destination of life, I wish you luck. I hope that college has made all the difference, and that, by the way, you lose the beer gut in six months.

For those remaining, there's tons ahead. Too much for one columnist to write about, but this one's got a Mountain Dew to spare. See ya in August ...

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YOUR WEEKLY TOONUP by Mike Luckovich

