

OPINION PAGES

Guest VIEW

Whose error? Children pay price for pushy parents

From The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

It's official. Instructor error killed 7-year-old Jessica Dubroff last year when her small airplane took off in a Wyoming storm — with Jessica at the controls.

Actually, the child — repeat child — was being assisted in flight by pilot/instructor Joe Reid, who also died in the crash, along with a third passenger, Jessica's father, Lloyd Dubroff.

The National Transportation Safety Board has now blamed Reid for poor judgment and for trying to keep a schedule to avoid being late for planned media interviews along the route of their transcontinental flight.

Sharp winds and a spring storm felled the plane shortly after takeoff from Cheyenne. The plane was 96 pounds overweight, and its performance was encumbered by the high altitude of the Cheyenne airport.

It has been said before, but it bears repeating now that the NTSB has made its ruling: A 7-year-old has no business being at the controls of an airplane.

We certainly do not allow children to drive automobiles. How in the world can we justify permitting the kind of stunt that cost three lives?

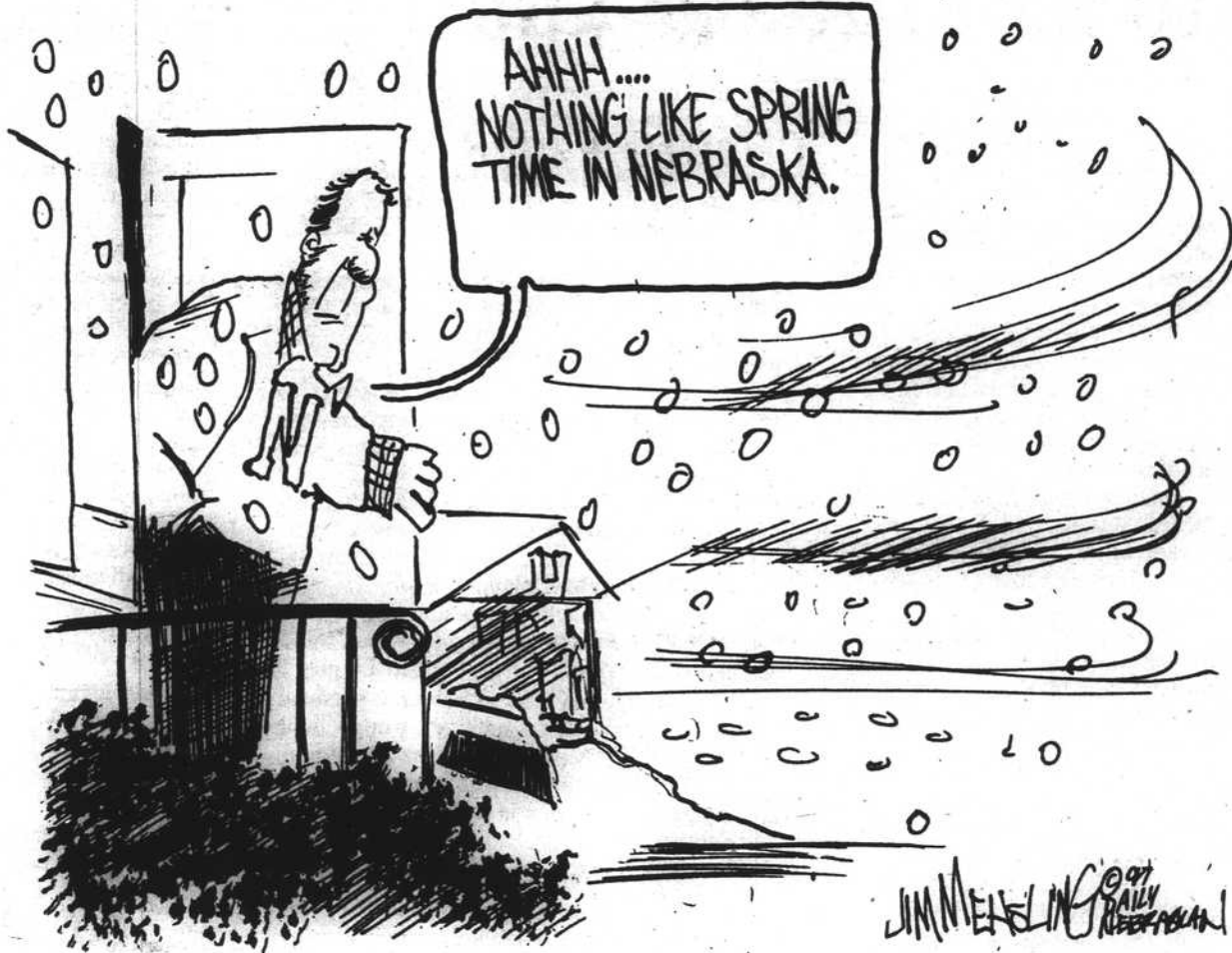
We know, of course, that some parents push their children to feats that their physical development and mental acuity are incapable of handling.

And we know that some parents live through their children the lives they themselves could not have.

Unfortunately, as young Jessica Dubroff's premature death shows, the price for that kind of behavior can be very high — and very tragic.

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Mehsling's VIEW



Jessica KENNEDY

Face-to-face with America People-watching more than a pastime

One of my favorite lazy-day, wasting-time activities is people-watching.

Not the perverted, illegal hobby of being a peeping tom, but rather the casual observation of behaviors, styles, and personalities.

Communal places are rich in observational material. I love “shopping” at the mall, supermarket, Laundromat and union — places where people's guards are down or they're so involved in what they're doing, they've forgotten about the people around them — settings where people are interacting with each other and their surroundings.

It's kind of neat when you think about it ... these places offer you an opportunity to look into the eyes of America. You can challenge yourself to face those things that might make you uncomfortable, to see what you normally don't (want to) see. It's all there — every type of person you can think of.

Look at LaundryLand's parking lot next time you drive by. You'll see junkers and mini-vans and BMWs — all side-by-side. Inside, the mix gets even more interesting. All these people sharing the same space. It's interesting watching people's behavior when they're somewhere they can't leave. For example, in a Laundromat you have people dealing with their dirty laundry in public, being bored, playing games, etc. ...

For me, the premier people-watching sport is the bus. People have to stay seated next to strangers, and they really can't look around much. It's easy to discreetly observe every nuance of a person. Each tells you a little something about the person and how he or she lives. Without feeling too obtrusive, the



astute observer can see what passengers are wearing, what they're carrying, how they hold themselves, how they keep to themselves and how they interact with the people and the bus environment.

If you don't normally ride the bus, take one this week during a rush hour. The people you see are so interesting. Businesspeople, students and the elderly all ride the bus.

But the passengers I am truly fascinated by are the elderly and the poor. Each has so much to share without ever knowing it.

So often forgotten by our busy, rush-rush society, these people deserve more than a passing glance. I suspect that the mass transit's poor and elderly have interesting and moving tales to tell.

I remember one woman in particular who I rode with one morning. She was probably about 65 or so and heavy-set with medium-length straggly, white hair and a colorful array of polyester coats and cotton flower-print shirts. On her feet were tan, worn, creased SAS shoes.

She carried with her several plastic grocery bags and a couple of large cotton bags. It was apparent that she was a regular, as she chatted about her neighbors and children with the bus driver.

Wide, watery blue eyes darted

around the bus as she spoke, conveying both cheerfulness and tiredness.

Her chubby, wrinkled face was rosy with excitement.

As the bus bounced over potholes, her feet swung freely, the tips of her toes brushing the floor.

More recently, however, it has been the younger generation that has perplexed me and dominated my people-watching time. I am at a loss over some of the behaviors and styles that are mainstreams these days.

Bell-bottoms were ugly the first time, neon colors (I thought) ran their course in the '80s and strappy shoes were uncomfortable when our mothers wore them, so why in the world would we bring these obnoxious fashions back?

Yet, here they are, sported by lanky, Twiggy-esque teenagers. I watch, in complete and utter disbelief of the few short years that separate these fashion oddities and me.

And all the suburban kids saggin' and packing beepers. What's up with that? I'll probably never know, but that's OK, it's fun to watch them.

In the end, there are no rules, and no one is safe from scrutiny. All that you need is a commitment to candidly survey society.

Head to the mall, head for the bus stop and watch America in her element. Pause a moment from rushing through your life and observe those lives around you.

So goes the sport of people-watching: seeing the unbelievable, observing the unthinkable, watching the unwatchable.

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