

Jessica  
KENNEDY

# Daily Gold

## Remembering those who matter most in life

I was 7 when I lost Gram and 17 when Pa-pa died.

I miss them.

They believed in me, supported me, loved me. When I stayed the



pervasive glow of the television set.

After Gram's death, Pa-pa, who was recently retired, decided to become a Catholic priest.

They were never famous, occasionally they were "out there," but regardless of the circumstances, they were always great. Good people with hearts of gold.

I am inspired by their lives, they are my heroes.

In the fourth or fifth grade, I has to write an essay about my hero. Some of my classmates wrote about political icons, others wrote about Hollywood movers-and-shakers.

I wrote about Pa-pa ... our experiences, my memories, our love.

On Grandparent's Day I read my outpouring at a school assembly, with Pa-pa sitting out in the shadows, hearing every word.

It's been four years since Pa-pa died. I still have a hard time thinking about him. It tears my heart out to think that he won't see me graduate from college, won't see me get married or hold his great-grandchildren.

There is comfort in knowing that I will walk across the stage this December accompanied by Gram and Pa-pa's spirit.

This week's Time lists the most influential people in America in 1997. Those profiled include Tiger Woods, National Enquirer editor Steve Coz, "X-Files" creator Chris Carter, Dilbert, Trent Reznor — to name a few.

So I started thinking, who are the influencers of my generation? Who influences me?

Like most of my classmates from elementary school, I started naming a list of the rich and famous; Rosie O'Donnell, Madeline Albright, Hillary Clinton, Stephen Hawkins.

It didn't take long to come back home.

I turned to the people in my life

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who have lived, struggled and ended up happy.

I came back to my early essay, "My Hero."

Originally I wanted to do this intellectual look at Time's influential people and discuss their worthiness. But heroes and motivators just can't be discussed in such a sanitized method.

After taking a look at my own life, I knew that we, as a society, may admire political and entertainment big-wigs, but that doesn't mean those people have much influence on our day-to-day living.

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lives, directly influencing our behaviors.

So, on that note, I challenge Daily Nebraskan readers to think of the influential people in their lives today. You may remember people who are memories or think of people you see every day in class or work.

Take the time to tell your daily heroes how much they mean to you. Say it directly or indirectly with a smile or a card. Just let them know.

I have no doubt that Gram and Pa-pa knew how much they mean to me. I just wish I could tell them again.

Kennedy is a senior advertising and broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Guest  
VIEW

# As seen on TV

## Rare redeemable flip side of trash television

DURHAM, N.H. (U-WIRE) — Sally Jesse Raphael and her fellow cohorts of daytime talk occasionally take a break from doing such shows as "My Ex-Boyfriend Impregnated My Lesbian Best Friend" to exhibit their altruism for a day.

Sometimes they reward individuals who are known for being "Good Samaritans" within their communities; other times they attempt to grant audience members' Christmas wishes.

These programs are innocent enough and are sometimes so moving as to bring tears to my eyes (it must be their theme songs — they're always slowed down during the less trashy shows).

Often, though, the only thing I am moved to do while watching these "Good Samaritan" shows is throw up. Last week I had the displeasure of witnessing one such show.

This particular day, Sally planned to help guests whose children were often made fun of by their peers. The children who were brought on stage had been teased at school either because of their weight, their dress or their overall appearance.

One particular young girl had been taunted for looking too "white" (leave it to children to be equal-opportunity bullies); her nickname at school was "Albino." Sally, with her big heart and equally big budget, sought to help "Albino" by sending her on an all expense-paid trip to Universal Studios for a week. Through tears, Albino's mother fervently thanked Sally for her support, while Sally's audience cheered and applauded.

Not all of the guests received vacation packages. Some children

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were given make overs, the results of which were displayed at the end of the program in poignant "Before and After" shots. Other guests were given palpable items, such as toys, for compensation.

As I sat with my butt glued to the couch and watched this spectacle, I wondered what getting a Tickle-Me-Elmo meant to these kids after years of being kicked, laughed at and taunted in the schoolyard.

Though I am a full-grown adult, I can still recall being made fun of in elementary school for my big eyes and penchant for getting correct answers on tests. The occasional teasing failed to turn me into a raving lunatic, but the fact that I remember it at all is evidence that it was hurtful.

I had little doubt that the tormenting to which these kids had been subjected affected them any less. Did Sally really think the young guests on her show would leave the studio with heightened self-esteem and go home to a more

tolerant peer group?

That "Albino" received a trip to Florida was distressing enough (what will she do when she returns to school and her suntan fades?), but I was appalled by the fact that some of the guests were given new haircuts and wardrobes. The logic that led Sally or her producers to even consider doing such a thing is probably the same logic that leads parents of some children to "build" their child's self-esteem by entering them in beauty pageants.

Living in a society that values its members' beauty too highly as it is, do we want to continue to preserve such a notion?

The kids who received make overs looked as uncomfortable as I expected them to, though the "oohs" and "ahhs" from the audience temporarily consoled them. As they strutted and twirled across the stage, Sally all but patted herself on the back for her tremendous generosity.

I wondered, perhaps harshly, if on a future show she would give

away cars and trips to Bermuda to victims of spousal abuse.

No doubt Sally's intentions in producing such a show were pure. She should be credited for putting her celebrity and wealth to good use, since she is one of the few who do so.

She would do better, however, to rethink the message she is sending to the children she had on her show and those who might have been watching it. This particular show was not an outrage, but the attitudes underlying it are.

Disappointing though it is, life is now "Cinderella" or "The Mirror Has Two Faces."

And though I would not want to be the one to tell those poor kids, it definitely ain't Sally Jesse Raphael.

— Shawna Starkey  
The New Hampshire



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