

Life's legacy

There's more to living a fulfilled life than a degree or the perfect job

Editor's note: Each Tuesday this semester, the Daily Nebraskan will print an opinion column from a guest columnist. Each works at the University of Nebraska or is involved with an issue that affects our campus or our students.

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What is life about? You might say it's to Live, to Love, to Learn and to Leave a Legacy.

I know so many people in search of happiness. Each person considering what route to take and what will make them happy. Once I get my degree and find a job, then I can be happy. Once I change jobs or start my own business, then I'll be happy. If I can get my life in order, then I might be happy. If I had more money, more friends, the right clothes, then I'll be happy.

There are scores of people out there with degrees. The degree is supposed to be a ticket to something else. Yet there are plenty of people with degrees and still looking for happiness.

I've been down of the road of changing jobs and looking for the right position to make me happy. My

longest tenure previous to my arrival at Nebraska was three years in any one position.

I'd get restless, discontented, want more and begin to search for the new place that would make me happy.

Many think, "Maybe if I just get my life in order, I'd be happy."

Getting your life in order can be a full-time job. There can be so much to organize. So much stuff to acquire and manage. Technology, gadgets, conveniences and so many things.

We think, "Once all these things are aligned, then I'll be happy." I recently heard the phrase:

"Everything in your life is perfectly aligned to get the results you are already getting."

We see fleeting happiness in the victory of an athletic game, an A on a test or paper or in winning the lottery. Then reality sets in, and we deal with what comes next — soul searching. Is it possible to "get" happiness? Is happiness a state of being? Or does happiness come from a meaningful life deeply rooted in your values?

I recently attended a several-day seminar that allowed me to stop and think about life. During one of the exercises, I had to identify the four

most important things in my life that I would not want to live without.

We divided a sheet of paper into four equal quadrants and wrote one of our four items in each. Then we separated each quadrant from the others and studied what we had written.

Next, we were asked to pare the four down to three. Then three down to two. And two down to one. I remember feeling very anxious about making this choice. We are so accustomed to having several options in front of us.

The program allowed me think about how I live, love, learn and leave a legacy.

What does it mean TO LIVE?

Daily I make choices in my life. I used to hope they were the correct choices. I know now that if my choices are firmly grounded in my values and things with most meaning for me, I don't need to hope. In living a life of integrity, I am able to make the most of my existence on earth.

Many people walk around angry at others and upset by what they do not have. Wishing will not get you there. In my life it means to be thankful for what God has given me: health, riches, family, friends, skills

and talents.

What does it mean TO LOVE?

To love is to hold my family, friends, colleagues and others dear. Life is too short not to care for others. It really is true that what you send out comes back to you tenfold.

To love is to make others matter. If you send out despair, anger, mistrust and anxiety, it will certainly come around back to you stronger than when it left. Most likely it will sneak up on you from behind.

To love is have relationships with others. It is to give of yourself and want nothing in return.

What does it mean TO LEARN?

If I am open, honest, willing to truly listen and to try, try again, I will certainly be richer for it. Riches come from using both the intellect and common sense.

We never stop learning, it's just that we may fail to recognize what we have learned and how to use the knowledge and experience again. With learning comes growth, wisdom of experience and the ability to advance knowledge.

I have no idea how much I really know and how far I can stretch my capacity to learn. My memory banks are not yet full and there is still so much to know, sense, feel and do.

What does it mean TO LEAVE A LEGACY?

How do I want to be remembered? What will people say about me when I am gone? How will my obituary or eulogy sound? What good will I have done in the world?

What things will be attributed to my ability TO LIVE, TO LOVE, TO LEARN? How will I have left the world around me a better place? What difference will I have made?

If you balance your spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical self, you will be able have a rich and full life. Having too much in any one area can throw you out of balance, like a wheel that needs an alignment.

Although it might be nice, you can't buy permanent happiness in a jar or can. It doesn't come from being successful or having lots of stuff. It doesn't come from holding high level positions or making important decisions. It comes from giving of yourself, loving others, and living a life of integrity.

I have met a few early-twenties adults who have already figured this out.

It took me 38 years to make the connection, which proves it's never too late to start to LIVE, to LOVE, to LEARN and to LEAVE A LEGACY.

Start your engines

Another wild and crazy NASCAR season is just beginning



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I've tried to quit, God help me, I have.

It's just that the same old feeling starts to come over me every February and I just can't help myself.

I'm addicted to speed.

I've been a speed freak for as long as I can remember. The thought of going more than a week with it terrifies me.

I was doing so good too. That's the worst part. I had been fairly speed-free since November.

However, this weekend I had a relapse.

I tried to resist, honest. But this time of year is so difficult for me to deal with.

Again, I was weak.

It's the beginning of the NASCAR season.

Ah, Daytona Speedweeks, how I curse thee.

Valuable time that could be used studying, cleaning or writing a column instead is spent watching qualifying, practice and preseason specials.

Not to mention the Bud Pole Shoot-out, Gatorade Twin 125s, Bando Mar-Hyde ARCA race and Busch Grand National race.

Yes, for two weeks every February my life is consumed in all that is Daytona Speedweeks.

See, I can't help it. I'm a NASCAR fan. Specifically, the Busch Grand National series and its bigger brother, the cream of the crop, the Winston Cup series.

Don't get me wrong, I love NHRA drag racing, CART Indy cars and World Of Outlaw sprint cars too. But my true love will always be stock cars.

Don't believe me? Let's just say that I'm looking forward to Feb. 14th for the Daytona 500. Not that other holiday, whatever it is.

OK, sue me. I've always wanted to drive race cars.

I really don't care if it's the local dirt track or the high banks of Daytona.

It's a desire I've always had and still do today.

Why? I don't know.

Ah, the hell with

it, fine, I'll be honest.

It's the uniforms. I think I'd look cool as hell in a firesuit and helmet.

Is that so wrong?

Besides, where else will you

find a guy named Buckshot?

(Roy "Buckshot" Jones. Rookie, Crown Fiber #00 car.)

Besides, NASCAR is so different from all the other sports.

In baseball, for example, I have MY team, the L.A. Dodgers. I don't care how any other team does, as long as MY Dodgers win.

It's the same on other sports too: football, Denver Broncos; hockey, Colorado Avalanche; Roller Jam, California Xplosion; basketball, no one, I hate basketball.

Well, you get the idea.

NASCAR fans are a little different.

How different?

Last year a woman was shot by police after she stabbed her boyfriend and attacked the officers.

What was her deal?

She was a Rusty Wallace fan. (Rusty Wallace. 20th season, former Winston Cup champion, Miller Lite #2 car.)

Her boyfriend was a Jeff Gordon fan. (Jeff Gordon. 6th season, 2-time defending Winston Cup Champion, 3 titles overall, #24 DuPont car.)

Gordon accidentally (according to Gordon) wrecked Wallace and went on to win the race.

The woman was so tired of Gordon winning that she stabbed the boyfriend.

No kidding. It's a true story.

But I forgave her. Still, NASCAR truly represents what is great about our country. It's a sport where ordinary men can seize the day.

Yes, I did say men. Sorry ladies, NASCAR's only woman driver, Patty

Moise, is currently "looking for a ride" this season.

However, aside from that, it's a sport where man and metal truly meet inches apart at a speed of 200 mph.

A sport where you struggle and scratch to reach victory lane so you can claim the honor, the pride and the chance to thank 500 sponsors on national television.

So I'd just like to thank God for giving me this chance to write.

My editor, man, this was a 10th-place column at best today, but you got me here.

This win is for Erin Gibson and all the other editors back at the office. Man, you guys are the best.

I'd like to thank U-Express for sticking by me through that legal reform column.

Oh, who am I forgetting?

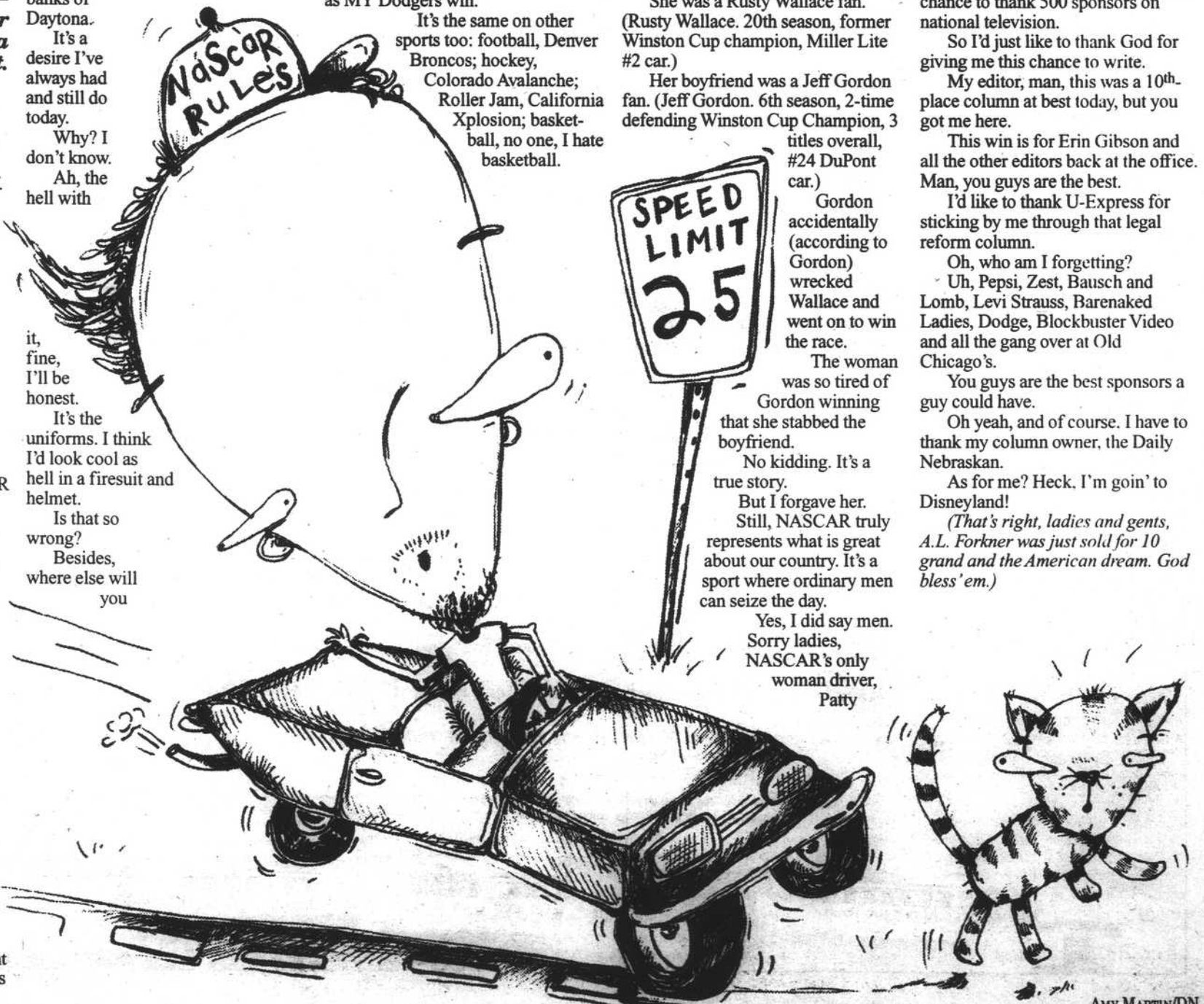
Uh, Pepsi, Zest, Bausch and Lomb, Levi Strauss, Barenaked Ladies, Dodge, Blockbuster Video and all the gang over at Old Chicago's.

You guys are the best sponsors a guy could have.

Oh yeah, and of course. I have to thank my column owner, the Daily Nebraskan.

As for me? Heck, I'm goin' to Disneyland!

(That's right, ladies and gents, A.L. Forkner was just sold for 10 grand and the American dream. God bless 'em.)



AMY MARTIN/DN