

2019
Class B
State
Journalism
Champions



**Editorial Writing Champion:
Adrienne Labay, McCook**

Drugs have been a long-standing problem for decades, starting in the opium dens of Victorian London, all the way to the pot-laced brownies so popular at today's parties. Many programs, like D.A.R.E., have risen and fallen in an attempt to stay the tide. Last week, our own high school set forth a new policy in their attempt to contribute to the fight. The policy calls for random drug testing on students. This means that at any point in the day, a teacher can ask a student to take a drug test proving they're not on something 'recreational.' While I'm sure teachers won't abuse this ability and conduct drug test on students during class, other concerns have been expressed about the new policy.

The main fear seems to be that the school will start profiling students in order to determine who to test. This could lead to an influx in racism, sexism, or elitism. "The overall goal of this policy is to promote a safe, drug-free environment, not to serve as a witch hunt or a way to legally profile our students." Principal John Kim assures. His statement, while well-intended, is not a promise though. He can only account for his own actions after all. What promises does the policy hold that can protect African American students from having their bags searched every day? What will protect low-income students from being tested repeatedly?

The problem with 'random' is that when it comes to looking for wrong-doers, it's never random. There will always be some underlying reason for why a particular student is picked. Maybe it's not something as harmful as racism or elitism, but there is always a certain reasoning behind why a person decides a student should be tested. It's just an impulse to them, with no rhyme or reason to it, but it will be there.

Many students in our school have reacted to this change with indifference or outright approval though. "I think this policy is a good idea, but I think the administration already knows who's using drugs and will just test those kids, making the process a lot less random than advertised." Oliver Taylor, a Junior, comments. Others seem to share this opinion. Mercedes Cardenas, a Senior, expressed the thought, "A lot of students do drugs. We all know who they are. Maybe these students can actually get caught now and be in trouble." The implication here is that the school will only test those they strongly suspect. If that's true, then why bother saying 'random' in the first place? Wouldn't it be much better to implement a policy saying suspected drug users will be tested randomly?

Some might argue that this would lead to more extreme profiling, or that it would start a witch hunt, but that's why you implement safe guards against this possibility, like cops have. This is my main problem with the policy as it is right now. There's no guarantee, no promise. It doesn't even say how many times a student can be tested, or how frequently. I would suggest revising the policy now, styling it after our local police force's own regulations, before it does become a problem. Innocent until proven guilty, remember?

**Newspaper Feature Writing Champion:
Alex Schrier, Mount Michael Benedictine**

While most drivers preparing to make the jump from amateur to professional racing at NASCAR's legendary training camp are age 23, Jorgensen, at 5 feet 2 inches and weighing less than 100 pounds, ages just 15.

She is the first female and the youngest driver to be invited to the three-day training camp held June 12-14 in Daytona Beach, Florida.

"This camp is the opportunity of a lifetime for me," Jorgensen said. "When I applied to this camp, I didn't think I had a chance at being accepted. The camp directors usually select male drivers who have started professional careers but are not performing at their potential."

Jorgensen is no stranger to fielding questions about her passion.

"People ask me all the time why a girl would want to race cars. I say, why not? It's the ultimate thrill," she said. "The speed helps me forget about everything stressful in life. It's just me and the car."

Jorgensen's love for competitive racing started at a young age.

"When I was just 4 years old, my dad and I watched Speed Racer cartoons on Saturday mornings. Soon, I was asking for cars instead of Barbies, and my love for racing developed," she explained.

Jorgensen looks up to a hero who blazed the trail she's travelling.

"It's pretty obvious who my hero is. It's Danica Patrick," she said.

Like Jorgensen, Danica Patrick also started her career with go-cart racing, and she became the first woman to win an Indy car race in the 2008 at Indy Japan.

"I want to set the records like Danica and continue to open the field to women," she said.

As passionate as Jorgensen is about racing, adjusting to regular weekend competitions and training camps was hard for her family.

"My dad is definitely not a racer. He's probably the slowest driver I know. He's super cautious and hates getting on highways. I don't think it was easy for him to support me, but my dad has always been a believer in dreams," Jorgensen said.

Even though it might not be easy, Jorgensen's mother, Missy, feels her support for Julie is important.

"It's scary everytime she gets behind the wheel for a race, but this is her dream. I wouldn't be a very good parent if I didn't support her," Missy Jorgensen said.

Molly Carlos, Jorgensen's best friend, is also Molly's best supporter.

"Before becoming her friend, I had never seen a car race. Now, I spend most of my weekends at the race track," Carlos said. "At one of her practices, Julie let me drive her car around the track ... I understand why she is hooked. It was so liberating."

While she may have the skills to race on the track, Jorgensen, who turns 16 on April 27, will have to prove she has what it takes to be a driver on the road.

"It's going to be embarrassing if I can win a car race but fail my driving test," she said.

According to Jorgensen, street cars and race cars, while seemingly similar, are actually entirely different beasts.

"In the street, everything feels a little looser. You have to push harder on the brakes to stop, and you have to turn the wheel a lot more. A [Volvo station wagon] doesn't handle as well as my race car," Jorgensen said. "Plus, I never have to parallel park during a race."

Until then, Jorgensen prepares to race against professional drivers.

"I've been waiting for this moment most of my life," Jorgensen said.

**Yearbook Sports Feature Writing Champion:
Amber Buhman, Columbus Scotus**

A Grand Slam of a Season

Twenty-seven state championship tournament appearances, back-to-back Class J State Champions, an undefeated season, and a state record for most consecutive wins are all titles held by the Cornhusker High School softball team.

The team, which consisted of fourteen girls, began their winning streak in September of the 2017 season, and it carried over into the 2018 season. In the state semifinals, the Cornhuskers swung their way to their fiftieth consecutive win. With this win, they tied Prairie High School's record previously set in 2005.

"I didn't tell the girls we were closing in on the state record," head coach **Susie Baker** recalled. "We were so focused on this season and winning the state tournament."

Winning the state tournament was exactly what they did. Win number fifty-one not only achieved a state championship, but it also earned the team a spot in the state record books.

"I can't believe we won fifty-one games in a row and number fifty-one was the state championship!" exclaimed senior pitcher **Holly Rowe**.

The team consisted of seven seniors, who had been a part of every single win of the streak and both state championships.

"Our main goal all season was to win back-to-back state championships, and we were not focused on the streak," senior center fielder **Graci Kolber** said. "Coach told us all season to trust our teammates and to remember to smile, have fun, and enjoy it."

With this mantra, **Baker** has led the Cornhuskers to many successful seasons in her fifteen years as head coach. She has instilled a tradition of winning into the softball program.

"Coach Baker has done an outstanding job building a program that focuses on developing a complete student-athlete," Cornhusker High School Athletic Director **Jerry Ryan** stated. "I'm so proud of how the girls handled themselves on and off the field. They worked really hard to represent the core values of the Cornhusker High School community, and they finished the season as true winners!"

The true winners' season may have come to a fairytale ending, but the streak is still alive. With seven players graduating, there will only be seven returning players who all hope to continue the winning streak into the 2019 season.

"I'm sad that I will not be part of the team next year," **Kolber** said. "My hope is that they will keep it going!"

Theme: All These Years

Opening

The value of tradition runs deep in the Rebels' veins. Far Away High is a place for students to let go and be themselves.

From the annual Rebels versus Destroyers game to the Back to School Car Bash, we know how to keep a tradition alive. For ten years running, the Rebels have proven that we will remain in the top.

Although there are new additions to our school, such as the new superintendent and the thirteen new teachers we gained, we still remain the same.

We've grown into a technology driven school, with our new 1:1 laptops and our cell phones in class, but we still are the same Rebels we were ten years ago, wearing red, yellow, and white with pride.

We are proud of our school and our long running traditions. We have, and will keep, the spirit of the Rebels alive for **All These Years.**

Division Page (Student Life)

As Far Away High comes up on our tenth-year anniversary, we reflect over all these years and all of the long-standing traditions our school has held for so many years.

Prom comes to the mind of a Rebel when they think of timeless tradition because it carries the memories we cherish the most when we walk across that stage on May 17th.

“Prom season is my favorite part of the year,” senior Catherine Roitman said. “I love shopping for my dress, getting my nails and hair done, and spending a relaxing night with my friends away from the stress of school.”

Catherine’s mother, Amy reflects on her days as a Rebel. “I remember feeling the exact same way fifteen years ago when I was in school. It’s an outstanding tradition that I am happy to involve my daughter in after all these years.”

Closing

“Perseverance and consistency are the keys to success,” Scott Frost said when he visited Far Away High in September.

Rebels are success-seekers, risk-takers, and hardworking individuals that stand for tradition and pride.

Rebels are still the same today as they were ten years ago when Far Away High first opened its doors.

We are still the same after the victory over Emporia High School under those stadium lights.

We are still the same when nothing in our school is.

We are still the Far Away High Rebels, after **All These Years.**

**Yearbook Feature Writing Champion:
Celia Wightman, Lexington**

In the ten years that Far Away high has been open, some things have simply never changed. From the annual Back to school Car Bash and the school colors of red, white, and yellow to competing in the state marching band competition every year, students have been able to count on several traditions to remain consistent throughout the last decade.

Even the weekly 'Mystery Meat Monday' has been a mainstay in students' lives, as senior Laya Orgona pointed out.

"This is something we students have come up with over the years. There is meat that is served breaded, but no one knows what it is for sure. Some people claim it is Salisbury Steak of some sort, but it's never been confirmed," Orgona said.

Having been in third grade when Far Away high opened in the academic year 2008-2009, some seniors were around since the beginning to see the progress the school has made in the previous ten years.

"My family has been in Tomorrowtown my entire life, so I didn't really have much of a choice. But I would say I loved being here for all ten years and seeing where we have come with everything," Orgona said.

Although much has remained the same, many changes have also been made. First, the school mascot changed from the Rioters to the Rebels. Moreover, rather than the elementary, middle school, and high school all being in separate towns, they all came together to a single location in Tomorrowtown.

"The biggest change I noticed in my time here, other than all the schools moving to one location, would have to be the number of students here," Orgona said.

Since the opening of the school, it has grown by approximately 250 students. It now has an enrollment of 1,000 students from grades 9 through 12.

"They also made it so we have gotten more teachers to try and combat that, but the class sizes have slowly started to get larger and the ratio for teachers to students has started to change, and one-on-one interaction with students has begun to go down a little, but not a ton," Orgona said.

In fact, the school added 13 new teachers in order to accommodate the rising number of students and lower the size of each class.

Despite the school's growing numbers, Orgona still feels close to her classmates.

"Most of us have been here since day one so we all know each other pretty well. Even the students that came later and have been here for nine years, four years, or even one year feel like they have been a part of our class since day one," Orgona said.

CLASS RANKINGS

Editorial Cartooning Champion:
Christina Saldana, West Point-Beemer

1



2



3



4



**Sports News Writing Champion:
Grady Corrigan, Bennington**

Grady Corrigan// Staff Writer

Freshman Step Up to Win Doug Moeckel's 17th Conference Title

Around 1,000 fans packed Buresh Stadium on May 5, to watch the highly anticipated ENWSC conference track meet. Victoria High has dominated the conference tournament and they looked towards extending their winning streak to seven straight years. Plainville is not going to sit back and watch it though because they know they are going to have a chance with being strong in multiple events. Cross-town rivals, Stockton, also has a pair of athletes that have potential to win multiple events. This will all be settled out on a slightly windy and rainy night in Plainville.

First up was the field events. After winning in high jump with a distance of 5-4 and later on winning pole vault with a height of 10-8, senior Betty Bonker was not yet satisfied. Bonker wanted to set a new meet record in pole vault. The bar stood 11ft and 2in off the ground and Bonker sprinted with her pole with all of her force but before she could not get a chance to clear it, she slipped on the rain, injuring her knee. That put her out for the day and she would have to miss the 400 and 1600 relays. Bonker was not the only Victoria athlete to go down though.

Victoria's other senior stud, Shelby Schister won the long jump at 17-8 and was looking forward to dominating triple jump as well. Rain also played a factor in this event and Schister wiped out on the board, ending her day with a pulled leg muscle. Schister still finished second with a distance of 35-10. She would also have to miss out on the 400 and 1600 relays.

"I started crying because I thought there was no way we could win the championship and that's one of our major goals," Schister said.

That was a valid assumption as their replacements were two freshman, Ally Williams and Bonnie Blue. This duo has never ran in a varsity meet yet but they were going to have to come up big to pull the Knights in first place as they were down. Ally Williams did not even show up to the meet with a jersey. The 400 relays were up first followed by the 1600.

Victoria's 400 team blazed their way around the track in 50.8 seconds and won the event and recieved 10 points. The young Bonnie blue finished out the last 100 meters for the Knights. Sprint coach Chris Foutaine, knew the freshman needed to work on their chemistry with the other varsity runners and gave them some good advice.

"Since the two freshman hadn't worked handoffs very often with the other girls, we practiced quite a few during the 800 and 1600 meter runs. The last thing I told them was we'd rather have you go too late than too early. You could tell they've run that 400 relay several times because they both did a nice job. It's nice to have a couple of substitutes like Ally and Bonnie. They're pretty fast," said Foutaine.

Stockton finished second and Plainville was third, setting up an exciting finish for the 1600 relays.

Stockton led the way after the first three runners and Victoria was back in third. Ally Williams was going to have to turn on the jets to bring home a victory. Her face looked tired but her legs did not as she caught Plainville's anchor and finally passes her before the finish line, winning the 1600 relays (4:03.8) and the whole conference meet.

"I still can't believe we won. In that 1600 relay, I just ran as hard as I could and tried to catch the Plainville girl. My legs got tired, especially since I had just run the 400 relay, but I didn't want to let my teammates down, especially the seniors. This is awesome." Williams said.

Victoria won the meet by just 0.5 points. The finals standings are first place Victoria (118.5), second Plainville (118), and third Stockton (114).

What a dramatic way to end head coach Doug Moeckel's coaching career as he has decided to retire after this season. With that last conference title that brings his total up to 17 in just 25 years.

"I did not think we could win the championship. I am so proud of how they didn't seem to let the pressure bother them and they simply performed. This is definitely a team title. Aren't these girls amazing?" said Moeckel.

We will see next season if the Knights will still be the powerhouse of the ENWSC with losing Doug Moeckel but fans have a lot to be excited for with being able to watch Ally Williams and Bonnie Blue run for the next three years.

Headline Writing Champion

Headline Writing – Jacob Gathje, Mount Michael Benedictine, Class B

Article #5:

Headline –

A simple treat turned to something sweet:

Posting on social media platform leads to booming business for new doughnut shop

Article #1:

Headline –

Washing out truancy:

Schools provide laundry facilities to combat student absences.

Article #4:

Headline –

PGA commissioner responds to criticism, again endorses USGA rules

**Newspaper News Writing Champion:
Julia Salerno, Columbus Scotus**

Weidner manages more than known

Julia Salerno

As the city of Norfolk deals with many changes and problems such as expansions and flooding, they do not struggle one bit with making sure that the city is as safe as it can be. With the mayor and city council working together to keep things running smoothly, a lot of responsibility lies in the hands of one man. This man is Public Safety Director, Shane Weidner.

Weidner was appointed by the mayor as the first Public Safety Director for the City of Norfolk, Nebraska after serving over six years as Norfolk city administrator. Weidner is 51 years old and has been working for the City of Norfolk for 29 years. He grew up just outside of Norfolk and is married with two kids and has four grandkids.

Weidner has had a great amount of experience in his past. He had been a police officer and firefighter for the city of Norfolk. He was chief of the Norfolk Fire Department for 15 years. He had also been in the U.S. Army for four years.

“The Army had a major impact on my leadership style,” Weidner said. “It was a great transition into firefighting.”

Being the Public Safety Director has lots of responsibilities. He oversees the city’s fire and police divisions. This is the first time both divisions have come under one banner in Norfolk.

“It is different than just being a police officer or a fire fighter because now I have to deal with the whole pie and everything about each of them,” Weidner said.

There were many differences from his position as fire chief to now city administrator. He no longer got to fight the fires or cruise in the cop cars. Weidner now had lots more responsibility in his position.

“The biggest difference is that now it is not only about one part. I have to be a generalist in all of the city’s movements and departments,” Weidner said.

During his years as city administration, Norfolk dealt with the Elkhorn River flood, a library expansion, the opening of AquaVenture water park, and many more involvements.

Almost one month ago, Norfolk had been affected by the flooding of the Elkhorn River. Thanks to a levee built over 50 years ago, it helped stop most of the water that could have majorly destroyed the city. Almost one-third of the city would have been underwater if it weren’t for the levee.

“There was a breach in the levee because it had reached full capacity. I never thought I would see it at full capacity,” Weidner said. “Overall, I would say that besides the damage on the outskirts of town, we survived pretty well.”

Some of Weidner’s main focuses as Public Safety Director are to keep his employees’ skills sharp and to try and incorporate the use of technology to enhance the performance of teams.

“Not all, but some of the decisions I make on a daily basis could be considered ‘life or death’ and I want to make sure that every decision I make is the right one and is made with confidence that it will be completed successfully by my employees,” Weidner said.

Through his many years of working for the city, Weidner has dealt with many issues and had learned lots from his authoritative position.

“Its not too sexy, but I really love it,” Weidner said. “It’s pretty much been a dream job for me.”

Newspaper Sports Feature Writing Champion: Kendra Paasch, West Point-Beemer

Amanda Schultze, head coach at Northeast Community College, is not only a decorated volleyball coach but also a firm believer that hard-work plays into becoming a talented student-athlete.

Schultze grew up in Wakefield, Nebraska. She attended Central Community College, Morningside College, and Wayne State College while always being a part of the volleyball program whether it be through playing or coaching.

She set multiple records as a setter at Central Community College and helped the Wayne State Wildcats to a 71-22 record in her time assisting there.

She now transfers her knowledge to her current role of being a head coach. The Northeast team record is an impressive 115-98 in Schultze's time coaching. This is attributed to Schultze's recruiting.

Throughout recruiting players for her team, Schultze has found that players who grow up on a farm work harder both on the court and in the classroom. Players who achieve more in the classroom also achieve more on the court.

This past year, the Northeast Community College team had a cumulative GPA (grade point average) of 3.76. This was the highest it has been in years.

In the words of Coach Schultze, "Academics is huge; that's the number one reason they (the players) come to college. We really strive to get good grades in the classroom."

In addition, this was one of the best years for the team on the court. At nationals, the girls took home the 9th place title.

The volleyball team has also participated in a team retreat and leadership training to make important family-like bonds.

On the court, Schultze coaches with a few different aspects in mind.

Schultze states that she always tries to be positive and find the best in players. She doesn't want to tear them down but rather build them up.

Having two girls of her own, she knows how important it is to be positive but yet tough on the players at the same time.

She tells her daughters that it is tough and they will have to put in the time. But at the age of two and five, they don't quite understand the complexity of the sport yet.

Schultze enjoys coaching "old-style" by connecting with the players instead of only their parents. She finds that she connects better to the girls, since she is a younger coach.

"I never promise anyone starting positions because they have to earn it."

Schultze always starts the year a little nervous because she has lost and gained a lot of players. Her hopes are that they are just as good if not better than the year before.

Going into her seventh season at Northeast, she hopes that they can come home from nationals with a place higher than 9th. She knows her team has the potential and is eager for the season to arrive.

Entertainment Review Writing Champion: Mitchell Lierman, West Point-Beemer

The Carol Burnett Show: Masterful performances, appealing messages

The 1960s classic television series *The Carol Burnett Show* was a revered comedy sketch variety show frequently offering wholesome, irreverent takes on the frustrations of daily life for average people. The talent pool offered on a typical viewing was staggeringly brilliant, with stars such as Harvey Korman, Vicki Lawrence, Lyle Waggoner and of course Carol Burnett, the dazzling eponymous actress.

The range of Burnett's talent knows no bounds; she is a master of the physical mode as well as a committed actress capable of making any character believable. This is perhaps best demonstrated in the sketch "Riddles," in which she combines a biting, sarcastic attitude with tremendous facial expression to convey the pure frustration that her character has inflicted on her by Carla's "southern exposure" riddle.

In "Riddles," Burnett provides a masterful performance as her character goes from civil, professional composure to disturbed, hysterical frustration over a riddle she receives from a co-worker over break. The audience could never expect the melt-down she has at the end of the skit from the opening set up as Carla first sits down, which serves as a straight that brings the contrast between the first twenty seconds and the last twenty seconds to the forefront of the mind.

Truly, the audience can only find themselves on Marge's side as the sketch continues, with all sides seemingly conspiring to prevent her from knowing the answer to the riddle. And while in a setting where we witness such an outburst we tend to hold our sympathy aside, in this case we know the context of Marge's outrage. Marge becomes a character for us to project ourselves onto, and in the real world we oftentimes do the very thing that Marge does- if not so drastically- in getting upset at the frustrations that life has to offer. Burnett offers a window into this aspect of humanity that is hilarious, acute, and resonant.

However, one of Burnett's less spoken to talents was her ability to let others be the star. In "A New Leash on Life," Burnett's character, Mrs. Gilberhaven, takes a back seat in the sketch to Mr. Cranston, a man with a huge, unruly dog. The sketch follows three pet owners and their hounds as they undergo obedience training, with two of the owner's able to mostly control their pets while Mr. Cranston is completely controlled by his pet.

This sketch differs from "Riddles" in that nobody- other than the instructor and his aide- ever says a word. But the physical comedy and outstanding pantomiming more than account for the story's lack of dialogue. Props fly around as pantomimed dogs knock them over (and, rather unfortunately for the poor obedience trainer, occasionally relieve their bladders on them to boot).

The costuming also provides a straight contrast with the action- all of the masters are adorned in clothing that could mislead an audience into thinking they were well put together. But when the chaos ensues as the dogs have their day, the incompetence of their owners, and especially Mr. Cranston, is clearly seen.

The commentary of the sketch seems to be that our pets control us more than we them, and that really hits the head of it. As any pet owner can tell you, training an animal is a lot of work, requiring persistent effort or the risk of complete regression. The rewards the characters give their animals function more as a bribe for good behavior than a legitimate condition tool.

This message is another example of *The Carol Burnett Show's* appeal to the average audience. Everyone knows somebody with a pet, and we oftentimes can see exactly the ways in which the pets sometimes become the masters.

The show's range of comedic exercises is unparalleled by any of its contemporaries, and for this reason, it has earned its due. Winning 25 primetime Emmy Awards and frequently finding itself placed on lists of the greatest television shows of all time, with notable examples being *Time* magazine's 100 Best TV shows of all time in 2007 and *TV Guide's* 2013 60 Greatest Shows of all time. Burnett continues to work even in her advanced age; just last year she hosted 12 episodes of Netflix's *A Little Help with Carol Burnett*, a show that brought children together with adults to help the adults handle their problems. Undoubtedly, Burnett has earned her spot in television history among the greats, and certainly she will go down as one of the most influential actresses of the twentieth century.

**Newspaper Column Writing Champion:
Nathan Cantor, Scottsbluff**

When I was nine years old, I understood what a crime was.

A childhood spent reading *Spider-Man* and playing *Grand Theft Auto* meant I was completely aware of what was bad and what was good.

After all, why would Spider-Man beat down a law-abiding citizen?

Crimes were bad things. If I wanted to be a kid Spider-Man would be proud of, I had to make sure I wasn't doing anything bad or taking part in anything bad.

When I was nine years old, I had been in the United States for six years and my brother had been here for five.

My brother did not read American comic books. He felt they were too *gringo*—too disgustingly American for his proud Colombian blood.

My brother understood what a crime was as well.

Rural Missouri was a beautiful place to spend three years of my life. It was peaceful, idyllic, and if I was lucky I would wake up and catch a glimpse of the clouds parting to make way for the sun.

Verona, Missouri was nothing like my family's native Colombia. It was too small.

In a town of 600 people, what was there to do on weekends or outside of class? What could kids and teenagers do for fun?

There was trespassing, of course. It was fun sneaking onto farms and messing with hens as they were roosting.

There were also other prospects.

Verona, Missouri was roughly 30 minutes away from Springfield, Missouri. Unlike Verona, Springfield had 250,000 people in its limits.

With that many people, surely *someone* knew how to cut loose and have a little bit of fun.

My brother took advantage of that. His friends would ride in to Springfield on the weekends and gallivant around the city.

“We’re going to Cartoons,” my brother would tell me. “Don’t tell mom it’s a bar, okay?”

“We’re headed to the club,” my brother would tell me. “If you don’t tell mom, I’ll buy you a GameBoy game, okay?”

Eventually, my curiosity got the best of me. While I was stuck at home on meandering playdates and walks in the countryside, my brother was having the time of his life with his friends.

I begged them to let me join in. “I’ll be good, I promise!” I squeaked to him one day, tears streaming down my face.

But my brother wasn’t an idiot. He knew if I joined him and his pals I’d be telling our mother everything.

Finally, he cracked.

“Fine, you can come, but don’t tell mom anything that happens or I’ll beat you up.” I was elated to finally get the chance to roll with the big boys.

The night was fairly uneventful. My brother drove me to his friend Angel's house, in Springfield, where we played *Mortal Kombat* and watched *Child's Play*. It was remarkably grown-up and mature.

Just as we were leaving, Angel motioned for my brother to come back to his room. I tagged along, only for my brother to tell me to wait at the car.

A smell came from under the door. It reeked like burning plastic.

My brother came from behind the door, a lazy smile on his face. Angel was close behind, the same dopey grin plastered across his.

"Let's go home. Angel will drive," my brother informed me.

I knew enough about drugs thanks to the DARE program visiting Verona for a week. I knew something wasn't quite right. I just couldn't place it.

Angel dropped me and my brother off at home. We thanked him and he sped off towards his house.

We went to sleep, my brother urging me to keep everything under wraps from our mother. I nodded and obeyed.

The next day, Angel wasn't at school.

As it turned out, Angel wouldn't ever be at school again. Barreling down a dirt road at 90 mph in a rickety Dodge with no seatbelt does that to people.

My brother told me when I was older that he didn't want to go to the funeral because he couldn't stand to face Angel again.

I felt a sense of responsibility for what happened. After all, I was present when Angel and my brother did what they wanted to.

I could have easily informed Angel's parents or his brother—I could have easily done something myself in order to save his life... but I didn't. I wanted to be cool.

If I had any guts, I would have done what was right. Would my brother be angry? Of course, but it would have saved Angel's life.

Whenever people in television witness crimes and do nothing to stop them, it hurts my heart because it reminds me of myself. At least I had the excuse of being nine years old.

We are all humans. We all deserve help whenever its necessary.

When people refuse to help even if they have the ability to, it means they're nothing but accomplices to the crime at hand. They are lower than pond scum, lower than the salt in the earth.

I quit reading *Spider-Man* after I turned 10.

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