

Jim's Perspective...

Who Would Have Thought

The Fox "Big Noon Kickoff" before the Nebraska/Oklahoma football game last weekend brought back many fond memories of Nebraska Cornhusker football years ago when Janie and I were together for a weekend of Husker football while in college. All of this activity back in the good ole' days was a lot of fun. We had no concerns or worries back then. All we did was have fun and lived for each day!

My wife and I were both in college at the University of Nebraska Lincoln campus in 1970 and 1971, the two years Nebraska won back-to-back football national championships. We had student tickets to all the Husker football games. We sat in the East stadium above the Cornhusker marching band at about the 35-yard line. There were always "kegger" pre-game parties on campus. As I mentioned in the past, my fraternity, held a keg party in the basement of the house from time to time before football games. Many of the fraternities on campus did the same thing. Most sororities did not do this, but the ladies simply showed up at whatever fraternity party they wanted to attend. My fraternity had the loudest and best stereo system on campus. The speakers were placed inside the house with the front of the speakers next to the screens of the open windows in the front of the house. Steppenwolf's, *Born to be Wild*, could be heard across a large swath of the campus!

In the early 1970's when we were in college, my mother was working at the Nebraska ticket office which was located on campus and housed in the Nebraska basketball Coliseum. The football coaches also had offices in the Coliseum. During that time, it was very difficult to purchase new season tickets. Everything was sold out and almost nobody gave up their tickets. At some point during that time, however, my mom learned that there were two season tickets available in the middle of the north end of the stadium which extended up from the north end zone of the stadium field. My mom called Janie's mom and the two of them arranged for Janie's mom to purchase the tickets. Janie's mother usually took one of her girlfriends with her to the game, but if she didn't attend a game, we used the tickets once we no longer had student tickets. Her husband owned a farm and preferred to work on the farm on weekends rather than attend Husker football! He was busy all during the week running his printing company. His company printed the programs for Husker football! At some point, Janie's mom could no longer attend football games. The tickets were then transferred to Janie and me. We still have them. They have essentially been with us for roughly 50 years.

During college I had another sports connection besides Husker football. I started a part-time job at the Lincoln Star Newspaper and initially worked as a sports agate clerk. I was a journalism major at that time. Also, I am sure it helped that my dad was editor of the Lincoln Star when I applied for the part-time job! My job involved putting all of the sports scores and statistical material related to sports games in printed order. This information was usually found on the second page of the sports section of the paper. As time went on, I also took phone calls on a Friday or Saturday night from coaches who reported the results of their games. I wrote short articles about some of these games that the sports editor thought might be interesting to readers.

It was fun to get to know some of the high school coaches across the state. The other aspect of journalism that I really liked was getting to know the Lincoln Star news reporters. In particular, the sports department was like a little social club. We always laughed and talked about high school and college teams and coaches. This obviously included the University of Nebraska. Interviewing people for a news article is very personal. You often actually see and learn who a person really is. We all socialized with each other about the people we got to know through our work at the newspaper. Also, with my press pass, I occasionally sat in on Husker football press conferences which was fun!

For me, there is solace in memories of another, distant time, when things seemed simpler, when the livin' was easy, when we danced to rock music in the Nebraska Coliseum, The Cornhusker Hotel or The Royal Grove. Yes, fall on campus was full of fun, and a little bit of studying! The Huskers were winning. We were sitting in our seats in the student section – the Huskers scored another touchdown – suddenly all the students in our area started singing, *“There Is No Place Like Nebraska.”* There was no pandemic! However, we did have the Vietnam War which definitely was our national, very difficult, controversy at the time. As they say, life is not perfect.

Today, the Huskers aren't winning. Statistically, their defense is one of the worst in the country. Back in the early 1970's, who would have thought the Huskers would ever be this bad today! In fact, even in the 1980's and 1990's, who would have predicted the current state of affairs in Nebraska football! I guess we all need to keep things in perspective and remember there are many things besides athletics that are very important in our lives, such as family and friends. So, recently, I went with grandson, Ben, who is in third grade, to his grade school's "Book Fair" held after school where the school kids can look around in the school library for books they would like to buy.

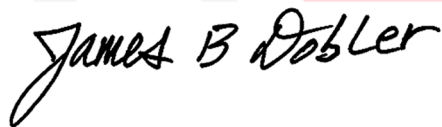
When school was finished that day, I met Ben as he came out of the building and we turned around and went back into the school to the Book Fair. There are two separate panels of doors at the entrance to the school. I walked up to the doors to our left and then Ben told me I should use the doors on the right, the ones on the left were locked. I followed Ben's advice and moved to the doors on the right and we entered an indoor entrance area which led to another set of doors to get into the building. I tugged on the doors to the right but they would not open. Ben explained that I needed to punch a button on the wall and someone would unlock the door. Finally, the door unlocked and we entered the school. I had no idea where to go. I just followed Ben. I thought all of this was so ironic in that I assumed I was there to help Ben with this Book Fair event, but in reality, Ben helped me! He knew what to do, and I knew nothing! He's very smart! Poor Papa could not have gotten along without him! Also, it is hard for me to realize the grandkids are growing up, and they don't need adult assistance or supervision as much as they did a few years ago. Being in third grade, Ben knows what he is doing and I need to remember and accept that!

The other aspect of the Book Fair that I found so interesting, is that the books were organized on shelves with a description of the type of literature on the shelf. I would have expected "history books" or "mathematics" or "science." But instead, it was all based on emotion or life experience. The shelf descriptions were "playing with friends" or "outer space" or "pets on the move." Ben moved from shelf to shelf, looked at some books, and finally picked two that he

wanted. He gave me the books without any explanation. I looked at the cover of the books, but had no idea what they were really about. Poor Papa was simply operating in a different world! But there was one thing I could completely relate to, and that was the kind and helpful engagement by the teachers towards the students. It was all positive and caring. Zero, nothing, negative. I loved it. That is how people should treat each other! Being with Ben and watching the school staff made my day. It reminded too, of my wife, many years ago, as an elementary school teacher.

Finally, I don't want to leave you with the wrong impression about our activities associated with football weekends in 1970-71. It wasn't just standing around a keg drinking beer! Sometimes, the weekend included more formal social occasions. For example, there might be a formal dinner and dance held at the Pla Mor Ballroom located on West 'O' Street out near Emerald, Nebraska. I dressed in a coat and tie, or maybe even a tuxedo. We had dinner there, and then an orchestra began to play. We danced away doing the swing or the foxtrot. We danced until the ballroom closed at 1:00 a.m.! Janie taught me how to ballroom dance. I knew nothing about it. She learned it from her older sisters. What a fun evening at the Pla Mor. It opened in 1929. Incredibly, it is still open today! Another neat aspect of this ballroom, is that it has a stage and dance floor that gives everyone a feeling of dancing in the 1930's and 40's. It all looks and feels like that era. And so I leave you with one of my favorite ballroom dancing songs, *Opus No. 1* by the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra. I distinctly remember the two of us – just gliding around the dance floor – having fun!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cfa8InRdHI>

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James B. Dobler". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The letters are connected, and the overall appearance is that of a personal signature.

Jim Dobler, CPCU

PIA Legislative Coordinator

Questions or Comments? Please email jbdobler@outlook.com