

# Value of life declares war

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In the years following high school graduation, students usually scan the newspaper's wedding announcements to read about their newly wedded and engaged classmates. However, to read about my high school classmates, I find myself having to turn to the obituaries.

In the course of three weeks, I read about a 1998 graduate committing suicide, a 1999 graduate killed while driving drunk and a 2000 graduate, killed, along with two high school students, in a speeding car accident.

It seems to me as if the frequency of tragedy has risen recently. However, the truth is, that while living in a small, quiet Indiana town, I've simply been lucky enough to have missed meaningless, untimely deaths, which have been progressing at a horrendous rate in past years.

According to International Reports Website, "Suicide is the third leading cause of death for young people age 15-24." Moreover, from 1993 through the end of the year 2000, an estimated 350,000 people have been shot and killed in the United States. Nearly one-third of these will be teenagers and young adults ages

15-24, according to the Website *Trauma in Transition: Trends in Deaths from Firearm and Motor Vehicle Injuries*.

With these statistics and the vivid, horrifying memories of Columbine High School, it seems only a matter of time before our generation self-destructs.

Even more troubling, there's no obvious reason for the disturbing behavioral and ideological patterns of today's young adults. Wages are high, unemployment is low and the country is at peace.

However, materialism also is high, national morality is low and school children are at war.

A professor once remarked to my class that our generation might be headed down the road to disaster because we have not experienced the range and severity of hardships which our parents and grandparents faced. He was definitely onto something.

Our grandfathers, many hardly old enough for facial hair, stumbled over decapitated bodies on the shores of Normandy and watched their comrades burned alive in Pearl Harbor.

Meanwhile, our grandmothers rationed sugar and prayed against the dreaded telegram.

Many of our fathers were forced to choose between the two evils of illegitimate war and treason. Our mothers, the martyrs of acute societal inequalities, stayed home to watch the body counts on the news each night.

Today, the United States is a country of decade-old national peace. And, discounting two weeks of one-sided missile skirmish, it's been free of declared war for more than 20 years.

Instead, a civil war is being waged on the streets of America because most members of the upcoming generation possess a sub-par appreciation of the value of life.

I've also heard, "Those who grow up in a honey jar no longer enjoy the taste of sweetness." (Wen Huang, news writer)

Instead of feel-good sock-hops and love-ins, today's young population thrashes around in mosh pits.

Instead of Ward kissing June good night in every episode of "Leave it to Beaver," now, Kenny gets killed in every episode of "South Park."

No more Checkers; now it's shoot-to-kill James Bond video games.

These examples, and many more, are the tell-tale wounds of a generation deprived of tragedy and, thus, taking life for granted. The "sporadic" deaths at Columbine and in millions of other American hometowns don't seem to have snapped us out of our ungrateful daze.

The proverb goes, "If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant."

As backward as it sounds, maybe an all-out war would do us some good.