

REVEL-ATION

Heroes & Villains

According to Mr. Webster, a hero is a **man** admired for his courage, fortitude, prowess, nobility, etc. A heroine is a female **hero**. A villain is a wicked **person**. So the topic, I gather, is about males who do good and males and females who are wicked. Riiiiight.

I have always had the tendency to view life from its serious side, not necessarily literal, but serious nonetheless. When writing about "serious" topics, I long for a humorous angle, but usually come up with a philosophical essay. So what? No, I will not lighten up. Not all Las Vegas fans are witty humorists. Some of us have to keep things in perspective. Life is not a party. And, no, I am not an unhappy person.

Okay, on to this hero business. Impress me. Be advised that I am not easily impressed. There are many people whom I admire, but not to the point of calling them heroes. According to Waldie, a hero is one who uses the guts, cunning or position to do nothing less than to save the planet from ourselves and benefit all living and non-living things. If an employee performs a "heroic" deed in the line of firefighting

or policing or other potentially life threatening professions - great; that's what s/he was hired to do. (In today's work force, just showing up on the job may be considered an act of heroism by the employee.) The risks are known up front. And it's not just the public service sector that is at risk job-wise. Whatever our vocation, there are risks.

Everyone faces potentially dangerous situations everyday: dangers from the wrong doing of others; dangers from the adverse effects of nature. It's called life. I admire those who adapt to or overcome the variables that life throws at them. They are more than survivors, but heroes? I think not.

Most young people need a person after whom to pattern themselves. It seems to be an inherent need. There were many in the sports field and in the political arena when I was growing up. Who is there today? The tattooed, hair-dying, endorsement-seeking quitter of a basketball player. The convicted rapist who's cool because he had a movie made, wrote a book and is a jillionnaire. Or some fictitious movie character. Sad, ain't it?

Teachers are usually the first people whom young ones admire. They were for me.

Perhaps that's why I became one. Today, teachers have the capability to influence children more than many parents. The general public will never know what good teachers go through.

In the sixth grade, my class put on a "This is Your Life" skit for our teacher based on her own life. I played a nun, complete with habit, who was a dear friend to our beloved instructor. I got so into that part and the relationship that I really wanted to be a nun. (That didn't go over too well with my protestant family.) What really impressed me about her was in addition to teaching students rather than subjects, she was the first published author I knew. Cool.

In 1960 I watched my first summer Olympic games, in part from my sickbed. Swimming and track and field were my favorites. I identified with individual sports; it's just you, yourself, putting it all on the line with no assists, no hand-offs, no teammates to make you look better than you are or to disappoint you. I could actually feel the energy emanating from these athletes. A blond teenaged swimmer particularly intrigued me as she set record after record. I was so hyped by her performances that my body overcame the ickies that had landed me in bed and I pranced off to conquer my world.

I watched her compete in the 1964 Olympic games as well and was crushed that she did not

come close to matching her performance in the previous games. I was disappointed, but not devastated. Chris von Saltza taught me some very valuable lessons, although I didn't realize it at the time. She was still self-motivated; don't give up on yourself. She didn't compete after those games; know your limitations and graciously clear the way.

The gutsiest athlete I followed was Wilma Rudolph, the 13th of 18 children born to a poor southern family. Everyone except Wilma was resigned to the fact that, due to the polio that invaded her body, she would never walk. How many track records did she hold? I lost count. My scrapbook ran out of pages.

Everyone has a story to tell. There are millions of Oxanas and Nadias who will never be known outside of their own town. I admire all of them.

And what about the villains of the world? According to Waldie, a villain is anyone who demonstrates inhumanity to man; *Brecht on Brecht* and all that. It's a lot easier to be a villain. It's a cop out, a sell out, a loser's life.

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