

Time-less lives . . .

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Until that moment of diagnosis, Tsongas, like most of us, had carried his ambivalence through his political career the way he carried his child between cities that winter afternoon. Tsongas never forgot the older colleague who stopped by his table when he was a freshman congressman and said, "Let me tell you one thing, I was in your shoes. I was here and I really devoted myself to my job and I ignored my kids and they grew up and I never knew them. It makes me very sad. Whatever you do, don't do that."

Last spring, when a New York reporter asked him his major accomplishment as a senator, he said spontaneously, "Keeping my family together." As his wife, Nikki Tsongas, a former social worker and law student, campaign partner and now full-time parent, said, "What is the point of a life that is professionally successful if 20 years from now you have unhappy children who can't cope?"

He had to hear the words "not benign" to finally focus on priorities, on mortality, time itself. "I used

to ache when I had to leave them," said the senator. "Now that won't be a problem. The illness forced me to do thinking that would not have taken place."

What of the rest of us who suffer, as the senator did, from mid-life bulge, the years of small children and big career plans? Tsongas lived at the outer edge of ambition and expectations where it's harder to keep any sort of juggling act in shape.

But there are times when we all end up completing a day or a week or a month, as if it were a task to be crossed off the list with a sigh. In the effort to make it all work, it can become all work. We become one-minute managers, mothers, husbands. We end up spending our time on the fly.

"If you care about your children and you care about your job and you take it very seriously, something gives eventually," said the senator. Sometimes, what gives is pleasure. Not all of us are forced to confront our own deadlines, the reality that we are, as Tsongas put it, "all terminal."

It's not that we should all live urgently under some threat of execution. It's not that we should go home and play Chutes and Ladders with our children for 48 hours. But it's worth paying attention from time to time to the way we drift, function, fill time, spend time, lose time.

Tsongas now talks about eight years or more. In eight years, a newborn become a third-grader, a first-grader becomes an adolescent, a 10-year-old becomes a voter. In an inattentive life that takes time for granted, those eight years can slip down as easily as Jello.

By this time next year, Nikki Tsongas will be back in law school and Paul in a new job. Their lives will have slowed to the normal hectic level of the average two-career family. The peculiar thing is that they've gained some real time.

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Letters

Sympathy undeserved

In response to Pat Clark's editorial on the preliminary hearing of John Joubert for the alleged murders of two Sarpy County youths (Daily Nebraskan, Jan. 19):

I was left with mixed feelings. Yes, I could see the point of worrying about a fair trial after such statewide media coverage. At times, the media can divulge too much information about a case prematurely. But I would hope that a jury would be chosen fairly and that this jury would listen to the evidence in the case and make their decision based only on what is presented at the trial, and to make this decision honestly.

But in the editorial, I detected a sympathetic feeling for Joubert. This left me angry (if Joubert is proven guilty) not because Daniel Eberle and Christopher Walden are dead, but because I imagine how the two boys must have felt once the realization hit that they were going to be killed and would never see their families or friends again. The thought of their emotional desperation in the time before they were murdered haunts me and drains me of any sympathy for their killer.

Sheri Packwood
freshman
broadcasting


Residents shun image

This is yet another contribution to the long line of letters written by those who have been offended by Bill Allen's "humor" column. This is in reference to the column in which Allen refers to Abel Hall as "the Zoo" (Daily Nebraskan, Jan. 19).

As residents of Abel, we feel that Mr. Allen's comment are insulting and inaccurate to say the least. The term "Zoo" came about in the mid 1970s in reference to the loud noise and disturbances that existed in the hall during those years. There is little evidence that lifestyle exists at Abel anymore. Today in 1984 Abel-Sandoz is a pleasant and enjoyable place to live. Many people who have lived in other residence halls on campus have been satisfied with Abel Hall as a place to sleep and study without being disturbed. The residence directors, student assistants, and other housing personnel have worked hard to improve living conditions in Abel since the 70s. Mr. Allen has insulted these people and probably a large number of the 1100 residents who live in Abel Hall.


The Daily Nebraskan should hire writers who are more in tune with what is happening on campus today, instead of employing columnists that live in the past and confuse the campus with stereotypical inaccuracies of today's campus life.

Jim Mueksch
senior
engineering
and 17 other students



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