

MICHELLE PAULMAN

Merchandising monsters emerge

“Someone soaped the fountain. Did you see it?”

On this tip from our friendly neighborhood Nebraska Union maintenance man, I ventured out of the office to behold the soaped fountain.

In a way, it was beautiful. Big suds billowed out and over the plaza like little clouds. Broyhill Fountain looked like a giant cappuccino.

So why were the union men shaking their heads?

Because to them, it was also a mess — a nasty, scuzzy, big ol’ fountain full of cappuccino-like foam. They couldn’t appreciate the beauty of something they had to clean up before the alumni came to town this weekend.

The maintenance men shook their heads and blamed the suds on pranksters.

Maybe the devil made them do it.

After all, this nation’s favorite pagan holiday, Halloween, is coming, and all the ghouls, goblins, monsters and trick-or-treaters will be out in full force.

And I bet you a popcorn ball they’ll be out at the football game, too.

The creepy-crawlies are already all over the posters in the union, and I’m sure they will be in the wood-and-paper monstrosities all over the fraternity lawns.

I walk through the bookstore and see everything from candy to fake severed limbs to greeting cards, and I wonder “Who needs this crap?”

Maybe Satan is in the merchandising business.

I’ve never sent a greeting card for Halloween, and I don’t intend to start now.

The cards must be for mature adults who feel this is the grown-up way to express those special Halloween feelings that we used to express by covering the principal’s house with marmite.

Since I came to college, Halloween has been a good excuse to party,

but I’ve never gone to the time or expense of putting together a nifty outfit for these keg-and-costume bashes.

Maybe I was possessed by demons a couple years ago when I walked into the thrift store and decided a great costume would be a toga and roller skates.

Have you ever tried skating in a bedsheet in an apartment with carpet and lots of stairs?

I had rug burns until Thanksgiving.

Speaking of Thanksgiving, as soon as the stores clear all the Halloween crud off the shelves, I bet you a bite-sized chocolate bar that the crepe-paper turkeys, pilgrim hats and Indian corn will take their place before you can say cranberry sauce.

Don’t we play another football game against some team down in Oklahoma on Thanksgiving?

Let’s not forget the Christmas crapola. Manger sets, plastic Santas, stuffed reindeer, stockings and candy canes, ribbons and bows, wrapping paper, poinsettias and a partridge in a pear tree.

Nebraska might even get a bowl game for Christmas.

Evil spirits are behind this. I know it.

Not to be a party pooper or anything, but I really hate merchandising. It’s just a cheap exploitation of otherwise perfectly legitimate traditional American holidays.

It’s like seeing the prom queen from high school prostituting herself in a body suit for cigarettes.

Well, maybe it’s not like that, but it’s the work of Old Man Splitfoot, I’m sure.

Of course we need holiday decorations, if only because I love sticking things to my windows and walls.

We need festivity, frolic and fun in our lives, so we throw parties and dress in bedsheets and roller skates or carve turkeys or go to football games or unwrap presents that we pretend to love—but really hate.

But I’m afraid that the sense of tradition has been lost. The real reason we celebrate these holidays gets

buried in the celebration and the merchandising.

Which brings me back to Halloween.

Halloween, properly known as All Hallow Even, began centuries ago with Druids dancing around bonfires in the autumn festival in honor of the sun god to express gratitude for the harvest.

A different sort of Thanksgiving, in other words.

Anyway, these Druids believed that Samhain, the lord of death, called up the souls of those who had died in the year and who, because of their sins, had been confined to the bodies of lower animals, and no, I am not making this up.

If you don’t know the origins of Thanksgiving or Christmas, maybe you ought to go back to grade school.

Do you feel enlightened? Do you even care about the history behind why you paint your face green or wear plastic fangs one time out of the year?

Be gone, then, ye apathetic fools, or may Samhain confine your soul to the body of a water buffalo.

Knowing the origin of our popular holidays is important.

Otherwise, Halloween is just an excuse to wear silly outfits, Thanksgiving is just a day to stuff yourself silly, and Christmas is just a time to give silly gifts.

If we forget why we do these things, someone is going to ask “Who needs this crap?” If no one knows, the celebrations may be lost along with their history.

And I like a good party as much as the next ghoul.

So watch your football games, wear your costumes, pig out, and tell your aunt you love that 20-foot scarf she made for you, but pause and reflect a moment on the true meaning of these special days before they’re lost forever.

Then party like you’re possessed. Happy Halloween.

Paulman is a senior news-editorial and history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist and photographer.

Hey--Halloween is only a few days away! So come to Second Wind now, and check out our threads while the selection is good!

Second Wind

Vintage Clothing and Collectables
720 "O" Street (Under the Viaduct)

See 8 countries in one day.

A representative of Central College Abroad will visit The University of Nebraska-Lincoln soon with information on study abroad opportunities in six European countries, China, and Mexico. **Debbie Blaine, an international studies counselor at Central College, will be at the study abroad fair in The Culture Center from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 30.** Check it out!

- Carmarthen, Wales
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- Hangzhou, China
- London, England
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- Paris, France
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JON BRUNING

Health care system not immune

Our health care system is in dire need of a make over.

The public is growing increasingly concerned about the limited availability and skyrocketing costs of health care, and the situation is getting worse.

In 1991, more than 35 million Americans, or 14 percent of the population, were uninsured. Over the last 10 years, the average cost of a visit to a doctor has more than doubled, from \$18.50 to \$42.08. During the same time period, the average hospital charge per day has nearly quadrupled, from \$285 to \$1,019.

Unfortunately, the solutions offered by President Bush and Bill Clinton have been largely unrealistic.

Bush’s plan revolves around tax credits and deductions. Tax credits, or dollar-for-dollar decreases in the taxes a person owes, would be doled out among lower-income Americans. Single people earning less than \$6,050 would qualify for a tax credit of \$1,250, couples earning less than \$10,900 would qualify for a \$2,500 credit and families making less than \$13,250 could receive \$3,750.

The deductions proposed by the president would allow people with incomes up to \$80,000 to deduct \$1,250 if they are single, \$2,500 for a couple or \$3,750 for a family.

The Bush plan doesn’t come close to solving the health care needs of the American people. Millions of Americans would remain underinsured. A family earning \$25,000, for example, would only realize a small percentage of the \$3,750 they could deduct under the Bush plan. After multiplying the amount of the deduction by the rate at which the family would be taxed by federal, state and local governments, the real value of the deduction would

be around \$600.

In contrast, the annual cost of adequate health insurance for the family would be nearly \$2,000, leaving the family or one of the spouse’s employers to make up the difference.

Bush claims the price of premiums would decrease if his ideas for reform were implemented. Specifically, the president believes small businesses would join together to negotiate lower prices of employer-sponsored health insurance. He would also exempt them from following state laws that mandate various insurance policy benefits in order to allow them to provide benefits of their choice.

Bush’s reforms won’t work. Small employers are unlikely to accept the initial increase in costs that would arise if they attempted to form coalitions. Furthermore, the job market is still depressed, and employers have no incentive to increase benefits to attract workers. In fact, many employers are cutting back benefits to save scarce resources.

Bush’s offer to remove benefit package standards would suffer from the same problems. Employers would offer low-benefit, high-deductible plans that would force employees to use the expensive health care methods the exemptions were designed to avoid.

A comprehensive look at the Bush plan shows that millions of Americans would remain underinsured. Unfortunately, the huge scope of Bill Clinton’s plan leaves almost as many questions unanswered.

The major facet of Clinton’s plan would eventually force employers to contribute 80 percent of premium costs for full-time employees and their dependents. The employee would be responsible for contributing the other 20 percent.

Clinton claims he arrived at the 80 percent figure by computing the cur-

rent average employer contribution to employee insurance. Regardless, the increased costs incurred would simply be passed to consumers in the form of increased prices and to workers as wage decreases or freezes. Other businesses with minimal profit margins could be forced to lay off employees or go out of business.

Clinton also wants to create a National Health Board to set a ceiling on health spending. While the idea seems workable at first glance, such a limit set by the board would be all but impossible to enforce. Even if rates for doctors and hospitals were fixed, the number of services performed couldn’t be regulated.

Furthermore, governmental price controls have historically been troublesome. The same treatment differs from patient to patient and in different areas of the country, so quantification would be extremely complicated.

No plan will be without drawbacks. Because Americans aren’t willing to have anything less than the world’s finest health care, we need to resign ourselves to a continued governmental presence in the health care arena and massive costs. Our present system borders on socialized medicine anyway, with the government paying 42 percent of all health care costs under the guise of various programs.

The best direction for the future includes a government-sponsored basic health care plan for all Americans. If an individual wants care beyond the basic plan, he or she can pay the costs on their own. We must realize the costs of supporting the system most people envision will be extremely high.

If we want the best, we had better be prepared to pay for it.

Bruning is a second-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



**Sunday, November 1, 1992
7:00 P.M.**

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