

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Trace family tree at dinner table

Do you know where you come from?

I don't mean that you are from Omaha or Ainsworth or New York City or something like that. I mean do you know your ancestors?

Keeping track of your family tree is known as genealogy—defined as the science or study of family descent.

However much science there is to it, I like to practice genealogy at Thanksgiving and Christmas and family gatherings. I simply ask my grandmother and other relatives about the people I am related to who are now long gone.

I can't say I am related to George Washington like a kid I went to grade school always did, but I've learned some pretty interesting things.

One of my ancestors — my grandmother's grandfather — was killed by his partner in the California gold rush shortly after they discovered gold.

I don't know how much gold was discovered, but if it was a lot and my great-great grandfather had lived and invested it well, I might be rich today, spending the last of a family fortune.

Such is genealogy. Somewhere in the United States there is probably someone who, by researching family trees, will find their great-great grandfather was a very rich gold miner.

If any of the gold money is left, I hope it's enjoyed.

In any event, it is awfully interesting to think someone I am that close to by relation, if not by time, was involved in the California gold rush.

That's what drives a lot of genealogy, I suppose. Knowing where you come from gives you a better sense of who you are.

It is more than a curiosity in some countries.

In England, Prince Charles and his family get to live in castles and be catered to all their lives simply be-

cause of who their ancestors were. Or in India, not so long ago, the life you would lead was determined by what class you were born into. Luckily, we don't have that kind of system in the United States.

Although it doesn't happen as often as we'd like to think, you can be from the very humblest background and still become president, or a great writer or whatever you might want.

But we haven't lost our interest in keeping track of where we come from, even if we don't take it as seriously as some people do. We practice genealogy innocently, hoping we might find we are descended from somebody pretty special, but not worried about it if we aren't.

Almost everybody, really, is interested in genealogy. When someone tells you that they are one-half English, two-thirds Yiddish and one-third Mesopotamian, that's genealogy, science and all. The details may not be filled in, but the framework is there.

And we, as amateur scientists, use the information. I am mostly Irish, so I have a temper. An Italian friend likes spaghetti. English people like tea.

My grade school classmate who descended from George Washington must be a pretty important person.

What could be easier than that?

This Christmas, I will get another chance to be a genealogist, questioning my grandmother about great aunts and grandfathers and the like.

The day will be important in another way as well. My grandfather's grandparents left Ireland for America

on Christmas day in 1872.

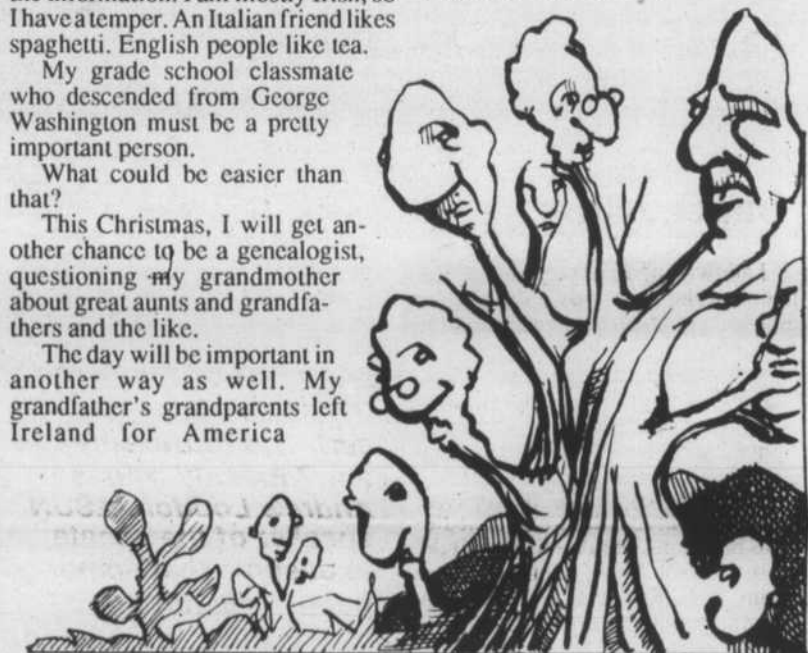
If heredity is everything, like some scientists think, then I am probably a lot like them. I have their genes and characteristics, at least. If my ancestors had been horse thieves or bank robbers, I probably wouldn't have written this column. Deep down, I think many of us suspect who we come from says quite a bit about who we are.

That would certainly explain the people that take so much pride in being in the family tree of a famous person. Do you know who your ancestors are? Do you know where you come from?

By practicing the innocent and inexact science of genealogy at holidays and during time at the dinner table, you can find out a good deal. You don't even need to be good at science, as I am desperately not.

You might even find you are related to George Washington.

Fitzpatrick is a junior political science major, a sports and news reporter and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



CRAIG HECKMAN

Columnist examines many issues

I don't have any one single issue to discuss this week.

Instead I will present a veritable cornucopia of issues examined.

First and foremost—Elvis is alive and well. He is working part time at a small wedding chapel in Las Vegas. He looks good and is doing fine.

John Lennon was murdered Dec. 8, 1980. On this, the 12th anniversary of his death, a few things strike me.

I remain appalled, and I'm sure he would as well, that people perverted his anthem, "Give Peace a Chance" during the Persian Gulf war. Echoes of "give war a chance" still resound. This is exactly the mentality that embroiled us in the Vietnam conflict in the first place.

In 12 years it might have been reasonable to expect the attitudes of Americans would have changed. After all, we went from the 1950s and its Cold-War hysteria to the optimism of the Kennedy '60s to the paranoia of the Nixon '70s.

We changed, but it was to the greed of the Reagan '80s. We can hope the '90s will be better — I once might have said it could hardly be worse, but I've learned.

Many members of our generation remember exactly where they were when they heard Lennon was dead, much like the generation before remembered the deaths of the Kennedys. Our loss is infinite — we will never know.

To totally change topics, the decision by the Commencement Committee to remove the invocation and benediction from graduation was wise.

No person should have to be subjected to another's religion, even though any rational person should welcome the opportunity for the exposure.

By having a Christian prayer, you are forcing a significant number of people with non-Christian backgrounds to listen to a ceremony that may counter their beliefs. That is to say nothing of the agnostics in the crowd.

The expected movement by certain students to circulate a petition to include prayer is misguided at best and not representative of the student population at worst. I have to wonder how many international students, the students most likely to be of other religious backgrounds, will be given the opportunity to sign, or not sign, the petition.

The University of Nebraska is a state institution. We accept state money and should abide by the rules, both explicit and unwritten, of the state and the nation.

The Supreme Court has ruled prayer at public high school graduations unconstitutional. The reasonable argument was made by the committee that this would apply to state-funded universities as well. Nebraska was one of the few to still follow the practice in this area: Iowa State, Kansas and Kansas State have already made the change.

It is probably more noble to welcome the opportunity to experience a new religion. However, religions have tended to be the least accepting of new and outside ideas. You doubt that? Look at the number of wars fought over religion. It is simply stunning.

We cannot really expect people to

show religious tolerance when, for the most part, there has been little shown in the past.

In a closely related issue: our neighbor to the east. Iowa Coach Hayden Fry was recently elected president of the College Football Coaches. He has already indicated he will fight to the death horrible college presidents and their horrible ideas.

It seems college presidents want athletic scholarships based on need, not on the ability to throw a football — or not to, in Nebraska's case. This would, Fry said, be the beginning of the end of college athletics.

I don't know about you, but I just don't follow that. Imagine the all-world-high-school quarterback with a 32 ACT score and lawyer parents who takes a football scholarship away from the inner-city kid with less, though still impressive, athletic skills.

Under the proposed plan, the poorer student would get the scholarship, and the rich one would still go to school. Now the poor one has no options other than to stay on the streets. Seems fair.

It would be the end to dominating athletic programs. No more Miami football being a power every year. At least this is now a possibility. As college presidents pointed out, this may actually return the amateur to college athletics.

Anyway, enough of my wandering. The bottom line is that there is no lack of issues facing us today. Take your pick, right or left, they're out there. Good luck.

Heckman is a graduate student in political science and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

ATTENTION DECEMBER GRADUATES

The **DEADLINE** for the return of the yellow Commencement Attendance Form is:

December 8, 1992

Return it to
SERVICE COUNTER B
107 Administration Building

Work at the Daily Nebraskan.

Learn the Forbidden Dance!*

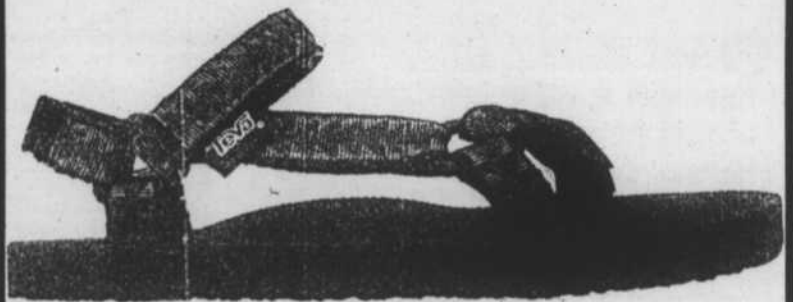


The Daily Nebraskan is now accepting applications for artists, copy editors, photographers and reporters for the news, sports and arts & entertainment sections for the spring staff. Pick up an application and sign up for an interview at the DN office, 34 Nebraska Union.

* Not everyone will be allowed to officially perform the forbidden dance. But if you want to try on your own time, go ahead. UNL does not discriminate in its academic, admissions or employment programs and abides by all Federal regulations pertaining to the same.

THE NAKED TRUTH ABOUT TEVA SANDALS

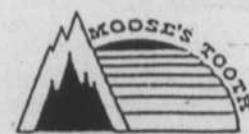
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