

WENDY MOIT

Bar pitfalls greater than perks

Ever since my 21st birthday, I've been scared to death of the bars.

I had what most people would call a successful bar crawl — successful meaning that a lot of people came, I made it to every bar on the list and, appropriately enough, I had to drag my drunk butt to the last few stops.

But the fun didn't end there. In fact, the fun didn't end until about 5:30 the next afternoon. Every 12 minutes, for 16 hours, I was reminded how much fun I'd had.

Almost a year later, the scars have not completely healed. Just the smell of hard liquor makes me nauseous, and the mere sight of a shot glass brings blurry memories clearly into focus.

But lately I've been braving Lincoln's bar scene again. I can't decide if I've finally recovered from my bout with alcohol poisoning or if I'm just afraid of passing up the mystical age of 21.

The drinking days of my youth, spent in fraternity rooms and off-campus parties, didn't prepare me for the bars. I remember sitting home with my friends and thinking, "If we were 21, we'd never be bored." I imagined us surrounded by admirers, accepting drinks right and left.

When I was a minor, one of my biggest dreams involved walking into a bar and hearing my name sung out like a chorus. I would bask in the warmth of welcome, completely at peace in my alcoholic surroundings.

The dream is over. In a few weeks I'll be 22, and I still haven't found a bar I can call home. They all look about the same to me — dark, smoky holes filled with drunk, smoking people.

You wait in line to get in, you wait in line to get a drink, you wait in line to go to the bathroom. I'll admit I've had fun, but it's sort of like Disney



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World. The lines detract from the entertainment.

I miss the drinking games from my pre-major days. Who could forget Friday-night favorites like quarters, beer dork and beer-a-mid? I became an expert. No one shoots off the nose like I do.

But at the bars, I'm a novice. I can't play darts to save my life. The last time I played, I nearly poked the eye out of a man whose only crime was that he chose the unfortunate seat next to the board. Sorry buddy, I shoot better with my eyes closed. . . most of the time. And I've discovered that foosball players get downright pissy when you spin the little guys around as fast as you can the entire time a ball is in play. Touchy.

These games just add to my fear. Not only do I face the possibility of getting so drunk I sleep on O Street, but I could do serious bodily harm to an innocent bystander.

I didn't expect to be spending \$20 to cop a buzz. Some may say that's my own fault, but I cannot, in good conscience, accept drinks from guys I

don't know or want to know. It's a discredit to barflies around the world, and to them I offer an abject apology.

To the beermongers who rely on the generosity of strangers for their inebriation—I salute you. It's a talent I most likely will never acquire, but will always admire.

Maybe I'm not being fair to the bars. In recent months I've been hanging out mostly with my guy friends. I love them to death, but I began to wonder if I was becoming gender inspecific. Maybe by losing contact with the feminine side of myself, I was shortchanging the drinking experience.

My female friends, especially the single ones, certainly seem to think so.

"Come to the bars, Mott. You're missing out," they cry, mocking my inexperience and deriding me for not spending enough time with "the girls."

Far be it from me to miss out on bonding time. So I tried hanging out with the girls, making the nightly journey as one of a flock of perfumed, big-haired bombshells wearing black boots and blazers. But I quickly found that girls' night out wasn't all group hugs and gossip.

For them, the bar ritual begins no earlier than 9:30 p.m. The group goes to the bar, maybe shares a fishbowl, then the members scatter. It's every girl for herself. From what I've seen, if a guy hits on you, you're having fun. If nobody hits on you, that bar sucks, and it's time to move on.

Sorry girls, no can do. I don't have the clothes, the hair or the makeup for it. But any time you want to order a pizza and rent "Beaches," give me a call.

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GARY YOUNG

'60s generation should grow up

The banality of life within TV America was readily apparent at the most recent Emmy awards. Left with little quality television to speak of, one by one the speeches were reduced to moralizing pot shots at Dan Quayle about his infamous Murphy Brown comments.

One or two remarks might have been funny. But it soon became apparent that nearly everyone who appeared on stage had been losing sleep thinking of how they were going to get in their gibe. Yawn.

In their spiteful overreaction, they of course missed Quayle's simple point: Images are powerful. Equivocating on what type of family unit is ideal will have social costs. The question was not, "Are single mothers necessarily unfit?" Rather, anyone fair-minded knew his question was: "What ideals should we encourage our children to aspire to?" Reasonable enough.

Hollywood retorted that Ozzie and Harriet never really existed. American nostalgia for the 1950s was based on a lie. There was no ideal family unit then. Current families are no less traditional than those of the pre-1960s.

Of course, a quick glance at the family before the 1960s and the family of today shows that Dan Quayle was not far off the mark.

Since 1960, the divorce rate has tripled. The percentage of children living with only one parent has followed suit. More than 80 percent of white children born in the 1950s lived their entire childhood through high school with both parents still married.

Today? 30 percent. Blacks have fared no better. In 1950, 52 percent of black children reached 18 living with both parents. Today? 6 percent. One need not be as white-bred as Quayle to shudder at this profound shift.

Nonetheless, armchair sociologists — consider the tiresome Arsenio Hall, for example — attacked Quayle, arguing that this profound shift in the



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family somehow did not matter. Single-parenting, Arsenio would have us think, has no social consequences.

Arsenio doesn't understand the costs of lives of license because he doesn't personally bear its costs. Who does?

Big surprise: children. Sociologist David Ellwood reports that 50 percent of children in one-parent families will experience poverty in any given year, as opposed to 15 percent of children with two parents. Seventy-three percent of children in one-parent families will be impoverished at some time in their childhood. Twenty percent of children in two-parent families will. Families headed by married high-school graduates have a 9 percent poverty rate. Single-parent families? 47 percent.

The data are staggering, and the message is clear: The traditional family of mom and dad remaining married is the best bet to stop poverty. Whatever Arsenio and the others sneer, attacks upon the traditional family have a clear result: Children eat less. Plain and simple.

One wonders, then: Why all the clamor over Dan Quayle's remarks? It could be that Quayle was a bad

medium for the message. Former Drug Czar Bill Bennett might have been better. Let no one be fooled. The problem was not the medium. It was the message.

This data force American culture to reckon with an uncomfortable truth. The cultural changes that manifested in the 1960s and have lingered ever since have resulted in a profound societal breakdown. For some youth of the '60s, parenting was not a stage which required maturation in attitudes and responsibilities. Rather, they thought their parents were stuck in an outdated model of life.

Though they were in many ways more thoughtful than today's '60s wannabes like Hall, they too thought they could avoid adulthood. Roger Daltrey was indeed a prophet of his generation: "I hope I die before I get old."

As William Galston, President Clinton's domestic policy adviser, has conceded: "The 1960s yielded an ethic of self-realization through incessant personal experimentation, the triumph of what has been termed 'expressive individualism.' An increasingly influential therapeutic vocabulary emphasized the constraints that relations could impose on personal growth and adults to turn inward toward the self's struggles for sovereignty, to view commitments as temporary or endlessly renegotiable — to behave in effect, like adolescents."

One challenge of today is that an entire generation of Americans, including many of our elites, find themselves as adults, but pine after adolescence. One can only hope that they will have the good sense to sober to the truth that they are, in fact, middle-aged. Only then can they accept the responsibilities — and the blessings — of it.

Young is a first-year law student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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