

E. HUGHES SHANKS

# Some tongues just never tire

**Y**ou have to wonder about people who talk all the time. I'm not talking about anyone specific — except myself, perhaps. How can some people talk so damn much? What makes them tick?

What does it look like inside their head? Maybe it's like a bunch of newspapers fluttering around, like in scenes from "Citizen Kane." Or maybe it's like rows and rows of televisions spontaneously monitoring hundreds of stations.

Some people seem to have a response for everything. They seem to make speeches for the sake of making them. They speak in long run-on sentences. Sometimes they're extremely accurate. Other times not.

It really doesn't matter to them, though. They're just talking for the sake of talking.

Imagine this: You tell a friend you'd like to lose weight. Before you know it, you're on the receiving end of a lecture about exercise physiology and nutrition.

Maybe you really just wanted them to tell you that you were a beautiful person and didn't need to lose weight.

You're thinking, "Hey! What about me?" But they just keep right on talking. They're so busy talking, they don't even notice you. Sure, what they're saying is sometimes useful, but it's always annoying.

Perhaps you've experienced this scenario: You're driving through town with a friend, listening to the radio, just enjoying the music, thankful for some commercial-free time, then, POW!

You're suddenly deluged with a litany of facts about the band, the song, its history and maybe even the name of the guy on the bongo drums.

Keep down the chatter. No amount of trivia beats a good song. Geez!

There seem to be at least two kinds of talkers. There are "nonstop talkers" who freely associate with whatever



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they happen to be thinking about, looking at or listening to at that moment. And there are "hunter talkers," who wait quietly until you least expect it and then pounce on you. Hunters have a mission. To say the least, they want to reform you or educate you. When either type catches you, there's no getting away.

I've worked at talking less myself. My 1990 New Year's resolution was to simply talk less. In 1991, I resolved to listen more. It made perfect sense. Listen more, learn more. Know more, be more. Talk more!

Just kidding. Recently I had dinner with friends, one of whom, Benny, is also a talker. I know he's a talker because when he's around, I shut up a lot. I'll try and describe Benny in action.

Benny is polite and friendly. He's hilarious, but his stories are about everyday topics.

He can give discourses on a myriad of topics, but once he's chosen one, he attacks it with vigor and doesn't let off until he's thoroughly explored every angle.

But he does it so easily, you never realize he's talking you to death until you're halfway in the grave.

Benny's stories aren't particularly enlightening, but they're funny.

The night we had dinner, I looked around the table when Benny was in the middle of a 10-minute discourse about baseball. Everyone seemed to be enjoying it. I figured they were re-

lieved that I wasn't talking for a change.

Benny gives talkers a good name. And a good rest. When Benny is around, other talkers like me can take a break. They can rest their jaws, apply some Chap Stick and maybe get a glass of water if they need one.

Talking too much appears to have harmful effects for some people. We have all met individuals who talk so much and so fast, they seem to have forgotten to take the time to breathe. So their mile-a-minute speech is punctuated with gasps.

Sometimes talkers get caught in the act. It's rare, but it happens.

Some time ago a co-worker warned me about talking too much. He had observed me talking to a small group of fellow employees.

Privately he told me I spoke too freely. He said I "should be careful" about how I talked around "white folks." He said I might be misinterpreted.

I said "Hey! If there are six people in the room, there are going to be six versions anyway. So why not capitalize on that?"

I can't control how others interpret my words, but I figure anything that makes people think can't hurt.

Sometimes you have to say all you know. Even if it means you talk too much.

Shanks is a graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

# It's a happy holiday — maybe

**I**f the weather continued to get worse through the night Wednesday, there is a good chance no one will be reading this today. UNL administrators will have canceled class and everyone will still be in bed.

Right. Judging from the blizzards the administration has expected students to weather in the past, this column will instead be read by students sitting in class only wishing they had the day to do whatever they wanted. Happy vacation — almost.

When I was in grade school, snow days off from school were like Christmas. When the weather was particularly bad, everyone would listen to the radio in the morning for the list of schools that had been closed. If your school was called in the lottery, you had a day to forget about work.

Usually that meant your mom made you put on arctic weather gear six layers thick, and you ventured out into the very blizzard that was supposed to be keeping you home. Sledding usually came in there somewhere, with snowmen and snowball fights and all the rest of it.

The main thing was that you woke up expecting to have to go through another day of school and instead got to do whatever you wanted. The unannounced vacation was better than others, because you were really supposed to be working while you were having fun.

How nice it would have been today, then, if Chancellor Graham Spanier had given us a snow day (although he probably wouldn't have called it that). There is a chance that he did give us one, and I have been wrong throughout this column. That would not be anything new, so I will not worry about it.

Had Spanier been so generous, everyone would have gotten to sleep in



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and have a day off. All of us, of course, would have spent the time catching up on homework and getting ready for classes on Friday.

If we weren't in class now, but home instead, we could be doing just about anything we wanted.

I would still be working at the Daily Nebraskan, presumably to help inform everyone there was no school, but at least I would not have had to go to class. I could have put off "The Awakening" for just one more day.

If this column was as much of a dream as a day off from school, I could end it here. Surely that would be the merciful thing to do for everyone involved.

As I can't do that, I will have to talk about what we might have done with a snow day besides getting some sleep or staying away from school.

Probably the most important thing you can do with a free day is catch up on those things that really matter. It sounds sentimental and sappy to talk about, but there are people and things that get pushed back in our lives because we are too busy or have to go to school.

It's easy to think that the important things in life will be there for you tomorrow or next week or next month. Sometimes, however, you find they

can go away.

Snow days are a break from the regular routine of life. You can do things like usual, or you can make your own rules. If school had been canceled today, we might all have called someone we haven't talked to in a while or done something important that we have been putting off.

But the weather held to UNL's satisfaction, so we will be saved from that task. We can read and study and do schoolwork instead.

Hooray.

Unlike us, little kids everywhere will probably have the day off. They can bundle up and enjoy the holiday.

And while they won't be laboring in classrooms, they will probably learn more from their day.

We could always take matters into our own hands. If UNL didn't cancel school, we could all decide that was the wrong decision and take the day off to do more important things. That probably wouldn't be popular with some professors and administrators, but life is too short.

Fitzpatrick is a senior political science major and the editor of the Daily Nebraskan.

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