

World needs more worriers

Some people are professional worriers. They're always bringing up the negative side of things and the less pleasant aspects of life. They always make their point by basing their worries on what happened in the past.

They're always reminding people about what "might" happen and usually have a good example of some past event on which to base their worry. Instead of just letting things happen, a worrier looks for danger signs and makes everybody else miserable by bringing up stuff like the Holocaust or what to do about illegal immigration.

Without the worriers of the world, though, we'd be lost. It's probably better for a worrier to be wrong than right. For example, having a person worry about whether another Holocaust could happen is better than having no one to worry about it at all.

The people who are worried about the economic effects of illegal immigration may be wrong about whether Mexicans are taking jobs from Americans. But I'd rather have someone worried about it than no one at all. The subject of illegal immigration brings attention to other big problems about the economy and the entire Western Hemisphere. In that way, worriers are a useful pain in the neck to keep around. I've never met any one who lost a job to an illegal immigrant. But I've led a sheltered life. It's easy for me to speculate.

Some friends of mine and I used to play a guessing game of imagining what other people might say about the topics about which we worried most. For example we might ask, "What would a right-wing conservative say to a Native American about freedom, democracy and the American way of life?"

It seemed obvious to me that when a Native American is re-



E. Hughes Shanks

mindful of American "freedom" and "democracy," they also get worried. I could be wrong, and it isn't just a game to them.

It's tiring to always be thinking about the fate of the world. Being the worrier that I am, however, I worry more what will happen if I stop worrying. To some, the basic principles of "freedom" and "democracy" are worth being worried about.

It would be nice to just relax and forget about the world and its problems. Worriers get tired of hearing themselves make the same points over and over again — even though we know we're right. It's just that sometimes I'd like to let others do the work of worrying about the world. The world needs more worriers.

There are times when I'd rather just let someone else worry. Someone who I hope could best represent my views. I'd be willing to take a break from life-and-death matters, as long as I could pick who would worry for me. It would have to be someone who isn't afraid of a little controversy, but doesn't go looking for it. Someone who isn't afraid to talk about things that make people feel uncomfortable.

If I'm going to take a break from worrying, I want to know my views will still be heard. A true worrier would be concerned about that. A worrier needs to be someone who isn't afraid to remind people of the

less positive sides of things, even though they know people will get mad at them for doing it. This is not a job for the timid.

Take, for example, the job of worrying about right-wing ideology, which says that the United States should lead the causes of "freedom" and "democracy" throughout the world.

A worrier is needed to keep that kind of talk in check. A true worrier needs to be there and remind people about the complete history of "freedom" and "democracy" in this country. I think I know the kind of person who would be just right for that job.

If I had my pick, I think I might like to have a Native American worrier do it. It really gets to right-wingers when you mention Native Americans, because there is no way to justify killing someone and taking their house away. Native Americans know all about "freedom" and "democracy." They didn't get any!

There might be a slight problem with a Native American being able to remain objective. But then, how can the believers of right-wing ideology remain objective about "freedom" and "democracy" if they deny that Native Americans were denied "freedom" and "democracy"?

Then again, maybe a Native American doesn't really need to "worry" about what might happen. Maybe they don't even want to think about it. A Native American already knows what can happen. How would I know what it means to be Native American, anyway? I think I'll just keep worrying and do the talking for myself.

Worrier rhymes with warrior.

Shanks is a graduate student and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Baseball strike no national emergency

The city of Chicago once sweated out a strike by firefighters. It was a very nervous time. Every building and every person in those buildings was at risk.

But I don't remember the president of the United States saying he was going to step in and somehow get the firemen to return to work before somebody burned to death.

As dangerous as the strike was to Chicagoans, it was a municipal labor dispute — none of the federal government's business — and it had to be settled by municipal officials and the firefighters' union.

Over the years, we've gone through strikes by schoolteachers in Chicago and its suburbs. The strikes hurt students, who need all the help they can get. They caused difficulties for working parents. And they weren't much fun for the teachers and their families, either.

But I don't recall any president of the United States saying that he could not stand by while children were being deprived of their book learning and households were being disrupted.

These strikes were a local governmental labor dispute and they were settled by local officials and unions.

But unless it creates a national emergency — and few strikes do — the president of the United States doesn't announce that he is troubled by all those lint-pocket workers, their nervous families and businessmen watching their profits dry up.

Now we appear to have a national emergency — the dispute between the millionaire baseball players and the millionaires who employ them as entertainer-athletes.

President Clinton says he can't stand by while the nation faces the threat of another summer without major-league baseball.

So he assigned an aide to the job of goosing the players and the owners into an agreement. He even set a deadline.

I have to admit feeling sheepish for failing to notice that we were experiencing a national emergency.

It was a lot more worrisome when the Chicago firemen walked out and I discovered that my garden hose had several leaks.

When teachers go on strike, we see frazzled mothers on TV. Apparently their suffering isn't as severe as that of some grinning patron of a sports bar.

I'm sure the baseball strike is unpleasant for the players and



Mike Royko

their agents. The loss of a season might force some of these unfortunate men to wait until they are a doddering 38 years old before retiring to a life of golf and goofing around. Some might even suffer the embarrassment of appearing in public wearing last year's gold neck baubles.

Yes, there are ordinary workers who won't have jobs if the season is delayed or canceled — the beer and hot dog vendors, the ushers, stadium sweepers, groundskeepers, parking lot attendants and others.

But hardly a day passes without corporations announcing that they are going to "downsize" their work forces. Often, it involves giving the boot to far more skilled workers than all of the baseball employees.

When that happens — bringing trauma to thousands of households — the White House press secretary doesn't call a press conference to convey the president's grave concerns.

What is it that President Clinton intends to do now that the deadline has passed and the ballplayers are still sitting by their swimming pools and the owners are sullenly riding away in their limousines?

I suppose he could call out the troops and, as commander in chief, tell them to get up a big game of piggy move up.

But with my limited knowledge of labor law, it looks like what we have here is a bottom-line dispute between a lot of well-paid entertainers, who seem to believe they are the center of the universe, and a band of arrogant and super-rich owners who know that the sun doesn't rise until their morning visit to the john.

This is a fine opportunity for President Clinton to demonstrate strong leadership. We can tell the nation and the world that if other countries can survive famine, earthquakes, terrible civil wars and revolution, this nation, under God, of the people, by the people and for the people, can endure a few months without spitting and crotch-scratching.

© 1995 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

Simple things fill life's book

I saw a wonderful Kodak film commercial the other day, so naturally I found myself in a very reflective and philosophical mood. I began to examine myself as a human creature and to look closely at what I have accomplished in my 24 years.

When reflecting upon my life and what I have accomplished, I like to consider my existence as being a book. The problem with this metaphor (or is it an allegory? It's all Greek under the bridge to me, anyway) is that no one knows how heavy the book may be on the right side; no one can tell how many pages are left to be turned.

In my case, I may be strangled by my Body-By-Jake machine tomorrow, and that's it. No more for this bad boy.

And I would cringe at how my book of life would be critiqued in a freshman literature class.

"Todd's Life, A Novelette," had a little potential," one student would say. "I did enjoy Chapter 4, 'Dances With Tall Girls, or The Junior High Days,' but overall, I would say that there should have been more, much more."

Because of this fear that my life book would be treated so harshly in Literature 101, I initially made the decision that I would live, from now on, as though I was on the last page of my book. As though I was reading the last paragraph, where I would find out if the butler did in fact commit the murder.

My initial response to my internal fears was, "Carpe diem! Seize the day!" Then I began to think about the consequences of living as though today were my last day.

If today really was my last day, I imagine that I would bungee jump, sky dive, purchase a high-powered motorcycle and run down the middle of O Street completely



Todd Elwood

naked. Then after lunch ...

Obviously, if I wanted to keep myself alive, out of prison and with any form of bank account left, then living as though it were my last day probably would not be the wisest decision. In fact, that lifestyle would probably propel me toward my actual last moments quicker than I would prefer.

The answer to this dilemma, I've decided, seems to lie somewhere between living a mundane existence and living with reckless abandon. The answer is finding simple pleasures and appreciating them for what they are.

My lovely wife, for example, hates long car trips. But when we are forced to travel a great distance, she finds pleasure by looking at mailboxes. Some mailboxes along the highway are amusing, shaped as tractors, farmers, ice cream cones and such things, and she finds a simple pleasure in this.

She has the right idea. The trick is to be able to pick out simple pleasures in your life. I find my simple pleasures in many things, but I don't think I've really appreciated them until now.

I enjoy finding a dollar bill in a pair of pants, especially if they are my pants. I find simple pleasure when I'm driving in the rain, and the speed of the windshield wipers matches the beat of the song on the radio.

One of my greatest simple pleasures is finding bonus fries. This occurs when, after consuming a fine meal, I notice there are a couple of french fries left at the bottom of the bag.

It should be a healthy, lifelong habit to find these simple pleasures. You don't have to look very hard for them, either. The trick is to notice them when they happen. Seeking them out is not necessary, because they will simply happen.

It is finding these simple pleasures and reacting to them that will prohibit any freshman literature class from tearing apart your life book. It's screaming, "Yes! Bonus fries! I love bonus fries! Yummy!" that makes life exciting.

It is a conscious decision to enjoy life a little bit more. Most of the time, that may be a difficult thing to do, but simple pleasures in life should not go unappreciated, because they are small pieces of happiness in a world that isn't always happy.

This warm and fuzzy attitude is kind of new to me, though, so I'm not sure how well this is going to work. How many times can I notice and appreciate bonus fries before it just gets old? What then? Bonus chicken nuggets?

Perhaps that is the answer. The solution is to notice and appreciate simple pleasures, and if these wear thin, notice different aspects of your personal existence that make you happy.

That's what I'm going to do. I will, from this point on, be filled with appreciation for the things in life that give me pleasure. But if this doesn't work out, don't worry about me, I'll be the happy lunatic running down the middle of O Street completely naked.

Elwood is a senior English and sociology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



Mike Lukovich