

Brief friendships enrich us

It's time to say goodbye. But before you say hallelujah, God bless and rejoice in sheer relief — I am not going yet, not for a while.

But it's time to say goodbye to so many people who have crossed paths with us. People who are graduating, roommates who are moving out, people moving on in pursuit of better career options, like our dear Chancellor Graham Spanier, people who are going to be taking up different jobs, people who are retiring ... the list goes on. Our social and work circles are never constant but ever changing.

When I was talking to an exchange-student friend of mine, it occurred to me that I'll probably never see her again. She is leaving for her country soon, and I was stuck by a sudden pang of sadness. She is not my soulmate, nor my best friend, even. And I think that is exactly the reason I am sad.

Ever so often in our lives, we meet people who are really neat, really cool — like a nice bunch in a relaxed class, like the people with whom we have shared riotous laughter in a summer camp, like the really pleasant person across the hall — people with whom we are comfortable, but not necessarily close.

These are people in whose company we grow complacent in our comfort, yet don't take additional steps to consolidate the relationship into a lifelong friendship. Mainly due to lack of time.

Accept it or not, life in these United States is a sorry, sordid slavery under the relentless and merciless master that is time. The only thing that has successfully and totally conquered the indomitable and uncontrollable spirit that is America is time.

Even if you want to spend time with a person, given all that an average student does, where do you



Vennila Ramalingam

find the time to socialize? You really have to go out of your way. Having spent all my student life until my graduate years without ever taking up a job of any kind, it awes me to no extent to see the things people do here while going to school.

Many of my friends here work 40 hours while managing a full course load. And on top of that, if you are in a relationship, add another 40 hours of "work." Salute and pat yourself on your backs, all you heroes!

And I'll save my admiration for another column. I truly believe in Seal's words when he sings, "Time is the space between you and me," especially when it comes to taking the time off to get to know a person outside your established social circle. The summer camp HAS to end sometime and you WILL have to return to your "normal" life, which won't be quite the same thanks to the people you had encountered. That is reality.

Going back to the talk with my exchange-student friend, I was sad that I had a chance to meet all these cool people and before I have a chance to get to know them well, they are going to be gone. It is not tragic, but it is definitely sad.

As my thoughts ran along this direction over the countless "could have become lifelong friends if only I had the time," I realized that this need not necessarily be a sad

thing. Maybe that's how things are meant to be — these people are like the very first spring flowers in our lives — they may not last very long, but they leave us remembering forever their freshness and spectacular colors.

Some people think friendship with such ephemeral people in our lives is a waste of time, since it does not last. But these are the people who do not enjoy the beauty of the rainbow because of a drizzle.

The people who we meet even briefly enrich our lives like a cool summer breeze. By the time we warm up to them, it's time for one of us to go. The hardest part of this friendship is letting go when it is time — for it is so temporary.

These people are not our best friends, with whom we will surely keep in touch. Nor are they indifferent acquaintances, with whom we surely won't keep in touch. These are our in-between friends, with whom we would love to keep in touch, but realistically and sadly end up going our different ways.

It's like having to leave a beautiful novel unfinished, never to know the end. It's like possessing a piece of a treasure map — you know that there is treasure somewhere, but you don't know where to start, and much worse don't have a chance to finish the search.

But then the beauty of such futile friendships is that we come off as better people for these chance encounters. We have had the chance and pleasure of opening a precious gift box and having had a glimpse of the beauty inside. And even though it is only in passing, such a thing of beauty will always remain as a joy forever.

Ramalingam is graduate student in computer science and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Montana doesn't fill retirement criteria

An elderly man named Sid called with an idea for a change in the language of the world of sports.

"I was just watching this Joe Montana on TV," he said. "He was announcing his retirement. But he's not really retiring, is he?"

Yes, he will no longer play football.

"That's not what I mean. I'm retired. I worked 45 years. Then I got a pension. Now I sit home all day and count my dimes because I'm too damn old to do anything else."

"This Montana, he's a youngster. And he's just quitting one job and starting in on something else. So instead of saying that he's retiring, you news people ought to say he's quitting."

But the results are the same. "Oh no they're not. There are a heck of a lot of differences."

Such as? "Well, is he buying a used RV so that he and his wife can drive down to Florida when it gets cold?"

I seriously doubt that. "See? I'll bet he's not doing any of the things that a normal person does when he retires. I've been retired for 10 years, and I know them all. I can tell you about them."

So with Sid's expertise, we've put together a list of things a person must do to earn the status of "retired."

● Is Montana planning to drive to California to visit his sister? "About half the guys I worked with said they were going to do that when they retired," Sid said. "The guys who didn't have sisters in California said they were going to take the vacation in Hawaii that they always dreamed about. I was lucky because I didn't have a sister in California. I went to Hawaii and got a bad sunburn."

● Is the highlight of Montana's day a walk down to the neighborhood diner for a cup of coffee and some conversation with other retirees? "This was a pretty good winter because we had the O.J. case to talk about. On days when there was nothing new in the trial, we had Michael Jordan's comeback. And on the real slow days, we could compare ailments. One morning we had a group at the counter with two triple bypasses, two prostates, a hip replacement, a colon, a cataract job and a 90 percent hearing loss in one ear."

● Is Montana going to go through the house and gather up all the jars and bowls containing coins and haul them to the bank to have them counted and



Mike Royko

exchanged for cash? "That was the first thing I did when I retired. Now, I don't accumulate coins because I use them to pay for things. It really gets people mad when I take my time counting out \$4 or \$5 worth of small change at the check-out counter. What's the rush? I've got nothing but time."

● When Montana goes to Florida with his wife, are they going to always have dinner at a restaurant's early-bird special? "Here's a good tip," Sid said. "If you're going to have a cocktail, always order it straight up instead of on the rocks because you get more booze that way. There's no sense in spending good money on melted ice."

● When Montana and his wife dine out, are they going to drop a few table items in their purse or pockets? "On one trip to Florida, we didn't buy a single loaf of bread or a box of sugar because we socked away so many sugar packets and dinner rolls. That's why I like places that serve mustard and ketchup in those little packets. You can't take it home if it's in a bottle."

● Is Montana going to send any long, angry letters to his congressman or the letters section of a newspaper? "When I was working, I wouldn't even send a postcard," Sid said. "But now I write to my congressman all the time, telling him how he's screwing up. They always send back real pathetic letters saying they'll try harder. So I just bawl them out even worse. Keeps them on their toes."

● Will Montana ever miss a chance to say that life used to be better and that the whole country is falling apart and a tomato has no taste and Nixon wouldn't look too bad right now? "He's still so young, I bet he doesn't know who Spiro Agnew was."

Finally, Sid said: "If you need any more proof that he's not really retiring, at his press conference, he didn't once mention his prostate."

Maybe there is nothing wrong with it.

"See?"

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Grades trivial on walk of life

Have you ever felt like you were teetering on the edge of disaster? Just one more little step and the ground beneath you will give way. The week before finals always seems to give me that feeling. There is no way around it.

My stomach crawls up into my throat and all I can think about is the disaster looming in the distance. I don't really consider myself to be a cynical or negative person, but the thought of finals seems to switch my brain to a black-or-white mode, and I can only seem to think in terms of pass or fail.

Over the past two years, I have experienced a lot, but I have yet to experience what it is like to fail a class. I have stood on the edge of failure many times, but I have yet to take the final step over the edge. One thing I learned early in my college career is to accept the fact that trying your hardest and not succeeding is common and needs to be taken with a grain of salt.

In past semesters, I must have had a four-leaf clover on my shoulder and an angel watching over me during finals week. This semester, however, I think my angel is on vacation, and my four-leaf clover has withered and died. My luck seems to be slowly running out when I need it the most.

For some reason, why I'm in school has become jumbled up and I'm left quite confused. It's hard for me to look out the window and see blue skies and feel the warm sun and not think that I should be out there instead of inside with my nose in a textbook, reading about things that seem irrelevant at the present time.

I have often been told that I should view my college career as a means to an end, or as a passage-way to another part of my life.



Beth Flinston

Right now, I feel as if I am traveling along one of my father's short cuts that almost inevitably will result in me taking twice as long to reach the destination. It seems to me that in recent years, the value and the purpose of going to college has greatly diminished. College is no longer a place of higher education and knowledge, but nothing more than a competitive game to see who can fastest reach the great Utopia we like to call the real world.

I'm tired of running the races of life and not coming in first by a fraction of a second. I can only hope that somewhere along the line, the judge's watch will be wrong, and my break will finally come.

After high school, I had a feeling of hope and complete and utter faith in the future.

Then I entered college, and I got a good dose of reality thrown in my face, with a dash of cynicism. My faith in the future became a fear of the future, and I finally realized that I was the only one who was going to get me through the next four years of my life.

Taking life less seriously is one of those things that is easier said than done. When I finally learn how, I am sure that it will be the greatest feeling on earth. I wish I could take at face value everything thrown at me, and realize that I am only 20 years old

with plenty of good years in front of me.

Finals week will come and go, and no matter what happens, I will still be here with a life to live and to make the best of. I do not boast to be wise beyond my years, but if I can offer any bit of advice to those with a college career in their future, it would be that the best thing you can do is to learn to take life less seriously and realize that failing a class does not make you a failure at life.

They say that hindsight is 20/20. If that is the case, then after next week, my life should be a wonderful vision of clarity. With one more year under my belt, I can only hope that it will get better from here on out.

No one ever said that college would be easy or that it would make any sense. My grades on my finals or in my classes will never define who I am, but the work and the honest effort I put into getting them will. No matter what happens when this semester is over, I know that my attitude has changed for the better. I am one step closer to taking life a little less seriously, and a lot more knowledgeable about how to go about it.

For those of you who are presently high on caffeine and stressed out of your minds, I advise you to step back and put your life in perspective. Take it from one who has been there — nothing is ever as bad or as hopeless as it may seem.

The other day, my dad told me something most people have heard before, but it might help to hear it again. All anyone can expect of you is that you do your best and live up to your potential. If you have accomplished that, then you can never be seen as a failure.

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Mike Luckovich