

Man gives thanks new meaning

It was an aimless walk. I was going nowhere in particular. I inhaled deeply. It was a beautiful day, I remember thinking vaguely somewhere in the back of my mind. I was too lost in thought to observe much of the beauty around me. My immediate objective was to step on another of those crispy dried leaves on the pavement and hear it crunch. With hands in my pockets, hopping from one dead leaf to another, I proceeded with my preoccupation.

What was I doing? For all I knew, I was hastening the biodegradation process of the leaf. For all I knew, somebody was having a good laugh at me. For all I knew, I was going to bang into the nearest lamppost. Oh, I didn't know. Nor did I care.

I was partially pondering — partially because it was one of several other parallel processes — over the meaning and purpose of life.

Ah! The meaning of life. Graduate school and a thousand deadlines tend to have that kind of effect on one, I hear.

It is almost Thanksgiving! That means the semester is all but over. That means a deserted campus and no food service in the cafeterias during the break. That means a break which is really no break at all — for me. That means family reunions and turkey — for a lot of others.

No, I was not exactly wallowing in self-pity because I don't get to go home, I was simply whimpering. The holiday season has a way of making you miss home. I might go weeks together without thinking about my family at other times, but during this time of the year, I tend to get a bit misty-eyed.

Thanksgiving as a holiday does not have much meaning to me. In fact, until a year ago, I had no idea it even existed. But the idea of family gatherings and appreciating and being thankful for your blessings, strikes a note.

There were not many things that I wanted to be thankful for. I might be thankful after a vacation in Hawaii, maybe.

But what with mountains of



Vennila Ramalingam

"There were not many things that I wanted to be thankful for. I might be thankful after a vacation in Hawaii, maybe."

schoolwork and not having your family with you — there really should be a complaints day. Thanks-giving especially for the wimps. What do you say?

Thinking in this manner, I sat on the rim of the Broyhill Fountain, for that's where my aimless wanderings eventually bring me. Even if you really tried, you can't get lost on the UNL campus, it seems.

I sat with my legs drawn close to my body against the crisp autumn air. The fountain had been shut off. But as I gazed with my eyes unfocused at the ugly bare insides of the fountain, slowly it came into focus.

I heard the roar of the fountain and felt the cool morning breeze of summer. It was an early summer morning. Waking unusually early, I set out for a walk to the Sheldon Gardens, and on my way back came to sit at the fountain.

There was a figure at the opposite side. He came around to sit kind of close to me. I nodded a good morning at him.

He was plain dirty. His face was swollen. And he had stuff oozing out of his eyes. He wished me a good morning with gusto and

proceeded on to put his grimy feet in the water. Having done that, he looked up at me, gave me a dazzling smile and encouraged me to do the same.

I politely refused and eagerly waited for the union to open so I could have some coffee. It was an idyllic morning and I really didn't care for company.

But my companion at the fountain seemed eager for some. He proceeded to tell me all about himself and his 8-hour night shifts at the O street construction site loading iron bars or something else. He told me about his five dollar bike and how he had given the better one to his girlfriend. He dismissed his aching body as it would take care of itself, and exclaimed how good the cool water felt on his aching feet.

Having been engrossed in his life story or the bits of it that he saw fit to tell me, I darted into the union really quickly to get some coffee, and then rejoined him.

He was inquisitive about what I was doing and where I was from. He didn't know where India was, but I had this vague feeling that he thought me to be Native American and was very impressed at the fact that I studied "computers."

He told me then how lucky I was to have a nice family, albeit far away, and to be able to go to school. He wished he could do the same. He wanted to get an education and a decent job.

It was time for me to go. It was getting chilly; the cold permeated my light jacket. I pulled up my feet from the fountain and this time they were not wet, nor was there the noise of falling water. No David and no coffee cup.

When I walked away from the fountain, I knew exactly what I was thankful for. I was also thankful for that chance meeting with a kind gentleman.

I wish David's wishes come true, one day.

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

Battle serves leaders' interests

The Great Budget Debacle of 1995 has come to an end, for the time being.

The battle is over; the war is probably just beginning.

The posturing, bickering and mugging for the network news sound bites will die down for a while, and the politicians (sounds like a dirty word, does it not?) will play nice for a few days in hopes that the voting public will be hoodwinked into thinking that they really care.

The government's downfall — the downfall of the free world, some would have you believe — has been averted in an 11th-hour compromise engineered by our benevolent leaders in Washington.

Democracy is safe once again, and we owe it all to Bill, Newt and Bob.

And if you believe that ...

I've always fancied myself as a "glass half full" kind of guy, even when talking about government. In the past couple years, however, I've come to realize that the half-full, half-empty question is meaningless.

The glass, it would seem, is as dry as one of Carrie Nation's Women's Christian Temperance Union meetings, and there's no water in sight. And still we, the "constituents," sit in the barren wasteland of American politics, watching the vultures circle and hoping ... not for a half-full or half-empty glass, but for a drop — just one, just to tide us over.

Meanwhile, Clinton, Gingrich and Dole, three of the most powerful men in America, bicker like school-children in an attempt to convince the public that its best interests are at stake.

And after all this, we can ascertain only the following:

A balanced budget is a good idea; balancing the budget the



Doug Peters

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wrong way is a bad idea; and, indeed, Newt Gingrich's dad could have beaten up Bill Clinton's dad in an even fight.

In addition, it is safe to assume that the military and the defense industry have taken stealth technology, so rampantly successful in the billion-dollar-and-change bombers we have rolling off the production lines, and adapted it to the defense budget.

Nobody seems very willing to put defense up on the chopping block — of course, one never knows when we'll need ICBMs.

So instead of scaling back the national defense, the government has been looking to downsize citizens' defense. Defense against poverty, defense against sickness, defense against illiteracy.

The Republicans defied President Clinton and proposed drastic Medicare and Medicaid cuts, as well as eliminating tax breaks for the working poor, as part of their budget-reduction plan.

"Give us your tired, your poor, your huddled masses," I can hear history prof-turned-politico Gingrich say, "so we can further disenfranchise them for the betterment of those who can afford to make nice, juicy campaign contributions."

In turn, Clinton, not too bad with history either, would respond, "I'd regret to have but one term to serve for my country," at which point we would scramble to preserve Medicaid, Medicare, tax breaks for the poor and education spending, knowing that his reelection hinges on standing up for the "little guys."

In case you're wondering, that's us.

American public is being treated like the geeky kid in school whom the captain of the football team befriends in order to get hooked up with the geek's attractive sister.

A means to an end. The success or failure of new budget compromise will not be measured by its effect on the citizens; it will be measured by its effect on the popularity polls. And the polls won't change much. There'll just be fewer voices, as more and more people slide into apathy or slip through the cracks and out of the loop.

I realize this all sounds a little cynical. For that, I apologize. Like I said, I'm usually, a glass half full guy.

The only thing is, there's nothing in the glass. And being used as a puppet in a petty, partisan tug-of-war can get to be pretty thirsty work.

Peters is a graduate student of journalism and a Daily Nebraskan columnist

A letter... from the FROSH

Talk at dinner table could shock a turkey



Adria Chilcote

Once again, here comes the last Thursday of November. I meet it with mixed feelings. Technically, I've already had my Thanksgiving. The part of my family that lives at my house had our traditional feast last Sunday.

Instead of letting the holiday sneak up on us (as it usually does), this time we snuck up on it.

We celebrated early because when the authentic holiday comes, my family will scatter in various directions.

Thanksgiving never was a very important holiday to me. It's never been all that close to my heart.

There's a ton of cooking to do, there's a ton of dishes to do when it's all over, and there's relatives to deal with.

When compared to Christmas, Thanksgiving sucks. On Christmas you get all the crap like dishes, cooking and relatives. But you get presents to make all the other stuff worth it.

Where's the motivation for Thanksgiving?

For me, there's not much. OK, I love cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. But is all that crap worth a few bites of sauce and a piece of pie? I think not.

It might come close to being worth it if I were a carnivore. But I'm not. So what's the point of Turkeyday with no ritual sacrificing of the great bird?

Couple that with the fact that I have some major moral reservations about the whole tradition.

You know the story. When the pilgrims came to this continent they almost all died off (which I believe), and the American Indians came to the rescue and taught them about corn and stuff (which I also believe), and that the pilgrims were really nice after they were saved from starvation (which I defiantly do not believe).

I happen to believe that a lie is a bad thing. I and my naive self was under the impression that the majority of people also shared this belief.

So why does the entire country continue to celebrate this colossal one?

I guess it makes everyone feel good about the whole thing. I think it's a hypocritical good feeling. And I hope that people will eventually stop believing in it.

But I would also like to see world peace and an end to hunger and homelessness everywhere. Yet I don't see any of these wishes being realized in the near future.

Even though I don't believe in the holiday any more, it's

A particularly entertaining portion of our dinner conversation was when Daniel brought up the subject of vaginas. He was convinced that the correct pronunciation of the word was "bagina."

entertaining to sit down with my entire family for a few hours (we are slow eaters) at least once a year.

The portion of my family gathered around the turkey table on Sunday consisted of my mother, my sister Melissa (15 years old), and my two brothers Ben (6) and Daniel (4). The most entertaining and infuriating were my two brothers.

A particularly entertaining portion of our dinner conversation was when Daniel brought up the subject of vaginas. He was convinced that the correct pronunciation of the word was "bagina."

Of course I corrected him, but Ben was intent on confusing the poor boy and told him I was wrong, it really was bagina. Then my sister and mother got in on it.

So there we were at the Thanksgiving dinner table having a heated discussion about vaginas and baginas.

The rest of the conversation meandered on to topics such as how about Daniel paraded around in pantyhose the other night and said he wanted to be a girl because girls are pretty.

Then we got on the subject of the morality of being a transvestite and how gender is socially defined.

Toward the end of a dessert of pumpkin pie, the entire family somehow wound up squealing at the top of our lungs like a bunch of insane pigs.

(And I'm not making any of this up! I swear to the Goddess that this all actually happened.)

What I want to know is what other families are like when they get together and no one's looking.

How many other people are going to be squealing like pigs at their turkey feast?

I think it sounds like a fantastic tradition to get started in every household.

I guess I will wish you all a happy Thanksgiving, even though I don't believe in it.

And feel free to start the tradition of squealing like insane pigs around your dinner table this year. It's a great way to relieve stress that can be accumulated when surrounded by relatives.

Chilcote is a freshman women's studies major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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