

Nebraska: More than football

My very first column was about arriving in Nebraska. My very last, strangely enough, is about Nebraska as well.

Nebraska. The first time my dad heard the name and that I actually considered going there, he freaked out. "Nebraska!" he exclaimed, "It sounds awfully like Alaska. I don't like it already!"

Nebraska. Certain people who I met in Florida didn't know where in the United States it was. At least the kid in "Sleepless in Seattle" might have given a "somewhere in the middle" answer to the question.

Shame on you Floridians. At least we kicked your butt in Miami. (Living in Nebraska had taught me to take comfort in football.)

One smart aleck wanted to know if we had Indians in our backyards. His vision of Nebraska was a 19th-century mural on the wall.

While my dad could be forgiven for his ignorance — he has never set foot on American soil — the same can't be said about the innumerable fellow Americans who harbor their own prejudices about this state.

A recent article about Nebraska in the Washington Post epitomizes the national view of Nebraska. The headline yelled out — "The Greater Part of Nebraska — Plain deserted" or something to the effect.

The article talked about a real problem in Nebraska: the problem of brain drain, attrition, and migration to other states. It also portrayed the state in a not-so-positive manner — at least not the way I see it.

It described the "ugliness" and "drabness" of the average Nebraska town, illustrated by a dreary picture of Anselmo. The last line of the article smirked that the only item of beauty was the lone windmill outside the town.

Nebraska is not all about grain elevators and game days, cornfields



Vennila Ramalingam

"The purpose of this column is not to boost up the morale of the state. It has never been low!"

and cow manure, flatlands and that lone finger rock, windmills and a white population.

It is more. Much, much more.

To me, Nebraska defines the word hospitality. My experiences here have been very positive, and reinforced my belief in the general goodness of people — all people.

If my columns conveyed an idyllic, sometimes unrealistic picture of the world, Nebraska is one reason for that.

I have not lived in other parts of Nebraska except Lincoln, and mostly on campus. I may not be justified in generalizing my campus experiences to the rest of Nebraska, but my interaction with the Lincoln community and the state at large has been mostly positive.

There is ignorance. And there is prejudice. Name one place on Earth that is free of these evils.

But here in Nebraska, there is also an overwhelming eagerness to learn.

The purpose of this column is not

to boost up the morale of the state. It has never been low!

A good many Nebraskans who have never left the Midwest claim that there is no place like Nebraska.

While the pride is justified, sometimes I feel it's for all the wrong reasons.

There is life beyond football. There is life beyond the borders of the state and yes, the country.

Sitting here in the heart of America, land of plenty, it IS very easy to forget about the problems plaguing the world. Abject poverty and absolute pain could not be more unreal. It is very easy to become focused internally and be preoccupied with ourselves.

But sitting here, in the "middle of nowhere," I have learned more about other countries, including this one, than one could possibly imagine.

And in my column I have tried to bring some attention to some of the global and not-so-global issues that were nevertheless close to my heart, even though it looked totally out of place amidst football fantasies.

And through my column, if I have reached at least one person and made him or her think and look at things from a different perspective, I would consider this endeavor a grand success — in addition to the sheer pleasure of writing.

I have really cherished this opportunity to reach out to the people of Nebraska. Writing this column was a dream come true.

I am not leaving UNL yet. So if you see me on campus, (very likely you would never recognize me through this photograph), join me for a chitchat.

Until then, adios amigos.

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

A letter... from the **FROSH**

Jumping into season spoils the holidays



Adria Chilcote

Christmas is a holiday I enjoy. I like the food. I like giving and getting presents. I like finding out what Santa stuffed in my stocking.

But I hate that damn Christmas spirit.

I hate that it comes so early. I saw Christmas decorations in stores and on houses before Thanksgiving, and that's going way too far.

I say that the beginning of December is a decent time to put up decorations, but mid-November is just obscene.

I hate that it's everywhere I go. I can't even go walking down the street without being reminded that it's the Christmas season.

The spirit of Christmas has puked all over the downtown area; no light pole has been spared.

This year I've discovered something new to detest about Christmas: It's the Christmas carols piped through the campus every half-hour.

I feel like it's trying to brainwash everybody. Like there are subliminal messages throughout the songs.

I'm sure that the music is just another part of the whole extravagant conspiracy to get everyone to spend more money on presents than no one's going to like anyway.

Sometimes when I'm walking around campus, I feel like I'm trapped in some kind of twilight zone. All of the people milling around me have been put in a hypnotic trance by the Christmas music ringing in the air.

All of a sudden I'm right in the middle of this society where all of the people are being controlled by some psycho in a Santa suit at the top of a bell tower.

Other times when various Christmas carols are chiming their way into my brain, I feel like I'm inside somebody's huge demented music box.

Pretty soon they're going to get sick of listening to it and they'll close the lid. Everything will grow dark, and all movement will stop until somebody else decides to open up the box once again.

While I was walking through campus one day, I was listening to 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer' and damning to hell the fiend who had thought up the idea

"While I was walking through campus one day, I was listening to 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer' and damning to hell the fiend who had thought up the idea to build a bell tower."

to build a bell tower.

I was relieved when the cursed tune ended. Then I realized that the song was going 'round and 'round in my head. I felt like screaming and beating the thing out of it. I felt possessed by an evil demon song.

I hate all of the really cute and happy things that go along with Christmas. I think there's a point where cute can go too far. Then it turns rancid.

Take TV commercials, for example. I can't take all of those happy, singing, shopping people.

If any of them were actually real, I would say that they've got to be psychologically disturbed to be that happy. They have to be in danger of straining some facial muscles from smiling so much.

The remote control to my television has been lost for years. So instead of pushing the mute button when an offensive commercial comes on, I must resort to closing my eyes, plugging my ears and humming a tune (or just moaning if I'm in a particularly bad mood).

With all the stuff I hate about Christmas, it's amazing that I actually look forward to it.

I really do like giving things to people. I like watching people open their gifts.

And, of course, I enjoy receiving presents.

But the thing I like more than the actual receiving of a gift is the suspense. It's fun to see a bunch of presents sitting under the tree and wonder what they are.

Another thing I like about it is that I kind of get to act like a kid again. I get to feel that old excitement of years ago when I go to bed on Christmas Eve, and when everyone goes downstairs to discover their filled stockings.

So I'm not a complete grinch. I do like the holiday.

I just don't like how it has that nasty habit of taking over the entire country.

My ideal Christmas would be like this: No decorations until about a week before Christmas day. Minimal holiday commercials. Absolutely no carols being drummed into everyone's head. And no abundance of cute, happy, singing people.

I don't think it'll ever happen. I just hope it doesn't drive me absolutely mad.

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

U.S. mobilizes for Bosnians

This week, as we lower our shoulders and shuffle through dead week, preparing for the dreaded final exams, thousands of our contemporaries are preparing for a test in which failure means more than having to repeat French class next semester.

They are preparing for battle. Already, 700 U.S. soldiers are packing their bags in preparation for deployment this week. They will be inching their way through the Bosnian hills, preparing the way for a wave of 20,000 U.S. troops who will soon join them, even as we are cramming for this semester's last flurry of tests.

As we sweat over the rules of grammar or the equation for the volume of a cylinder, they will be sweeping the terrain for land mines and booby traps.

As we look forward to Christmas with our families, swapping stories by a crackling fire, they prepare to face the crackling sound of gunfire.

I don't envy them. I don't envy anyone sent anywhere to fight, and possibly die, for this or any other country.

And although I don't necessarily support sending 20,000 Americans to take part in someone else's war, I can't help but admire, at least a little, the Clinton administration's decision to send in the troops.

After years of made-for-TV wars, served up nightly by CNN and the Reagan and Bush administrations (maybe in that order), we finally have a leader willing to take an unpopular action, simply because it seems like the right thing to do.

Bear in mind: Bosnia is no Grenada, Libya, Panama or even Persian Gulf. It is a quagmire of hazardous terrain, fervently held beliefs and barbaric (even by the standards of war) acts. It is not a major producer of oil. It is not, no matter what anyone says, vital to the security interests of the United States.

And it is not, most importantly, a quick and dirty way for President Clinton to boost his popularity



Doug Peters

"They are going as 'peacekeepers,' we are told. Going to separate the warring factions tearing apart an area most American high-schoolers couldn't find on a world map."

ratings.

Yet still those thousands of troops are readying themselves for the task.

They are going as "peacekeepers," we are told. Going to separate the warring factions tearing apart an area most American high-schoolers couldn't find on a world map. Going to stand on a side of beef and shout "sit!" at the starving Rottweilers on each side.

But above all, going because what is happening in Bosnia — indeed, as critics point out, what has been happening there for centuries — must be stopped.

How can we, as a nation professing a love for values and decency, stand by and simply watch genocide unfold before our eyes? If America is to remain what we claim it is — a world leader — we have a responsibility to help restore order in Bosnia.

Furthermore, if the presidency is to remain what we claim it is — a position of authority, commanding

respect from American citizens and leaders abroad — we have a responsibility, not necessarily to agree with, but at least to support, Clinton's actions.

Right now, not many people are doing that.

The Sunday World Herald reported that correspondence received by area representatives has been overwhelmingly against involvement in Bosnia. There is little hope for a lasting peace in the area, these letters rather uniformly state, and why, even if there were a chance, should we spend tax dollars to stabilize an area so very far away, with so very little to offer us in return?

By the same logic, why would we, as individuals, come to the aid of a stranger being beaten on the street? Why would we step in and break up a fight? Why would we put ourselves at risk in a show of compassion for the victim of a crime?

Maybe we wouldn't. Maybe our country is ready to step out of the role of world leadership it has filled for so many years.

Maybe Americans are ready to turn their eyes inward, putting individual well-being above all else. Maybe we have just stopped caring.

And, maybe, just maybe, that's the way it should be.

But tell that to Zlata Filipovic, the Bosnian girl who became famous through her diary detailing the hardships of life in her war-torn home. She, like millions of other children in Bosnia, is a victim of being born in the wrong place at the wrong time. She is hoping for peace. Thousands like her don't have the luxury of looking forward to peace anymore; they are gone. Thousands more will die if the fighting is not stopped.

For once, it's not for oil or for the containment of an ideology. It's for people.

Which is really more important to us?

Peters is a graduate student of Journalism and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

BE OUR GUEST

The Daily Nebraskan will present a guest columnist each Monday. Writers from the university and community are welcome.

Must have strong writing skills and something to say. Contact Mark Baldrige c/o the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588. Or by phone at (402)-472-1782.