

Grad looking back, forward

The end is coming! The end is coming!

I sound like one of those overzealous preachers who you run into on the street corner. You know — the ones who dutifully warn people about the approaching rapture.

So-called prophets have predicted the date of the world's demise so often that their words are soundless, and we pay them as much attention as those Wednesday morning sirens left over from the Cold War — when the fear of Soviet attack was imminent.

Not so with me. I can tell you the exact date that the world as I know it will end. It's Dec. 16, 1995 — the date that I graduate from college and elevate to a different plane, a higher level of existence. A place sublime that many refer to as "the real world."

Looking back on my college career with almost 20/20 hindsight, I now wonder if it lived up to all of my expectations. All the high school counselors I talked to and all the movies I watched told me that college would be the most glorious time of my life.

Faced with insurmountable odds, I would team up with a group of people who, under the weight of tremendous pressure, would bond together in one strong friendship that would dissolve only after death.

So, I'm a romantic — sue me.

In truth, college has surpassed my expectations, and God has given me a lot to be thankful for.

I'm thankful first of all to the U.S. government, which was willing to finance my college education for the past five years. Many people around the world would fight for the opportunity to live in America and receive the education that I have so often taken for granted.

I'm thankful to my parents who, with the responsibility of five kids on their shoulders, slipped me money here and there when they could.

I'm thankful to my professors who went above and beyond the call of duty. Especially those in the



Chaka Johnson

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criminal justice department who after years of teaching continue to look on it as a joy and a serious responsibility.

I'm thankful for all of the memories. In college, I've had the chance to experience life more fully than many people who've had the responsibility of a nine-to-five job.

There were times when my friends and I were able to take off for the weekend on various road trips. I remember one particular road trip from Colorado to California that took us much longer than it was supposed to because we had three carloads of girls and couldn't synchronize our bathroom breaks.

I remember sleeping out under the stars by a lake in Yankton, S.D., and scaling up the sides of rocks in Boulder, Colo.

And the friendships created through these memories are everlasting. I remember running wildly through the halls of the engineering building at the University of Colorado while a group of us played assassins — a practice that abruptly ended one night when I rounded a corner and pulled my fake gun on a

security guard.

I remember running up and down the dorms during the summer sessions and getting a whole group of students to play sardines with us in the darkness of a Boulder night.

And I remember returning home from spring break to the news that one of my good friends had died in a car accident that morning. About six of us travelled to his funeral in Texarcana, Texas. And though Chip's death was devastating, the time that the six of us spent together has become one of those rare lifetime memories.

Also, I am thankful for all of the ideas that this whole experience has stuffed into my head.

I've learned everything from mathematics to creative writing. I can do derivatives and integrals and then write about what the experience made me feel like.

I've learned about different people from different backgrounds whose native language and understanding differ markedly from my own experiences.

I've learned 20 different things about Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson that I never wanted to know and won't tell you because, believe me, you don't want to know either.

College has far exceeded my expectations, but I fully expect my life to get better and better.

College serves as both a foundation and a springboard for me. In it, I have learned more about who I am and how I deal with different challenges — and from it, I plan to catapult into that place known as the "real world."

I'm still trembling with fear over the unexpected, but writing this has made me realize how much I have to be grateful for and how much more there is left to experience in this lifetime.

So stand on the street corners and shout it out. Chaka is coming! Chaka is coming!

Johnson is a senior criminal justice major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Satire impacts life, columns

Next Wednesday, thousands of student readers across campus will feel a sense of loss.

They'll scratch their foreheads in confusion, wondering why their hearts are aching.

And then it will hit them out of the blue.

I won't be with them. Reading my column has, for many people, been a lot like heroin addiction. Once they had one dose, they were willing to lie, cheat and steal in order to get more.

It's been a privilege providing the much-neglected liberal point of view for the Daily Nebraskan. And it's been an even greater privilege providing the campus with a dose of satire and irony every Wednesday, something that is often neglected in the Midwest.

It would sometimes come as a shock to discover that people really believed that I held up the circulation desk with a water pistol and had my apartment walls strewn with deer heads.

But that was a part of my mission: to introduce people to liberalism and satire, a rather heady combination.

One of my great journalist models (whose name I have unfortunately forgotten) once wrote a satirical column for the Des Moines Register outlining an underground movement by disgruntled Iowans who were planning to secede from the Union. The National Guard had been called in by President Ford, said this former editor. Several Iowans wrote in, expressing panic and dismay, wondering why they hadn't heard about it.

That column inspired me for years.

However, many people might feel that satire is a lesser art form — that serious commentary is a far more important pathway for young journalists to take.

Naturally, I disagree. Both are



Debra Cumberland

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important. However, satire fills a far different need than so-called "serious commentary."

First of all, satire is an extremely difficult form to master. In order to write satire successfully, you have to walk a very fine line between serious commentary and farce.

A fine example of satire would be Mark Twain's comment on his journey to Genoa, where he saw "two skulls of Christopher Columbus: one when he was a boy, and one when he was a man."

Because satire is a form of humor, it allows people to laugh at themselves, a much better way to enable people to see the incredible absurdities in themselves and in society. One might compare it to frosted miniwheats: a sugar coating around something otherwise not so

edible. People are much more likely to accept criticism through humor than through what they might otherwise perceive as preaching.

Satire (especially political satire) is also a means of survival for people, especially those living in oppressive regimes. Because it is a subversive art form, it enables a writer to critique a society/government without necessarily appearing to do so, enabling them to continue to write and stay alive.

These are only a few of the reasons why I am so fond of satire, and why I have chosen to write satirical columns so often. Having spent much of my misguided youth reading satirical writers and listening to Tom Lehrer, satire has just become a part of who I am.

Writing for the Daily Nebraskan has also become a part of who I am. I've enjoyed sharing my unique perspective on the world with all of you. As always, writing has helped clarify how I feel about what is going on in the world around me.

It's also been exciting to see that my columns have had an impact. After writing about how I held up the circulation desk workers with a water pistol, I noticed that many of the library staff either kept their distance, or checked out my books at lightning speed. It's nice to know that you're appreciated.

For those who are confused, I will take these last few lines to clear up any mysteries. I don't own guns, I don't abuse my cat, I don't hunt, and I don't vote Republican.

However, I am still waiting for that dinner invitation from Tom Osborne. After all those years of catering for his sweaty athletes, I still feel that he owes me something. Now that he's going off to play Florida, the least he can do is send me an invitation.

If he does that, I'll take the jinx off of the football team.

Cumberland is a graduate student of English and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

From the

INTERNET

And they said it couldn't be done ...

The following quotes have been circulating in certain e-mail circles for some time. Hope you enjoy the look back!

"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons." — Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949.

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers." — Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943.

"I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year." — The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957.

"But what ... is it good for?" — Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968, commenting on the microchip.

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home." — Ken Olson, president, chairman and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977.

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us." — Western Union internal memo, 1876.

"The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?" — David Sarnoff's associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

"The concept is interesting and well-formed, but in order to earn better than a 'C,' the idea must be feasible." — A Yale University management professor in response to Fred Smith's paper proposing reliable overnight delivery service. (Smith went on to found Federal Express Corp.)

"Who the hell wants to hear actor talk?" — H.M. Warner, Warner Bros., 1927.

"I'm just glad it'll be Clark Gable who's falling on his face and not Gary Cooper." — Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in "Gone With the Wind."

"A cookie store is a bad idea. Besides, the market research reports say America likes crispy cookies, not soft and chewy cookies like you make." — Response to Debbi Fields' idea of starting Mrs. Fields' Cookies.

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out." — Decca Recording Co. rejecting The Beatles, 1962.

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." — Lord Kelvin, president, Royal Society, 1885.

"If I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can't do this." — Spencer Silver on the work that led to the unique adhesives for 3-M "Post-It" Notepads.

"So we went to Atari and said,

"If I had thought about it, I wouldn't have done the experiment. The literature was full of examples that said you can't do this."

SPENCER SILVER

Post-It note inventor

"Hey, we've got this amazing thing, even built with some of your parts, and what do you think about funding us? Or we'll give it to you. We just want to do it. Pay our salary, we'll come work for you." And they said, "No." So then we went to Hewlett-Packard, and they said, "Hey, we don't need you. You haven't got through college yet." — Apple Computer Inc. founder Steve Jobs on attempts to get Atari and H-P interested in his and Steve Wozniak's personal computer.

"Professor Goddard does not know the relation between action and reaction and the need to have something better than a vacuum against which to react. He seems to lack the basic knowledge ladled out daily in high schools." — 1921 New York Times editorial about Robert Goddard's revolutionary rocket work.

"You want to have consistent and uniform muscle development across all of your muscles? It can't be done. It's just a fact of life. You just have to accept inconsistent muscle development as an unalterable condition of weight training." — Response to Arthur Jones, who solved the "unsolvable" problem by inventing Nautilus.

"Drill for oil? You mean drill into the ground to try and find oil? You're crazy." — Drillers who Edwin L. Drake tried to enlist to his project to drill for oil in 1859.

"Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau." — Irving Fisher, professor of economics, Yale University, 1929.

"Airplanes are interesting toys but of no military value." — Marechal Ferdinand Foch, professor of strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.

"Everything that can be invented has been invented." — Charles H. Duell, commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, 1899.

"Louis Pasteur's theory of germs is ridiculous fiction." — Pierre Pachtet, professor of physiology at Toulouse, 1872.

"The abdomen, the chest and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon." — Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon-Extraordinary to Queen Victoria, 1873.

"640K ought to be enough for anybody." — Bill Gates, 1981.

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.