

Moving up

Purchase helps clear path to writer heaven

You're living for nothing now; I hope you're keeping some kind of record.

—Leonard Cohen

I bought this computer, the most money I've ever spent on any one thing.

A lap top. Everyone says that's cool. You know, a LAP TOP? The kind of thing that puts you, for sheer coolness, almost on a par with someone who's been to Czechoslovakia.

That cool. Or almost. And everyone wants to be as cool as you. All of which has reached marvelously in me: the money, the unfamiliar stress of having scaled the heights of coolness — I spent the weekend sick to my stomach.

It doesn't take a Freudian Junior Decoder Ring to figure that out — though a year ago I might not have made the connection: I am worried/sick.

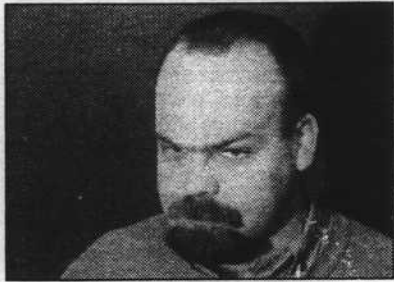
I'm not used to being made aware of the connection between my body and my self. I was a person who wanted to live in dreams; increasingly, I have found myself reminded that the dreams will be short in any case: I am mortal. Socrates and me.

Well, well.
*And spending that much money (two semesters' worth in terms of tuition) on something so devastatingly cool has quite caught my breath. Indeed, even now, I am deep in the throws of nausea — the feeling of vertigo.

I have suffered for many years — most of my life — from the terrible twin fears of spending money and looking cool.

I know that makes me one of the buzzards, spiraling ever downward on currents of the invisible, descending on the corpse that others killed — neither a mover nor a shaker.

But I'm catching an updraft, and I'm ready to try my wings: I am prepared to brave both affluence



Mark Baldrige

"I have suffered for many years — most of my life — from the terrible twin fears of spending money and looking cool."

and hype if I have to — I'm ready for my close-up, Mr. Devill. Er, um, DeMille.

I am flustered, I am giddy. I am so happy to be here. Got my shades on.

All in an attempt to synchronize my thoughts with my writing in new and better ways.

I work so (expletive deleted) hard for you people, and it's not fair that I have to wait my turn for computer time with the rest of the pedestrians. My fine and sensitive nature demands a more accommodating world; hence, my purchase: I'm only doing it for you.

I don't mean you, of course. I mean them. "Them" you.

You know who you are.
This is a secret message. Get out your code books. I'm writing for "them" you. Them you who are reading for me.

I have a bet to settle with the future and a late start at the gate, but let me tell you, I'm coming up to meet you.

This is a message to posterity: Come out with your hands up.

I finally realize what boasting is — it is a message through time to the future, for the gods who are remembered from the past. The immortals. They are there at the end of time, of human memory, looking back at us: Shakespeare, Goethe, Cervantes — who will live as long as humankind lasts.

Boasting is a shout that tries to pass beyond those hearers who hear into history. "I HAVE NOT YET BEGUN TO FIGHT," some schmuck announces, and plunges, head first, into destiny.

And the devil takes the hind most.

There are lesser stars in that heaven, of course, Kafka, Montaigne, Mishima — and lesser still. But it is this heaven to which I aspire, the heaven of writers: those gods who made the stories from which we make the world.

Again and again remarking it. So no, I do not mind a little phobia, a little terror, a little mountain of debt (who among you never wanted for anything?) And I will NOT believe the hype and I will NOT be my best press secretary, my own PR, but I tell you now:

My name is Ozymandias: Hear me roar.

And so I sit, sick at home on a Monday afternoon, tip-tapping away on my expensive cool new toy, eating my comfort foods — the comfort foods of many a poor starving artist: Kraft Macaroni and Cheese (a luxury) and sweet soda pop. Planning my takeover of the world.

My God, I feel like one of those little mice — what are their names, Pinky and the Brain? But I tell you now, the world will remember this silly cartoon years into the future because I wrote it here, now. I will take them, squealing, by the ear, into history.

This is a message in a bottle, to those who stand looking: Send Help Quick! This era sucks!

Baldrige is a senior English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

U.S. budget problem intensifies politics

David Broder

"We Americans have produced a system for running our government and choosing our top leader that no other nation can match. Luckily for them."

Having scrambled matters as thoroughly as the Dulles taxi line, both Clinton and the Republicans now watch nervously to see which of them gets blamed.

Blame 'em both. They deserve it.

The endless budget battle now has overlapped into the start of a front-loaded, foreshortened presidential nomination season for the Republicans, providing the putative favorite, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan., a perfect excuse for avoiding such supposedly significant events as the South Carolina debate.

The next budget deadline is set for Jan. 26, barely 17 days before Iowa begins a cascade of contests that will settle the Republican nomination, possibly as early as New Hampshire on Feb. 20, almost certainly by California on March 26. There is no time for second thoughts.

Without Dole, most of the others are campaigning as if they were running for sheriff. There are great issues to be discussed in 1996. The future of Medicare, Medicaid and the welfare safety net — all matters of intense controversy between Clinton and the Republican Congress — are important enough to fuel a national election.

But the Republicans have a penchant for the picayune. In South Carolina, for example, Pat Buchanan reminded the audience that he had stood foursquare for keeping women out of The Citadel, the military college in Charleston, and for keeping the Confederate battle flag flying over the state capitol in Columbia. The next president, presumably, will have a lot to say about those questions.

On the other hand, there is Sen. Dick Lugar, R-Ind., who is afflicted with the crippling notion that an important office deserves a serious campaign. So when Buchanan asked a barbed question about why we should be wasting money on foreign aid, when Medicare and Medicaid are facing cuts, Lugar told the audience just how useful foreign aid had been in disarming Russia and nudging the Middle East toward peace.

The reward for his thoughtfulness is that he is running about even in the polls with Alan Keyes.

As the visitor said at Dulles, we Americans "do have a knack."

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WASHINGTON — Unless you believe that the Russians are still secretly messing with our weather, it is clear that the gods are angry. The great East Coast blizzard of '96 — which made a routine three-hour return trip from the Republican presidential debate in Columbia, S.C., a three-day ordeal — is proof enough of that.

Standing at Dulles Airport in Northern Virginia, late on the third night of the adventure and almost within reach of home, I joined a milling crowd of weary travelers being sorted into occasional taxis by two very overworked and harassed dispatchers. Their system was a fine one in theory. When you reached the curb, one dispatcher gave you a number between 1 and 100. When a taxi showed up, the other dispatcher would call a number and then fill the cab with other travelers — irrespective of number — headed for the same general destination.

I'm sure the system seemed efficient to the executive — in a warm office — who designed it. But by the time one dispatcher had sorted out the claims of the five people who desperately wanted to fill the "one seat to Bethesda" in an imminently departing cab, he had forgotten which number was next. Everyone bellowed out his own as the right answer and the dispatcher chose at random.

An Englishman, standing in the slush after a much-delayed trans-Atlantic flight, looked over and remarked, "You Americans do have a knack."

Well, it's true, we do. And if the Dulles taxi lottery doesn't convince you, the budget negotiations and the presidential primary system certainly should. We Americans have produced a system for running our government and choosing our top leader that no other nation can match.

Luckily for them.

The basic task of a budget is simply to finance the operations of government for the next year. Budget-making is largely in the hands of Congress, but in our Constitution, the president, through the veto power, is part of the legislative process. Since the 1920s, when a statute allowed the president first crack at presenting a spending plan for the year, that role has been enhanced.

In 1995, President Clinton took a pass on that responsibility. The budget he submitted ignored the need, which he had previously acknowledged and the 1994 elections had clearly reinforced, to move the government toward ending deficits. So the congressional Republicans went ahead on their own. Periodically, and not at all helpfully, Clinton would pop up with new budget suggestions of his own, progressively closer to the Republican plan.

Meantime, however, he was vetoing appropriations bills, and the Republicans, instead of revising them sufficiently to meet his objections, as is normally the case, held them hostage — thus forcing two partial shutdowns of government.

A HERO!

Powell would bring hope back to America

Will America's new president be Sen. Bob Dole, or will we see the same old stuff with Mr. Clinton and the queen of espionage, Hillary Rodham Clinton?

General Colin Powell is a man that represents exactly what the United States is in desperate search of, a HERO!

He is the essence of the United States, a brave leader who helped lead an army to stop a crazed dictator.

General Powell holds the power to change the way the different colors, religions and nationalities interact with each other in American society.

Our great country is the multicultural melting pot of the world, and we act the role with perfection.

But the races are not one in 1996, nor have they been in the great history.

It is Colin Powell's responsibility to the world that he run for President.

Powell would have been the absolute best candidate for President. It's too bad he declined to enter the mad race for the country's trust.

Powell, an African-American, and a genuine inspiration in the United States community, also could be the single most influential man in race relations this country has ever witnessed.

We need somebody real. Powell is a real man, he is an American war hero, upholds a stable family, and is a minority.

As much as his skin color should not matter in the race for president, the reality, sad as it may be, is that it does. The reason being is that so many of people in our society have an intolerable ignorance. It's truly



Bob Ray

"It is Colin Powell's responsibility to the world that he run for President."

ugly!

The impact Powell could make would be tremendous. It's about time that the American public stops voting for a generation of World War II veterans. That entire generation is trapped in the mind-set that WWII was just yesterday and things shouldn't change. I've got a big wake-up call for those gimpy old men: Sit down, find your remote, turn on the television and retire!

If Powell would run for president, he could win, and the monotonous tradition of lawyers and millionaires would come to an end on Capitol Hill. At least for the time being.

The cynical mustard gas that has invaded our great country is holding us back, and the international world is realizing that our society needs a serious tuck.

The United States comes to everyone's aid, what we need to do is concentrate on our own people

first, set a new example for the rest of the world, and begin setting the tone for the way this globe works as we did in the past.

Does anyone remember when Cal Ripken Jr. played his 2,130th game just this September?

If you watched the pre- and postgame, you'll know what I am trying to say. Almost all of America watched this man, a professional baseball player, walking around a stadium filled with an emotion that literally seemed to glow out of the television and into our hearts.

I mean it, not only myself, but all of the people around me were seriously moved by this moment.

And that is the essence of America. We are a people in search of a glorious hero, an individual, whether male, female, black, white, yellow or whatever.

Our society is lacking a hope, a hope that America was founded on, the future. We need to regain that incredible feeling and excitement.

The last thing we all need is another old fart reading from a cue card and smothering the public with promises and statistics.

You know what, just get the damn job done, speak to us from your heart and take some risks. If American politicians can't perform those tasks, then I suggest they go into another profession, like selling used cars!

We have to get our hope and optimism back; we need a restoration period of sorts. A time to re-evaluate our thoughts and morals.

We need to recapture America's youth and spirit, and despite what the cynics may say, it's never too late, we all need to remember that!

Ray is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

BE OUR GUEST

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

Must have strong writing skills and something to say. Contact Doug Peters c/o the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588, or e-mail at letters@unlinfo.unl.edu. Or by phone at (402)-472-1782.