

Wide awake

Students inflict sleep deprivation on themselves

I once read somewhere that Leonardo da Vinci only slept two or three hours every night, so great was his genius as an inventor and artist.

Granted, not all of us are gifted with such genius, but we do find ourselves pressed for time with the need to make the most of our waking moments.

For many people, this is the source of that wide-eyed feeling while lying in bed at two in the morning, or the desire to suddenly get up and go see what the corner gas mart has in the way of discounted foodstuffs. Also known as The Big "I."

Insomnia. Of course, there are bonuses to being habitually addicted to the night. Twenty-four hour video stores, all-night Cablevision, stop-and-shops on every other street corner, and an endless array of 1-800 (or 1-900) talk lines, are but a few of the perks our world has created for the sleepless multitudes.

But medical fact cannot be dismissed by a mere flip of the TV remote. The human body requires rest, whether the mind wants to acknowledge it or not. Studies have shown that once the brain is deprived of sleep for an extended period of time, judgment, motor skills, cognitive faculties and reasoning ability all are affected.

In short, YOU WILL GO CRAZY.

There's truth to the saying, "better rested, better tested," even though the pace of modern life has lulled many into believing the contrary.

A vicious circle is thus born, the more we try to cram into a single day, the more tired we become and



Fred Poyner

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the less time and effort we put into individual projects and responsibilities.

Perhaps the notion, if not the appeal, of having eight out of every 24 hours set aside as pure rest is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, along with the concept of the nuclear family, the Amazon rain forests and the practice of cursive writing.

My speculation is about where the line is drawn between someone who, for whatever reason, is an insomniac, and someone who

doesn't have a choice as to when they get to sleep. Work schedules affect the number of people in both groups, without a doubt. Especially when you consider the economic grind a lot of family providers find themselves locked into these days.

College students form their own category. Nine times out of 10, if a student blames a poor performance regarding a test on being tired, it's because they waited to the last minute and stayed up all night to finish that two-week project in question. Or it might have something to do with all those empty beer bottles out in the kitchen.

What's worse, many take this practice of procrastination with them when they graduate. And then later wonder why they can't hold a job. This is as much deprivation of the spirit as of the body. Insomnia of this kind is self-inflicted, friends, and if you suffer from it, I have no sympathy for you.

Remember da Vinci, and be encouraged to excel without using lack of sleep as an excuse for bad grades.

To the students out there, the next time you're in a restless state, stop to consider the guy working in the convenience store across from your apartment complex.

Is he there because he has trouble sleeping and needs to fill the time, or is he there out of your need for that midnight snack? Maybe you should ask him next time you pull an all-nighter. It could be an eye-opening experience.

To sleep. Perchance to dream.

Poyner is a graduate student in museum studies and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Buchanan becomes this week's top pick

Looking genuinely pained, a longtime friend said: "Do you really endorse Lamar Alexander for president?"

Yes, I do. At least at that moment I did. As I explained, Alexander sent me a red plaid shirt exactly like the one he wears to show he's a regular guy instead of a rich lawyer and opportunistic office-seeker.

But that was then. This is now. And for a mere flannel shirt — nice as it is — nobody can buy my enthusiasm that cheaply. So I've abandoned Lamar.

For the rest of this presidential year, I intend to change my loyalty at least once every week or two.

That's really a lot more fun than the approach taken by most people in my line of work.

Some are liberals for President Clinton now and will be for him no matter what he says or does.

Others are moderate Republicans and are committed to Bob Dole or — in their most politically erotic dreams — Colin Powell, a second-rate Ike.

Hardly anybody who writes a column is for Pat Buchanan because he is this year's political bogeyman.

Buchanan has become such a frightening creature to the mainstream media that I wouldn't be surprised to read that he is suspected of secretly eating broiled Mexican babies.

Liberal commentators screech that Buchanan is a fascist, a Nazi, a racist, an anti-Semite, a threat to world peace and domestic harmony, and a vicious enemy of the precious right of a female to snuff out the life of any inconvenient fetus in her tummy.

But is Buchanan really that awful? Maybe, but who's perfect?

So I've decided that for the moment I am a Buchanan supporter.

That can change, and it probably will. But this week I'm for Pat, and I will try to defend some of his positions.

Let us consider the question of illegal immigrants, especially those who sneak across the border from Mexico.

As any Pat-watcher knows, he seems to be fearful that if we don't seal our southern border, eventually we all will be forced to dine on refried beans and name all our children Jose.

So liberals say that Buchanan is a crazed nationalist, a bigot, and they suspect that in private he refers to Hispanics as beaners.

But let us look at the issue of our borders without getting all emotional.

Is there anything wrong with foreigners who want to live in this country going through the procedures that our immigration laws require?

When it comes to borders, most countries are tough. The same holds true for illegal immigrants: Try going to Mexico and saying: "Hey, I want to live



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here indefinitely, and if I can't get a job, I want some kind of welfare, medical care, educational opportunity for my kids, and maybe even a pension plan."

Some guy with a mustache would say, "Hey, gringo, you nuts?"

In truth, Mexico, while it has nice beaches and other tourist attractions, is not a very nice neighbor. Besides doing nothing to prevent its surplus citizens from sneaking into this country, it is a corrupt narco-state that pumps tons of drugs into this country. Its police and politicians — a really sleazy crowd — are owned by the drug bosses.

And anything that contributes to drug traffic in this country — which Mexico does every day — should be considered a hostile act.

Is it the fault of the average working Mexican? Those honest folk who want to escape their miserable lives for the joys of living in this country?

Yes, in a way it is their fault. They've had their own country for many years, and if they allow themselves to be run by a bunch of corrupt pocket-stuffers, that's their problem.

They've had more than enough time and opportunity to revolt and march their sleazebag rulers to the wall and — snap, crackle, pop — do away with them.

But what do they do? They put up with the crooks and try to sneak into this country to make a living working on a dead-chicken assembly line. You call that ambition?

If Mexico is sincere about wanting to improve itself, it would stop pushing drugs and border hopping. Instead, it would invite us to invade and seize the entire country and turn it into the world's greatest golf resort.

Let us be open about this. There is no reason for Mexico to be such a mess except that it is run by Mexicans, who have clearly established that they don't know what the heck they are doing.

Just name one thing that Mexico has done this century that has been of any genuine use to the rest of this planet. Besides giving us tequila.

See? You can't. If you are honest, you will admit that it is kind of a useless country. And before its entire population sneaks across the border, we should seize it and make it a colony.

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Feminism

Men and women should have equal rights

I was browsing through my dictionary the other day when the definition of a very familiar word — feminism — caught my eye.

My 1962 Webster's New School and Office dictionary defines feminism as:

"A condition ascribed to men apparently lacking in the chief masculine traits; the cult of advocating for women full equality with men in regard to political rights, working conditions, social standing, etc; propaganda on behalf of 'women's rights.'"

OK, so I'm in dire need of a more recent dictionary.

According to this definition, a feminist man is a fairy, lacking the all-important "masculine traits." A feminist woman is evidently a witch. Equal rights as cult activity? I hadn't thought of it that way. I didn't think it was possible to pack so much raw contempt into a dictionary definition.

But it gets better. A prominent Christian fundamentalist once said that feminism encouraged women to become lesbians, leave their husbands, kill their children, and practice communism.

Maybe that's why I didn't consider myself to be a feminist until a few years ago.

Part of it has to do with my upbringing. My parents were hippies. They were generally egalitarian in outlook. I was not taught that male was better than female or that black was better than white. My parents never told me that being female meant that certain parts of the world would be off-limits.

Being female wasn't an issue until I got to grade school. Girls were expected to be quiet, fastidious and studious. I was active, assertive and inquisitive, so they called me a "tomboy" and hoped I'd grow out of



Jennifer Mapes

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it. I didn't grow out of it. I'm still independent and inclined to stick up for myself, but I'm too old to be called a tomboy. I've found that "feminist" is one of the milder terms used to describe women like me.

I used to think that if some woman was being mistreated, it was her problem for letting people treat her that way. It won't happen to me, I told myself, because I am me, and I am invincible.

Naturally, it did. "It," in my case, was sexual harassment. In the simplest terms, I was forced to quit a job I liked because I was being sorely mistreated by a misogynist creep. The creep happened to be my manager.

He didn't like women. He particularly disliked me. My presence in the workplace irritated him. I learned to do my job well, which annoyed him even more. So he tried to make things difficult for

me. He would not order supplies when I asked for them. He sabotaged my work area and left nasty notes on the wall. He left pictures of naked women lying around where I would be sure to see them.

In short, the manager was more interested in ruining my day than in making sure the workplace ran smoothly. My work environment was at best depressing, and at worst, charged with mutual hostility and loathing.

The manager made it impossible for me to do my job. So I quit. They hired another young woman to replace me. She lasted fewer than three months. The person doing my old job now is a man in his mid-60s. I guess they've learned their lesson.

It's not that we haven't made some progress toward equality in the 20th century. A few generations ago, women had to fight for the simple considerations that I take for granted — the right to vote, for example.

But there always will be people out there who can't see past my gender. I'm a woman, and that's all they need to know. I never will earn their respect.

To me it's obvious that women should have equal rights and opportunities. It stands to reason that a woman should have the same options as her male counterparts. Women are just as much human beings as men. To advocate equality seems like common sense, not cult activity.

I believe that opportunities are out there, and jerks are inevitable. I will make the most of my abilities in spite of them.

If that makes me a feminist, then I'm pleased to be one.

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