

Mark
ALBRACHT

Money-minded Eccentricity is OK if you're rich



I will never understand the mentality of anybody who utters the sentence, "A million dollars? How could anyone spend that much money?" To this, my perpetual response is "What, are you kidding?"

It seems to me that not knowing how to spend a million dollars indicates a certain lack of creativity — especially when you consider that a paltry million doesn't even constitute wealth nowadays. I once read a statistic that said the average American earns \$1.2 million dollars in his lifetime. This means that even with a cool million in lotto winnings a person would still have to scrape up another \$200,000 along the way just to be average. Early retirement is obviously out of the question.

In fairness to all those who can't fathom spending any figure of money with seven digits or more, it's not usually a mere million that stumps them, they're more often baffled by how they'd spend a \$50 million Powerball jackpot. That's a bit more understandable, but still, if \$50 million stumps you, then don't harbor any think-tank aspirations.

As cruel, ironic, spiteful fate seems to prefer it, no one ever wins the lottery except the people who have the smallest inkling of what they might do with that much moolah. People who, when pressed by the Prize Patrol's happy microphone, offer, "Umm, I might buy a new truck." A new truck? With \$50 million who could be so adventurous? And if it's not this sort of person who gets the lucky number, then it's the octogenarians who, though they might have creative uses in mind, are thrown into cardiac arrest by the thrill of victory.

I have not once seen nor heard of a laid-back, Lucky-Charms-eatin', game-show-watching Generation-X slacker claiming the big payday. That's a shame. There's the axiom that youth is wasted on the young, but it's my opinion that money is wasted on the old. Slackers would by far be the best recipients of untold millions. Part of being a slacker is to daydream all day about what one would do if one had more money than God, which \$50 million is not,

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but at least it'd be more money than one's father.

I would be the ultimate recipient of a mass fortune. In fact, \$50 million wouldn't be nearly enough to suit me. Fifty-million dollars gets me a greasy spoon compared to the sort of silverware I want in my mouth. I'm talking hobnobbing with billionaires. Why? Because money turns strange people into eccentrics. That's what I want, to buy eccentricity. Would Dennis Rodman be half as peculiar without his NBA salary or his book sales or his lucrative endorsements? No.

I have off-the-wall tastes which I am burning to turn into off-the-wall hobbies ... like architecture. I have a passion for architecture, so much so that, had I not been horrendous at math (and unable to draw), I would have been an architecture major. I constantly conjure images of buildings which I would design as an architect. But they are destined to stay in my mind. That is, unless I were a billionaire.

As a billionaire, I could impose my unique architectural vision on the world. Structures inspired by

crustaceans and mollusks would make lovely additions to any city, I think, as would fungus and Dr. Seuss-like buildings. Why let sensibility get in the way of money and eccentricity?

I would also use my billions to become a movie mogul, following in the footsteps of another eccentric blue-blood, Howard Hughes. He was definitely on the right track when it came to spending his fortune wisely. I'll never understand why he dropped out of sight while the going was good.

I would take small, character-driven plots, sort of indie-film like, and fill them with gratuitous violence, sex and special effects. I would bring back 3-D glasses and smell-o-rama. I would put in digital dinosaurs and tornadoes and have aliens blow up the White House. I would take the "indie" right out of independent film-making. I would fix the Oscars. I would tear down the "Hollywood" sign and replace it with my favorite word: "Careen." Eccentricity is the key.

Of course, becoming a billionaire would also have its down side. People would begin to expect a sort of civic responsibility from me — help the needy, donate to the university, or whatever. With this, my paid-for eccentricity would come in very handy. After a never-ending slew of charity solicitations I would, no doubt, begin to feel particularly Republican whereupon I would tell the tree-hugging, baby-seal-saving, cancer-cure-searching bevy of gnats to hold on a sec and then toss my car phone out the window. Which, to a billionaire, is like tossing out a used Kleenex, I would think.

As I think about it, annoying phone calls may not be the only bad thing about being a billionaire. I can see where that much money might actually not be enough to contain my bustling eccentricity. I think what I really need is to be a multi-trillionaire. After all, how else could I build a moon colony?

Albracht is a junior philosophy major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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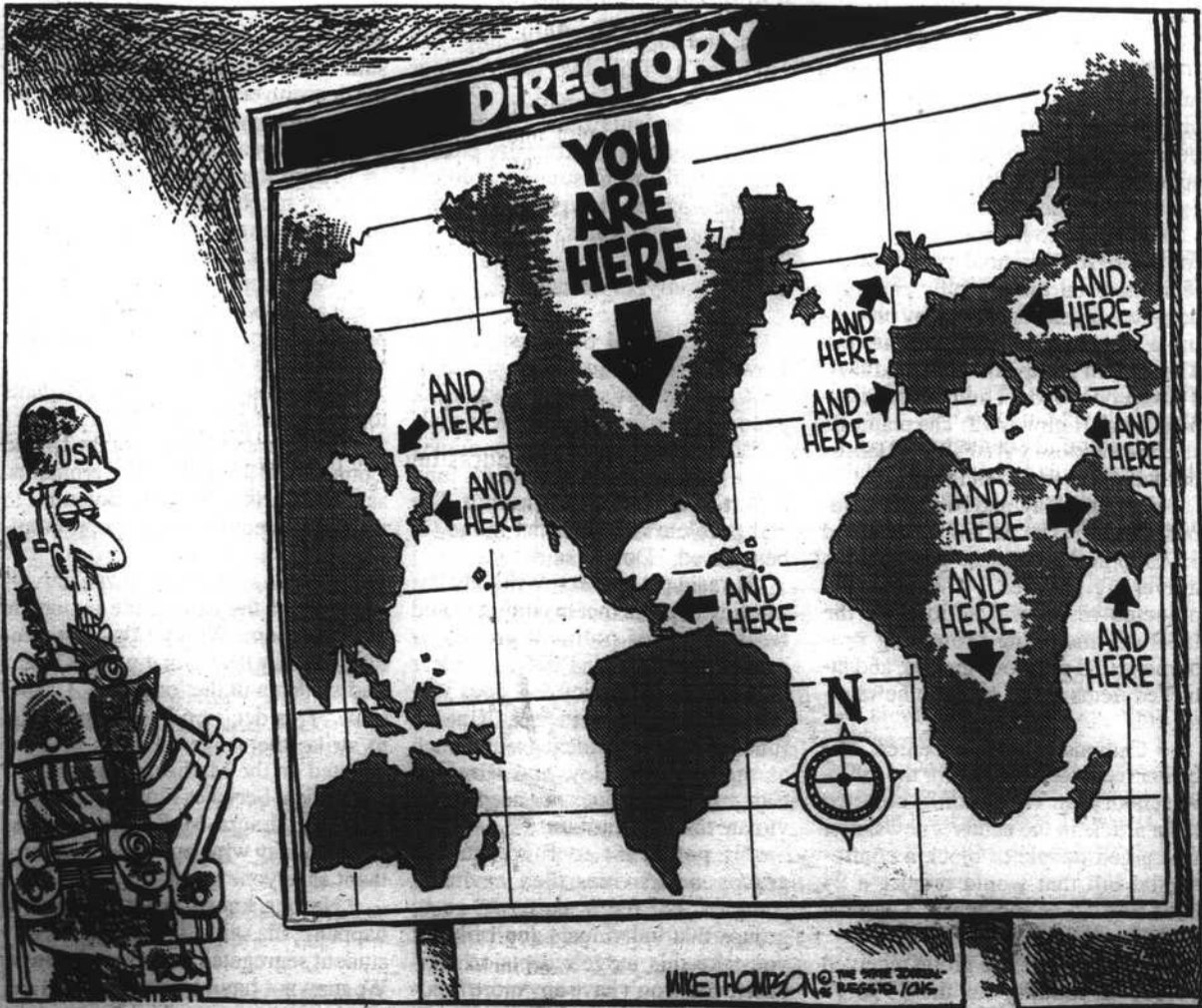
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