

To sleep, perchance to dream

Waking up only chance to make life livable



MATT PETERSON is a senior English and news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

At 2 in the morning on the day of my deadline, the topic of sleep comes to mind. And being only a couple days removed from those four glorious nights of drunken debauchery otherwise known as Labor Day Weekend, I'm sure I'm not the only one.

At first glance, a column devoted to the subject of sleep may seem a waste of time. Considering, however, that artist Andy Warhol once devoted an eight-hour film to observing a man in the throes of slumber, this particular waste of time pales in comparison. And whereas, the intent of Warhol's "genius" proved to be rather obscure, I hope this column, and the cheesy metaphor herein, can successfully remove the glaze from more than a few pairs of eyes.

An opening like that is bound to demand a yawn from the heartiest of readers (after all, it drew more than one such yawn during its composition), but if you can stand to shun the Sandman for the next 10 minutes, I'd like to proffer your complimentary wake-up call. And since you made the Herculean effort of dragging yourself out of bed this morning anyway, you might as well be awake, too.

As an English major with three years of higher education under my belt, I see myself as somewhat of an authority on sleep. To put it briefly, as I rarely do, me and the snooze button are pretty tight. What I haven't learned from firsthand experience, I've managed to glean from the actions, or should I say inactions, of my friends.

Eight hours of sleep per night is good - 10 is better, especially if those extra two hours come at the expense of a morning lecture because, let's face it, you're going to sleep through class anyway.

Sleep also tends to be self-

perpetuating - the more you get, the more you need. But then again, there's no such thing as too much of a good thing, right?

Now, before I lose the more diligent members of my audience - those non-trads and honors students, engineers and architects among you who subsist on antacids and ephedrine ("trucker speed") over the course of the academic year - I'll attempt to make my point.

Being "asleep" is a relative term. Obviously, most people equate sleep with the nightly routine of inciting unconsciousness. But I know quite a few people who have been asleep since I met them and have shown no signs of true consciousness, yet. They aren't comatose. Somnambulism (sleep-walking) doesn't seem a likely diagnosis, either. Perhaps an example, albeit a rather bizarre one, will clarify this admittedly ambiguous metaphor. As I child, I can remember having an incredibly vivid and eerily progressive (it would actually pick up where it left off on subsequent nights) dream. This dream proved to be so realistic that, for a short time, I actually believed it to be reality and my waking life to be the actual dream - I'll be the first to admit, I was a funny little tyke.

But whether they know it or not, there are far too many people who live their lives in a similar manner; every day, their ambitions extend no further than

their daily routine. They slide by in class or at work with the minimal degree of effort and long for that moment when the bell sounds or the whistle blows signaling their right to do nothing for the rest of the day. Eventually they go to sleep in preparation for the next day's routine, and inevitably, their dreams prove more significant than their waking lives.

Ultimately, most of the people I know simply lack any semblance of direction in their waking moments. Now, I must step lightly to avoid the stumbling blocks of hypocrisy. After 21 years of misdirection, I'm still fairly groggy myself. And although I'm still uncertain of where it is I'm headed, I've finally come to terms with where I am and why I am here.

From what I've heard, these are the best years of our lives. It's the last time we are allowed to legitimately put our inhibitions to sleep, as it were, and enjoy ourselves. College is the proverbial

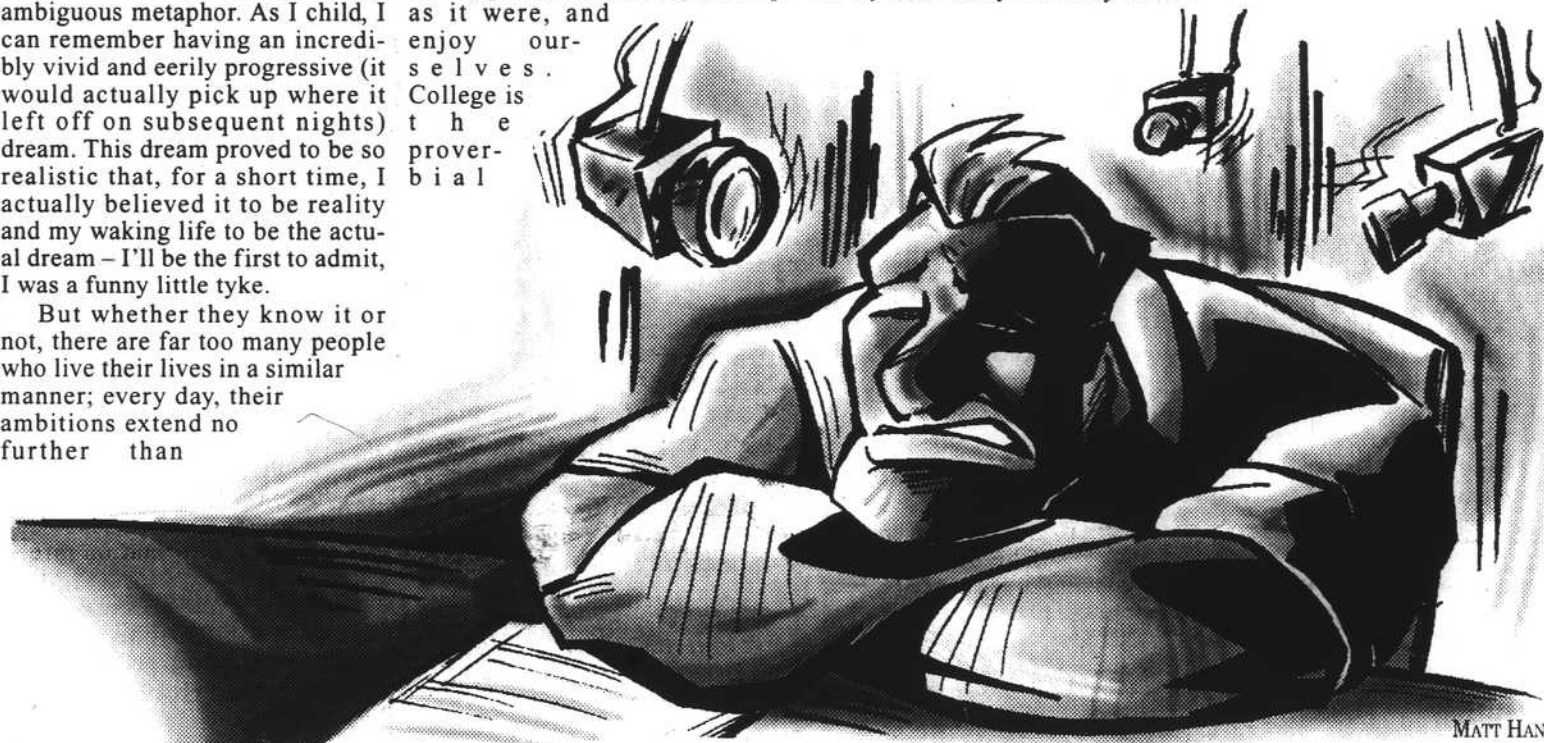
snooze button, and the dreams and nightmares which ensue during these four to five years will have the most lasting influence upon the rude awakening that is - drum roll, please - the real world.

During high school, I fell under the tyrannical, though fairly entertaining, influence of a journalism adviser who demanded that, "We are not here to do what we like but to learn to like what we do." Upon entering college, I, like so many other wide-eyed freshmen, was under the false pretense that this misguided philosophy would hold true at the next level.

The daunting process of choosing a major and beginning an undergraduate program upon my enrollment scared me to death. As far as I knew at the time, these were the decisions that would shape my career and thus the rest of my life. Only recently have I

accepted that we are not here to learn to like what we do, but rather to learn what we like to do. And it is that passion which will inevitably wake each one of us from our respective slumbers.

Such passion, however, has an incredibly elusive tendency; I've been biding my time for the past three years and have yet to be truly inspired by any aspect of my education. It would seem that the real trick of the matter is to live our dreams rather than dreaming our lives. It's an idea so clichéd that another yawn seems in order; unfortunately, it takes most people a midlife crisis to live by it.



It's good to be king

Fan or not, it is your duty to visit Graceland



TED TAYLOR is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan assignment reporter.

It's on a street just like any other busy street in any other decent-sized town.

There's your Burger King, Taco Bell, Holiday Inn, car dealerships and dry cleaners sitting alongside four lanes of suburban city traffic.

But as you casually pass EP Motors, Texaco and the Days Inn Hotel with the guitar-shaped pool, you quickly find yourself entering a strange, surreal new world.

Welcome to Graceland.

It's not exactly the setting I imagined to find the beloved mansion and home to the King of Rock 'n' Roll. It's as far as you can get from the scene of a secluded acreage tucked away into a quiet, wooded area of Memphis that I had pictured.

Instead, if I would have (for some reason), needed to ask directions, the guy in the gas station next to the Super 8 Motel with the 24-

hour Elvis movies would have pointed me down the street to the first house on the left just passed the used car lot. "You can't miss it," he'd say.

That much is for sure.

Every corner along U.S. 55 South, which leads you to the congested Elvis Presley Boulevard, features a sign leading the way to the Graceland grounds.

Once there, you'll find a huge parking lot (\$2 a car), two of the King's private jets, a garage filled with EP's classic cars and motorcycles, a ticket center, three gift shops, a tiny movie theater and a couple of restaurants.

Beginning in the parking lot, the mood becomes fever-pitched as families start strapping small children in strollers and loading film in to one or more cameras.

But for a person like me, the Elvis un-inspired, it started to feel like I was about to enter a crazy rock 'n' roll amusement park where hours of enjoyment (and maybe an upset stomach) awaited.

As you enter the ticket center, that feeling is confirmed when you start to feel the built-up excitement and see the mass of people - all of whom are talking about the King - snaked around metal railings, a-la Worlds of Fun.

But this is the World of Elvis, and for some visiting on this day, the trip to the King's home is a pilgrim-

age. They had no problem paying \$10 to see the mansion or \$4 to see the jets or \$4.50 to see the cars.

Most just coughed up the \$18.95 to see it all - the Platinum Package.

As I stood in line waiting for the shuttle bus to take us the 100 yards across the street and up the driveway to the front doors, I couldn't help but begin to crack up.

It was just hard to comprehend that I was standing in line to board a bus to see Graceland. The home of the King, EP's hideaway, E and 'Cilla's mansion - rock 'n' roll heaven for crying out loud.

While waiting for the bus you're greeted by a group of high school and college-aged men and women who are paid to just stand there with arms extended. Small stereo headphones hang from one arm, a portable cassette tape player from the other arm.

Meet your Graceland tour guide.

There's no Elvis impersonator greeting you at the front gate before taking you on a tour of "his house." There's no gal dressed up 50s-style showing you the Jungle Room of her biggest crush.

Nope, your tour guide for the afternoon is the slow, southern drawl of a strange man on a cassette tape player hanging from your neck. And if the batteries in your player happen to be a bit worn down, the man's voice is even slower.

But in a most sincere voice, the

man on the tape tells you things about Elvis, his career, what he liked to do in the house, features of the mansion and little known facts about the Presley family. All the while the voice leads you around the house with commands like, "Now turn right and walk into the kitchen," and "Notice the ceiling of the Jungle Room and its green shag carpet."

"Elvis covered the room in carpet to absorb sound, and many nights were spent recording while the King sat on that tiger-print couch."

You get the idea.

Pricilla's soft voice is also heard throughout the tape as an additional tour guide with quotes and stories to go along with each room.

"Oh how Elvis loved to watch television," she said of the 14 TV sets scattered throughout the mansion. But upon hearing her voice, all I could think about were the "Naked Gun" movies she appeared in.

The tape thing got pretty old pretty fast. Thankfully there was no penalty for stripping off the headphones and going about the tour on your own once you left the house and entered Vernon's offices and the trophy room out back.

After walking through the trophy room, which houses all of Elvis' capes, belts, records, awards, jumpsuits and whatnot, the tour nears its end and the mood of the group

changes from excitement and interest to sorrow and sadness.

The cameras come out and people become silent as they mournfully look down upon the grave of Elvis Presley, his mother, his father and his stillborn baby brother, Jesse.

I guess they let people go up to the "Meditation Garden" freely for 90 minutes a day before the daily tours start. I was told there is always a number of people who walk up the driveway to pay their respects to the fallen King everyday.

Those must be the real fans. Those who remember what they were wearing and what they were doing the day Elvis died.

For me, the drive to Memphis was just something I had to do. I was probably alone at Graceland that day in that I don't own a single Elvis album and the closest thing to a fan I am is that I named my hound dog after him.

Going to Graceland is something that everyone should do. Whether we like to admit it or not, it is as much our duty to visit Graceland as it is to visit Washington, D.C.

Even if you don't know what color his suede shoes were, even if you don't know what kind of sandwiches he liked and even if you don't own an Elvis record, like me; you must go.

Just remember, it's the first house on the left past the used car lot. You can't miss it.