

Use it or lose it

Breaks shouldn't be wasted in front of television



TODD MUNSON is a junior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

As of 8 this morning, there are 11 days and nine hours remaining until winter break officially begins.

It's no doubt torturous to bring this up on the dawn of Dead Week. What a mean distraction, making you envision 23 days of freedom from the clutches of academia when you still have to do a semester's worth of reading in only a few days.

For myself, this winter break is going to be a change as far as winter breaks go. No more late nights watching worthless television and days spent asleep.

I've got bigger ambitions. I'm going to use this time to prepare for something most important — summer vacation.

It starts in only 151 days, eight hours and 58 minutes (assuming you're not a speed reader of course).

What makes this summer vacation important is that, without scholastic catastrophe, it will be my final one and I will make the most of every day.

For someone who lives for three months of pure freedom from responsibility, it's frightening to know that the grim reaper of the pro-

fessional work force is waiting patiently to rip out your soul and give you two weeks of vacation in return.

In retrospect, the preparations for next summer actually began last summer.

It had its usual beginning. My textbooks were sold within minutes of the final heads-or-tails answer. I par-tied like a viking until my new fortune ran dry. I passed out. I woke up a week later. I managed to pry myself off the couch by mid-June.

But not until I had a vision; no, make that a nightmare.

I awoke one morning and decided it was time for summer to begin. The morning sun peeked through the gaps in the blinds; it was going to be a great day outside. I craved adventure, but not until I lounged in bed a while longer.

By noon, I was up and dressed. Walking toward the door with my bicycle at my side, a whole new world was just a few feet away.

It was a snowy world. I had slept through the summer and awoke in the midst of a snow-covered winter.

Oh the horror. An entire summer wasted away in bed.

How can that be?

Oh the humanity.

I shuddered to consciousness and leaped to the window. No snow. The clock said 9:15 a.m.

There is a god.

From that moment forth, I vowed to milk the summer for all it was worth, in five more minutes.

By the end of the week, I finally set into the mind-set that was inspired by that dream.

“... This winter break is going to be a change. ... I'm going to use this time to prepare for something most important — summer vacation.”

I was on my bicycle by 7 each morning. I would ride out to Eastridge Pool and swim laps with a local swimming club. After finishing Coach Teri's Marine quality workout I was home by 9 a.m., ready to seek out the randomness of summer that passes you by if you stay on the couch.

I found the start of that randomness perched on my neighbor's roof.

His name was Justin, and we vaguely knew each other from a previous meeting. Now he was on the neighbor's roof laying tar in the 90-degree heat. Lucky fellow landed a job working for my landlord.

Every morning as I left for my chlorinated bath, he climbed the expressway to hell. We'd make small talk. About noon, I'd come home for my lunch break from work. He'd still be up there, covered in tar and coming to a boil. Our small talk would pick right back up. Most of the time it was about our common interest: bicycles.

After a couple of weeks, the talk about bicycles turned into talk of going on rides together. After a few rides, the talk turned to going to a couple of races. Soon, we'd become good friends and riding partners.

The randomness exploded one Saturday in August.

I rode out to Justin's house on 84th Street. The plan was to go on a long ride in preparation for a race that was a week away. Halfway there, I realized I forgot my ID and money.

Oh well, I was almost to his place, I'd be fine.

We rolled east out of town down O Street. When we reached Walton, we

decided it was time for a change of pace, and we veered our skinny, tired road bikes onto the scenic Mopac trail. We rode on the crushed limestone until it stopped at the town of Elmwood. We then headed north on Highway 1 with the help of a strong tailwind, deciding that Platte River State Park would make a nice destination.

We took a pit stop at Murdock to fill up on water at the Bulldog Tavern. Surviving cat calls of, "You boys are wearing girl's pants," we continued east down the vacant highway, looking for a sign that pointed to the park.

No dice. We rode until the highway ended at a crossroads. The sign had an arrow pointed left and said Omaha-25, Louisville 7. To the right was Syracuse 30 miles away. We just rode to the middle of nowhere.

Whoops.

"Let's ride on to Louisville.

There's a state park where we can go swimming," I suggested.

We were off. The water would be a welcome relief from the 90-degree heat. We raced each other on the descent into town. Hitting a top speed of 47 mph, we about missed the park entrance.

On the beach, with our farmer tans exposed and wearing spandex shorts over our shaved legs, we really stuck out — so much so that we were spotted by Leah, a friend who had graduated and moved on to bigger things. She was at the park camping out with some friends of hers.

In true Nebraska hospitality, she invited us to their camp for some food: chips, salsa and beer. Justin was a bit taken aback. It wasn't every day a total stranger offered you some of Milwaukee's finest.

By 5 p.m., it was time to shove off back to Lincoln. A Polaroid was snapped for posterity.

Then God went bowling.

The thunder was well off in the distance, but we were 50 miles from home and riding wasn't the smartest thing to do. We stayed for bratwursts and corn on the cob. The clouds still hovered above, and soon it would be dark. Leah wasn't worried and got a couple of extra blankets from her car.

In our spandex, Justin and I helped them polish of a cooler full of beer and then we piled into the tent amid a thunderstorm.

Sleeping in a tent with four women after a night of raucous fun sounds like the quintessential Duff Beer moment. But nothing happened except for the random magic of summer.

And for that, I'm grateful, because I now know that summer is something that must be cherished and utilized to its full extent.

If not, summer will pass you by and leave you with nothing but memories of daytime television and your favorite couch.

On Saturday, May 9, I'm thinking of going surfing.

Anyone want to go?



BARB CHURCHILL is a graduate student in saxophone performance and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Same-sex sexual harassment is real, it is prevalent, and it is growing.

From Baltimore to Denver, men are suing other men for sexual harassment. The issue is so serious that the United States Supreme Court recently heard oral arguments in the case of Oncale v. Sundowner.

Oncale v. Sundowner concerns workplace sexual harassment of a heterosexual man by other (purportedly, anyway) heterosexual men.

As such, it is unusual, because lower courts throughout the land have been unsure whether or not sexual harassment could be promulgated by men against other men.

Some people dislike the term "sexual harassment" for same-sex problems, preferring the term "gender harassment" instead. In any case, sexual or "gender-based" harassment shares the same definition: It occurs when one person acts in such a way as to oppress or cause distress to someone else because of that person's gender.

Federal laws define sexual harassment as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors,

and other verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature. Some of the actions that would constitute sexual harassment include (but are not limited to) pressure for sex; asking about a person's sexual fantasies, preferences, or activities; sexual gestures, graffiti or visuals; or sexually offensive comments.

Some of you may be asking, "So, Barb, when I'm laughing and joking around with my friends, and we use some off-color humor, does that mean that we are being sexually offensive?"

The answer, children, is NO. Sexual harassment only occurs after someone has said to you, "Please don't say that," or "Please, don't do that ... I find it offensive and rude."

A verbalized statement must be made, sometimes more than once (depending on what state you live in), in order for off-color jokes to be considered sexual harassment.

However, the case of Oncale vs. Sundowner is NOT a case of jokes, misunderstanding, or innuendo. This case is about clear-cut abuse. If Oncale were a woman or a homosexual man, rather than a heterosexual, married man, there would be no dispute.

Consider the facts of Oncale vs. Sundowner. The plaintiff, Joseph Oncale (a married, heterosexual man), was employed as a roustabout in an all-male crew on a Sundowner oil-drilling rig off the coast of Louisiana. It was a dangerous, isolated job; one in which men looked for adventure any way they could.

Three men in particular crossed the line of good taste: John Lyons, his supervisor; Danny Pippen and Brandon Johnson, Oncale's fellow workers.

Lyons, the supervisor, began his sexual advances and objectification of Oncale right away. Lyons said, "You know, you got a cute little ass, boy." Lyons threatened to rape Oncale, and said Oncale would "have sex with (me) before it was over." These remarks, and others like them, showed a persistent pattern of verbal abuse.

On Oct. 25, 1991, Oncale was sexually attacked. Pippen grabbed him, pulled him down, and restrained him in a squatting position while Lyons unzipped his pants, pulled out his penis, and stuck it onto the back of Oncale's head.

Oncale asked them to stop. Lyons and Pippen laughed as Oncale's co-workers watched.

No one intervened.

The next day, Johnson forced Oncale to the ground again. Lyons pulled his penis out and put it on Oncale's arm. Oncale complained to superiors, but nothing was done.

Later that same night, Lyons and Pippen attempted to rape Oncale in the shower with a bar of soap. Oncale struggled and got away. Oncale complained again.

Again, nothing was done. Oncale tried to get off of the oil rig. However, Sundowner took its own sweet time in releasing Oncale from his contract.

In the meantime, Lyons continued his verbal harassment. Lyons said, "Well, it ain't going to do you no good (to leave) because I'm going to f*** you anyway."

Oncale said that he tried to work but "couldn't sleep because I was afraid that they would do something to me, I couldn't fight, and I felt disgraced."

When Oncale finally was

allowed to quit, he stated on his pink slip that he "voluntarily left due to sexual harassment and verbal abuse." Oncale filed his EEOC lawsuit soon after, on Dec. 5, 1991.

Oncale is not the only one who has faced same-sex sexual harassment:

■ In Massachusetts, three men say that two male supervisors constantly subjected them to raunchy comments and gestures.

■ In Chicago, a former convenience-store worker said his male boss kissed and grabbed him while making degrading sexual remarks.

■ In Denver, two UPS workers claim sexual harassment by their supervisor.

■ In Baltimore, a man working at Baltimore Gas & Electric was subjected to his male boss holding a magnifying glass over his genitals at the workplace. This offending boss also gave the male employee a big, sloppy kiss at the employee's wedding.

■ And, in Minnesota, at the Donaldson Company, the most bizarre act of male-on-male sexual harassment occurred. Called "bagging," this is the widespread company practice of grabbing and squeezing other men's testicles as a form of saying "hello." One new employee didn't like it; his boss said "tough."

Meanwhile, back at the ranch (otherwise known as the Oncale v. Sundowner case), Oncale ran into a roadblock.

The criminal justice system is divided on whether or not same-sex or "gender" harassment is real. Sexual harassment is currently defined as: females by males; males by females; females and males by homosexuals of their own sex; and

(so far, anyway) neither females nor males by heterosexuals of their own sex.

However, as seen above, this is a faulty definition. This definition says that because Oncale is a straight, married man, his treatment at the hands of Sundowner is horseplay, not harassment.

The legal definition of sexual harassment is wrong. If Oncale was gay, his treatment at the hands of Sundowner would assuredly be harassment. If Oncale were a woman, once again, his treatment at the hands of Sundowner would definitely be harassment.

It's a good thing that the U.S. Supreme Court is taking Oncale v. Sundowner under advisement, because right now courts don't have a clue how to handle same-sex harassment cases.

As the Westword (Colo.) Web page, <http://www.westword.com> stated, "Much of what is muddying the same-sex discrimination waters is that judges are ruling every which way."

Perhaps a pending U.S. Supreme Court ruling will change things. According to the Dec. 4 issue of USA Today, the U.S. Supreme Court appeared ready to give legal recognition to same-sex sexual harassment.

All I can say is this: It's about time.

It doesn't matter whether you are straight, gay, bisexual, transgendered or Martian. Your gender or sexual orientation should not be an issue at the workplace, and no one should be subjected to harassment based on their gender, sexual orientation, or sex life.

Sexual harassment is sexual harassment.

No joke

Same-sex sexual harassment is real