



(After six years of trudging through UNL classes, veteran columnist Steve Willey remembers some of his best and worst experiences ...)

Six years ago, when I first set foot on UNL's campus, I was but a chubby 18 year old.

I was fresh out of a Catholic high school in Mississippi where nuns had unanimously voted me "most likely to attack a midget with a wooden dowel."

I had made the University of Nebraska-Lincoln my choice for higher education after a scholarship fell through at Louisiana State University.

Also, my father had recently been arrested for "impersonating a hummingbird" and, out of personal embarrassment, I felt like I needed the extra distance between us.

I remember so much about my early years at this university. I recall the excitement of taking a nude swim in Broyhill Fountain; and subsequently, the appropriate head-start distance needed to effectively elude vomiting University Police.

There is no doubt my years at this institution were very expanding, and I am not only referring to my waistline.

I am a different person than the naive prep student of yesterday. Thanks to my journalism professors, I am now able to use the phrase "dangling participle" in a sentence without having women flee out of the room like frightened piglets.

Indeed, I've come a long way. And now, I'll graduate in May. And I will never forget the things I have learned and been a part of at UNL.

Already, I badly want to give something back to the university. So what I've decided to do is pass on a few of my experiences. It is my hope that nuggets of my past will entertain, but perhaps more importantly, inform students about what college is really about: Lunacy.

(Thanks is, of course, in order to the Daily Nebraskan, my former employer of three years, for giving me the opportunity to reminisce. The following stories are all true and represent the best and worst of my life at UNL.)

Memory 1.

Midterm my sophomore year, I began to experience what doctors call a "burning sensation" during urination.

I was somewhat alarmed because, aside from the burning, I was also experiencing the ejection of a lavender-colored plume of smoke.

Burning is common in college students, and the problem doesn't have to be sexually born. (It can, and in fact often does, stem from placing one's winky into a can of refried beans for more than 11 hours.)

The most important thing to remember (if these symptoms persist) is to seek medical attention instantly.

Magna Cum Lousy

College provides painful experiences

The important part of this story isn't the symptoms, however, but the treatment.

When you go to your friendly University Health Center doctor, you will be given the option of either a "urinalysis" or a "swab" to detect the origins of the problem.

A swab can be done instantly whereas a urinalysis takes a little more time. Both are equally effective at discovering most problems.

The swab, however, is **MUCH** more painful. In terms of comfort levels, the urinalysis and swab are about as far apart as a paper cut and having your lower torso gnawed off by a school of hungry Black Mollies.

As you can guess - because it was faster - I opted for the swab. (The only way I can describe a "swab" is by asking you to imagine placing a cucumber inside of a McDonald's straw.) It was excruciating! But things turned out OK, and I am happy to report that I am once again a healthy idiot.

MORAL: Avoid the "swab" for the rest of your natural life. Even if your avoidance means death, it is still the appropriate option. Nobody will blame you.

Memory 2

After my third year at UNL, I began to see what upperclassmen had that I didn't: relationships with their teachers.

I began to earnestly pursue avenues that would lead to my professors' getting to know me. I met them after class and, on five occasions, trimmed their toenails with my teeth.

It is important to establish these relationships as they can often mean the difference between an F and a D-minus.

This was the case with me and a certain Chemistry 109 professor. It was the third time I had taken the class, never able to manage a grade higher

than "dipshit" in my first two attempts.

Having gotten to know the teacher, however, I was confident that the third time would indeed be the charm. One week before the final exam, I called my professor and we talked for hours.

Eventually, we calculated that I would need to get a score of 137 on the final exam in order to pass.

Now, had I not known this teacher, I would have been up doody creek. But it just so happened that the following conversation took place: (As God as my witness, this is true.)

Steve: "137! Boy, that's going to be tough, 'specially since the exam is only worth 100 points. I probably shouldn't even bother to show up."

Teacher: "I wouldn't if I were you. Concentrate on your other exams."

(Yes, I was expecting the teacher to imply that if I did really well, she'd pass me.)

MORAL: It is still good to establish relationships with your teachers, provided they are not from the chemistry department, as these professors possess the same empathetic capacity as a garlic bagel.

Memory 3

During my first two years, I was a resident of Schramm Residence Hall.

I had some of my best times in that sixth-floor room, although I was dangerously close to being expelled for "minor" violations.

Some of those were: missing fire extinguishers, extinguisher discharged into Student Assistant's room, alcohol violations, removal of fire bells from floors nine through two, death of two students who were unable to hear said fire bells and, last but not least,

failing to acknowledge - as the SA put it - "the fact that not all pets are flushable, particularly live kittens."

The best memory, however, comes from my friend's and my decision to build an exploding plastic bottle.

Neither of us were well-trained in bomb-making. (The Daily Nebraskan issue that described it intimately had yet to be conceived.)

However, I had seen three episodes of "MacGuyver" and was convinced that if he could build a ham radio out of fishing line, a 43-year-old pigeon and some discarded chewing gum, then I could build a bomb.

It never quite happened like we wanted it to and, to make a long story short, the bomb merely chased my friend and me around the floor for a period of 11 weeks until it finally came to a stop on the forehead of a custodian who was passing by.

Nothing special. It did, however, leave a nasty black mark on the carpet; a mark which, I believe, is still there. Scorched carpet, northwest corner of sixth floor Schramm. Check it out. My legacy.

MORAL: Never take credit for something stupid until AFTER you have graduated.

(Editor's note: But Steve, you haven't actually graduated yet. Have you?)

NEW MORAL: Always admit when stories are fabricated and that any markings on the floor are purely coincidental. Ahem.

Memory 4

The next story is one that really hasn't been created yet. Ever since the Nebraska Alma Mater was created a few years ago, I have been impressed with the deep meaning of it.

I, an aspiring song-

writer myself, have always wanted to do something like that for this university. For years now, I have poured over various melodies and words, attempting to create the perfect song.

Finally - and how fitting that it is so close to my graduation - I have come up with a tune that I believe is every bit as good as our current Alma Mater.

Don't get me wrong, I like that song, but mine is a little more contemporary. Also, I wrote mine when I was drunk. Give a listen:

"Magna Cum Lousy" - words and music by Steve Willey, BJ, UNL 1998.

(To the tune of "Candle in the Wind" by Elton John)

Goodbye dear NU, I have finally, climbed your mountain.

I have survived your ticket prices, and swam in Broyhill fountain.

So goodbye sweet NU, you've taught me more than you'll ever know.

Like how to make class in a blizzard, and collapse head-first into snow.

And even when I'm gone, oh I'll keep on hounding you.

I'll pelt Hamilton Hall with pecans, or show up in A-ver-y in the nude.

But it seems to me, for 30,000 bucks, I could've been taught more. I could've learned, how to jet ski, or how to build an oar?

And I would've liked to left here, educated and debt free.

But you gave me no financial aid, so I'm graduatin', Cum Lou-sy.

(Instrumental)
(Mr. Moeser, can we play it at commencement?)



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