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Our
VIEW

Paltry prediction

Urban legends cured with common sense

On Nov. 10, 1998, a rogue terrorist group, in an attempt to gain attention to its cause, will drop an unspecified toxic viral agent into the ventilation system of Abel Hall.

Nearly a thousand students will die within five hours and hundreds more will pass away later from secondhand infection.

Sound ridiculous? It should, because we just made it up.

Just like someone made up the urban legend about the Little Bo Peep serial sorority killer, and look at how far that went.

The legend goes as thus — a psychic predicted a massacre would happen in a sorority house at a Big 12 school this Halloween weekend. The killer would arrive dressed to kill as Little Bo Peep. And the prediction was from a real live psychic. Not a 1-900-psychic, but the very same psychic who predicted the Oklahoma City bombing.

It's all fake, of course.

But, as a result of the legend's circulation, more than a couple sororities were at less than full capacity Halloween night. This didn't just happen here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but across the Midwest. Sorority members said they were simply uncomfortable staying, fearing the very possibility of such an event.

Urban legends, by their very definition, are grounded in reality just enough to be believable, no matter how implausible they sound. They're usually started by one or two creative people and last forever.

Everyone knows a few: The medical students who lure victims at Mardi Gras to a hotel room and steal their kidneys. The guy with the gerbil lodged somewhere very uncomfortable. The python that comes up from the toilet.

Whole Web sites are dedicated to the collection, study and debunking of such legends. While not all these legends are entirely untrue, all have been wildly exaggerated by those who have retold the story. Eventually, rational minds look into them, and people's so-called "proof" evaporates like the ghosts at haunted houses.

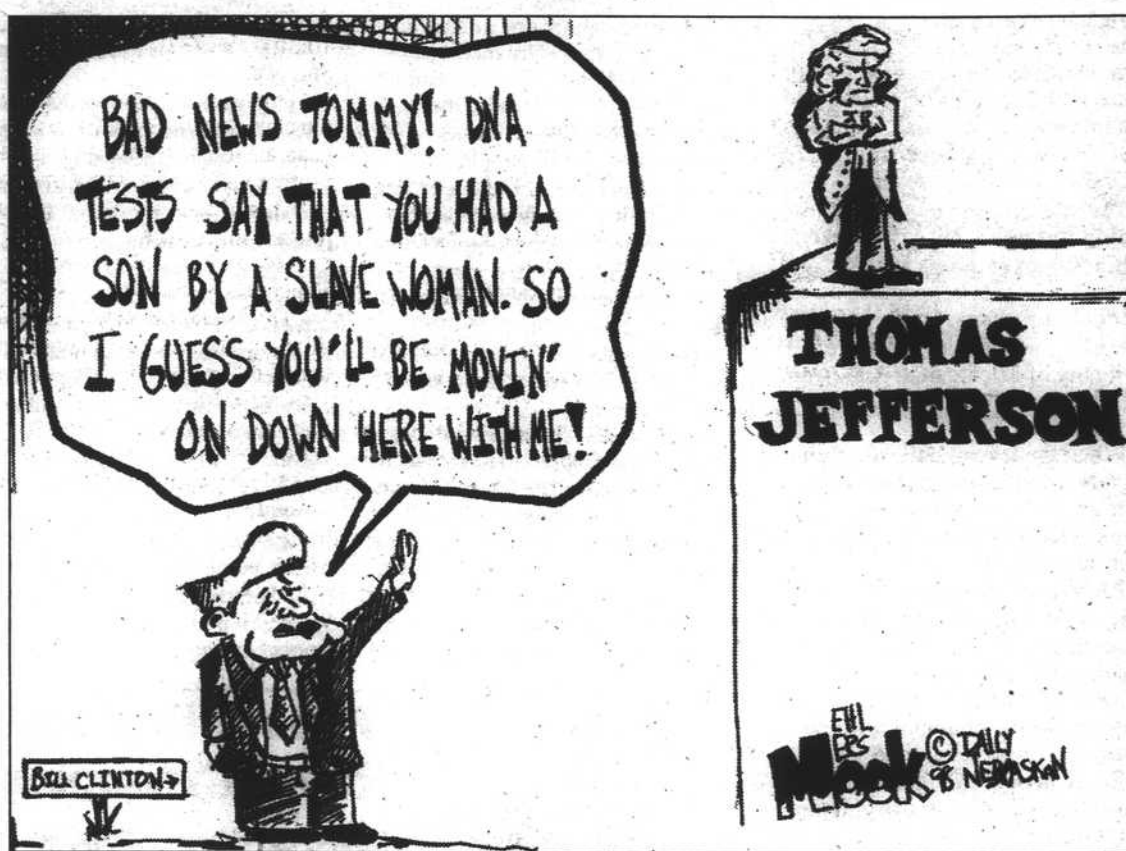
Urban legends prey on the naïveté and susceptibility of people. Almost all urban legends urge you to tell your friends, hoping to "prevent you from befalling the same fate." That's how they thrive. Average people retell them.

They've taken to e-mail, and their life has been extended far beyond what anyone could have thought. People forward them on to everyone they know, just on the off chance they might be true.

And yet in looking at them, it's a wonder they even get anywhere at all. A mass murder predicted by a psychic? Dressed as Little Bo Peep? People stealing kidneys? Pythons in the sewers? Gerbils in ... ahem.

Where's good, old-fashioned common sense when you need it?

Mook's
VIEW



Study hard

Education should be a college student's priority



TASHA KUXHAUSEN is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Why are you here? It's a serious question. Have you ever really thought about your intentions in college? I don't mean for you to ask yourself why you are at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and not Arizona State, Northwestern or another college. What I mean is, why are you in college at all?

I'm here for a few reasons. Of course I want to get a job in the future, and most jobs these days want employees who have more than a high school diploma.

I'm also in college because of my parents. They both went to college, so they have instilled in me the value of a college degree.

Last but not least, I'm in college because it's paid for.

Unfortunately not with a scholarship, but by my wonderful mom and dad. (Thanks, you guys.) I don't want to waste the money they so graciously have given me by flunking out of school, so I plan to work very hard while I'm here.

When my parents were in college, there were kids in school to party or get away from home, and there were students wanting to excel in sports or academics.

But I've heard my dad speak many times of the guys who he knew in his fraternity or those in his classes who had come to a small college in Nebraska merely to avoid being sent to war.

They had to take the 24 hours required a year at a level of success acceptable by their local draft boards.

In those times, many colleges across this nation were founded to

take in the money of those who were so desperate to escape the fighting in Vietnam.

Hiram Scott College, John J. Pershing College and John F. Kennedy College no longer exist, but they did a lot of business in the late 1960s. Those students and those colleges made no secret of why they were there.

Survival, either physical or financial, is a great motivator.

Who can blame the young men who went to college to obtain a draft deferment to avoid or postpone what might have been the end of their lives in the combat zones of Southeast Asia?

But there are no excuses for the students who come to college to waste precious time and money because they don't have a respectable reason to be here.

So how 'bout you? Why are you really in college?

Are you one of those students who came to college to escape your overprotective parents? I know there are students here for that reason.

There are some of you who don't particularly like school, but finally have an opportunity to free yourself from your parents' watchful eye, and college seems like the perfect way to do so.

One day you'll finally realize that you've actually been here for about seven years, constantly avoiding all opportunities to visit your parents, and you're not sure what your major is.

Or are you here at college because going to parties is your favorite hobby? I know kids who take more time planning a party than they do studying for a midterm.

With all the partying, studying usually doesn't get much attention. These students often don't last longer than one semester.

If they do happen to make it to graduation, they can't remember anything they learned because they killed a lot of their brain cells. What a waste of money and time!

I'm not saying partying is bad; that'd make me a hypocrite. All I'm trying to point out is that your goal here at college should be more complex than trying to chug six beers in a

couple of minutes.

As I mentioned before, there are those we all know who can't seem to put down the Nintendo control or say no to the daily temptation of "party on, dude!" They end up wasting the time and money the rest of us find so vitally necessary for academic and financial survival.

Every year the freshman class at the university has met higher standards of admissions, and it is supposedly more qualified for college level studies than any class before.

Yet, we all know of qualified students who have a hard time either finding their way to class or finding the energy to put forth the studying needed to remain in college.

The waste of time, money and brain power of those who don't put an effort into succeeding in college, though they are qualified, is ridiculous.

I admire those students who come to the university for what I feel are the "right reasons."

Those who want to obtain a higher education work hard in their classes so they will have some knowledge to show for their time spent in college.

There are also respectable students who work their butts off in school and at part-time or full-time jobs, just so they can stay at the university.

We all say we hate school at times when we are stressed out with tests or clueless as to which majors to pursue.

But if we push ourselves to keep focused, in the end, the knowledge we have learned in college will be one of our most sacred possessions. It will take us in directions we may not have gone with only a high school diploma.

So those students with proper focus, I commend you. You know why you are here, and it is obviously an admirable reason.

Those of little purpose and limited motivation, you should seriously reconsider your intentions for being at college.

If knowledge and preparation for a career are your purposes, stay. If your reasons are frivolous, hit the road!

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