

Kid at heart

Youthful fun adds enjoyment to adult life



ERIN RITZ is a senior theater performance major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

One of my friends seems to be having major issues with the concept of aging. He's actually developed a sort of complex about it.

It always begins with the same scenario: We're playing the computer trivia game "You Don't Know Jack," and a biology question will come up. He will proceed to answer incorrectly and immediately scream the following:

"It's been nine years since I've taken biology. Do you realize that? NINE YEARS! GOD, I'M SO OLD!"

I've been trying to get him some help, but he claims he's too young to be having a midlife crisis. Poor fellow.

Watching my friend wig out on a biweekly basis got me thinking. I'm starting to feel old, too.

I first noticed it when I was a sophomore at this fine institution. I had borrowed a "Seventeen" magazine from a friend (only for the purpose of cutting it up, mind you). Upon opening it, I immediately aged by about 20 years.

I saw girls who looked like they were 13 wearing more sparkly blue makeup than I donned in my last play. I saw obnoxious clothing I wouldn't be caught dead wearing on Halloween being showcased on these little nymphs. I saw advice columns on how to French kiss someone.

I saw what I used to read religiously every month, and it made me

slap my hand to the side of my head in disbelief.

I felt that I had jumped into the realm of an entirely different culture within the last few years. Is that what getting old is supposed to feel like? Since I couldn't be totally sure, I decided I needed an expert opinion. I called my mom.

In an attempt not to be entirely rude, I didn't say, "So Ma, at what point in your long, long life did you finally own up to the fact that you're almost as old as Methuselah?" No, no, no, I am a sweet child, every parent's dream. I said, "So Mom, how did you know that you were getting old?"

She, in her infinite wisdom, responded with the following: *I never did.*

You never did? That's not acceptable. I need more. You're not exactly a spring chicken anymore, you know.

(OK, so I didn't really say the "spring chicken" bit, but it is my philosophy that you should never, never waste an opportunity to use the cliché "spring chicken.")

OK, let me think about this. Hmm. Oh man, there are like, three different signs.

Such as...?

One: You start falling asleep in front of the TV on a regular basis.

Two: Your joints start hurting when you do things you're used to, like dancing or walking. (Insert mom-ish chuckle here.) *Three: you can't remember things you were just about to say. You start calling your kids by the dog's name and, uh, give me a minute. I wanted to say something else.*

What? (This is the kicker, folks.) *I don't know. Ask me later.*

I was quite grateful for some words of wisdom from Mom, but those things don't really apply to those of us who are spring chickens.

For me, one genuine sign of aging is that your life seems to become a series of circles. Patterns, you know, like those funky crop circles in

England.

Things you considered crazy cool when you were 8 suddenly become cool again when you're 20. Stuff like collecting action figures, having slumber parties and going trick-or-treating are wildly fun again.

I can't name the number of guys I know who would throw themselves into a pit of fire before they allowed their Star Wars toys to be subjected to the flames. "Girly" sleep-overs are something we wish for more often.

Granted, the slumber parties have evolved (usually, if you're lucky) to include booze and Kevin Smith flicks, and the Halloween costumes have gotten a lot more suggestive, but the point is that the principles remain the same.

Getting older causes you to revert back into things you enjoyed when you were younger.

In my youthful wisdom, I have stumbled upon a theory that can (sort of) explain this mystery. It is as follows:

When you get past the whole "I'm too smolderingly cool for the rest of the world" phase in junior high, high school and the first year of college, something inside of you is awakened.

It's that thing that you'd been missing for 10 years that helped you not take life all too seriously, that let you live every day for itself and not constantly worry about what would happen in five, 10 or 50 years.

It's that thing that allowed you to just let go.

I don't know if it has a name or what started it. I'm just hoping it won't end when I leave college. I really don't want it to.

For the first time in a long time, I can truly say that life is fun. I love the people I'm lucky enough to be friends with, and I love the dorky things we do. We act like idiots on a regular basis because we *can*.

As I get older, will I lose that "fun vibe" that it took me so long to get back?

If I continue on the cycle that I've been on, I can expect it to fade out when I'm about 30. Bummer.

I'm not too worried, though. My parents still have it. My older sister still has it. I'm ODing on it. It's not leaving anytime soon.

Yeah, I do feel like a grandma sometimes when I see tiny little freshmen walking around campus,

but I have my "You Don't Know Jack" support group and others my age to help me through those tough times. We feel each other's pain, but we revel in our rediscovered youthful frivolity!

(My high school creative writing teacher would have been so proud of that one.)

So for now, my fresh, young, vibrant readers, live out loud. Make the most of every day, and most importantly... uh... hang on. What was I saying?

I don't know. Ask me later.



MATT HANEY/DN

Political perversion

Undemocratic ways were founded in our heritage



GRAHAM EVAN JOHNSON is a graduate student in German and environmental social studies and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Did you vote Tuesday?

I don't really know if voting matters. I mean, obviously it's important to voice your opinion, but your opinion often is muffled by the sound of cash registers.

Because when the real voices of the public come to speak at forums like the Lincoln/Lancaster City Council, the voices often are offered as a token response, and this doesn't mask the deal-making behind closed doors.

Think this is all made up? Think again.

These hasty deals between the politicians and private developers often are made before the concerns of affected individuals are heard, before the results of objective experts are considered and before delicate situations are thoroughly reviewed.

This needs to stop immediately, or we will face the consequences of an unmanageable city that is rife

with environmental, economic and social problems.

What do all of these things have in common? It's called the perversion of democracy, in which powerful players directly or indirectly guide political activity, which, in turn, greatly affects the public's well-being.

This perversion of democracy has been around since the time of George Washington.

Washington and his elitist Federalists set forth to deconstruct and discredit the opposing group, the Federal Republicans.

The Federal Republicans were made up of small-farm owners, shopkeepers and laborers: the common people.

The Federal Republicans believed in the decency of the common man and in a participatory democracy. They also strove for the greater protection of individual rights and viewed the elites as corrupt.

Washington and his elitist cronies were rich property owners and merchants of the Northeast and Atlantic states. They saw themselves and other elites as the ruling class and the best fit to govern. Others were simply to be governed. Washington pursued his attacks with mud-slinging propaganda and chastised this opposing pluralist group, calling them "Anti-Federalists."

Then these self-serving capitalists strangled the opposing Federal Republicans into submission with

political and economic coercion.

Finally, the small-farm owners, shopkeepers and laborers gave into the heavy-handed elites and were lucky to even have the Bill of Rights considered.

Washington and these elite capitalists had no thought of considering human rights and freedoms as integral to the Constitution. It was the Federal Republicans who pleaded for this addition.

I got all of the above-mentioned facts from my U.S. Political Science textbook "American Government," by O'Connor and Sabato.

Unfortunately, not much has changed over the past 200 years. The economic elites still ravage the land and our political system with a self-serving economic purpose and perpetuate this plutocratic rule.

This country is not run by the public, nor guided by the public interest as the capitalists and politicians would like you to think.

It is run by these economic elites who use the United States' political system as an instrument for their benefit and as a structure for individual economic pursuit.

And even in our nice, small town of Lincoln, where everything seems peachy, the capitalist elites dominate the political arena with self-serving interests. They disregard the long-term well-being of the public and its land.

My example is Wilderness Park. Are the concerns of the public interest really being heard? If they were, would our representatives

allow developmental planning to occur before numerous environmental impact studies could be assessed? No.

And that's just my point. They haven't considered those public concerns. If they had, they would have put a moratorium on all developmental planning until thorough, objective studies could be completed.

Only after zoning changes, pursued by capitalist developers, were already set did the City Council decide to develop a token process. However, the Lincoln/Lancaster Mediation Service is eliciting the same concerns voiced almost one year ago in the City Council chambers.

So now, after the damage is about to be done, the City Council is pursuing an environmental impact study. But who is in charge of this study?

Fortunately, the community study is being pursued by our own Allan Williams, chair of the sociology department and professor of Environmental Sociology.

But the rest of the studies are blatantly biased.

All of the information you are about to read is taken from the Lincoln/Lancaster County Mediation Service's information packet about this Wilderness Park Sub-Area Study or from the Friends of Wilderness Park.

The transportation study is being pursued by The Lincoln/Lancaster Chamber of Commerce, whose members are selected by Mayor

Mike Johanns. The Chamber of Commerce has vested interests in developing an elevated highway that will connect to the underused West Bypass.

The study also is being directed by Olsson Associates, a private developing firm.

How do I know this? Because a member from the Chamber of Commerce came and spoke at a Friends of Wilderness Park meeting Oct. 14 about this proposal.

The ecosystem study also is being pursued fairly ignorantly. There is not an objective EPA regional specialist to assist in the study, and mammals aren't considered integral component of the park's dynamics. *Mammals*, for God's sake!

This is a dangerous way to approach city development.

The people directing these important studies have conflicting interests, which hinders objectivity.

How could this be done better? All of the studies must consist of objective and experienced specialists in the areas of concern.

I hope the working group that will meet over the next nine months will come to this conclusion and pursue working with these types of individuals.

Otherwise, guess who pays the millions of dollars in repairs when imminent floods destroy neighborhoods after careless development proceeds as planned?

The taxpayers. Us.