

# That's a wrap

## Closing up shop for the holidays



**CLIFF HICKS is a senior news-editorial and English major and the Daily Nebraskan opinion editor.**

writer, a legendary rock star or the world's most eccentric millionaire – you know that.”

“Well, they didn't until now.”  
I tilt my head a little. “I suppose so. Anyhow, I got into column writing because I had a lot to say. After you've told your friends and family all your theories on life and politics, you realize they stop listening to you after a while.”

“What were you saying?”  
“Funny.”  
“As long as I get the laugh.”  
I continue on, ignoring his wise-ass remarks. “So, I figured one day, back in high school, if I could say whatever I wanted to, then I could get my opinions out there.”

“How's that been going?”  
I fold my hands together, thinking for a long moment before I respond. “It's hard to judge. There are people who remember what I've written, so that's a good start I suppose.”

“To have an impact, you have to be remembered.”

“Exactly. But I figure giving up isn't an option. Maybe that's what I've learned over the past few months more than anything else.”

“What a wild and crazy semester it's been, you know?” I ask my colleague, A.L., who's sitting on the couch behind me, as I polish up the last column of the semester – mine.

“So what should I expect for the final shout out from the Chief?” he asks me. “Something crazy?”

I laugh at that. “Isn't that the understatement of the year ... presidential impeachment motions, almost being at war a couple of times ... the end of the world as we know it.”

“Hey, I feel fine.”

I shoot him a dirty look.

“Sorry, someone had to say it.”  
The offices are quiet, a rarity for the DN, certainly, if not a physical impossibility. It's late in the evening on a Saturday. No one is around other than the Fork and me.

There still isn't snow on the ground, the first time I can remember there not being snow on the ground during finals week.

“So what are you going to say in your column?”

I pause and shrug. “Dunno yet.”

“You're eight inches into it, and you're still not sure what it's on? Isn't that against like every rule you stand for?”

“I suppose I'm trying to find a way to convey the atmosphere of the Daily Nebraskan to the average reader.”

“Then why are you writing about a Saturday afternoon?”

A sly smile crosses my face. “Because they don't want to know what it's really like.”

“Oh baloney. It's not that bad down here.”

“I'm not saying it is,” I tell him. “I'm just saying that if we tell them how it really is, it'll be like pulling back the curtain to show them who the Wizard of Oz really is.”

“You're not that short.”  
“Why are you still here?”  
“You got me.”

I sigh a little with a weary smile. “Maybe you should tell them why you got into the business, Chief. That might interest them.”

“What? Why I got into journalism or why I got into column writing?”

“Either-or. Both, maybe.”

“I got into journalism to pay the bills until I become a world-famous

that advice to heed myself.”

“And now?”  
I spin the chair partly, setting my feet up on the desk. “To quote They Might Be Giants, ‘I was young and foolish then, I feel old and foolish now.’”

A.L. ruffles his eyebrows, waiting for me to continue.

“I've begun to start trusting my instincts. I've been trying to do it for years, and I've been saying I was starting to, but the last month or so has really proven it to me.”

“How so?”

“I've said things the old me wouldn't have said. I've done things the old me wouldn't have done. I quit my second job – even though it's going to make my financial life harder – because it's going to make life mentally easier on me. I can start doing the things I want to do.”

myself, then actually go through with it.”

“That's always the hard part.”  
“The key to getting past it, I've found, is to just do it and resolve not to regret it.”

“Like those e-mails you sent last week?”

“Exactly. I had to say those things. I sent three brazenly honest e-mails. I think I told you about one or two of them.”

“Yeah you told me about one of 'em.”

I nodded. “They were just things I really had to say. You have to tell your friends when they're being good friends or bad friends. You have to tell people what you're thinking, how you're feeling.”

“Bottling it up sucks.”

“Exactly.”

“So what came out of those?”

“What, the e-mails?” I ask him.

“Yeah.”

“Well, obviously the one guy and I are no longer talking.”

“And the other

my life, I've forgotten that what's best in life is what you don't see coming.”

“Eeehhh, I don't know if I agree with that.”

“You're rationalizing. Stop.”

“What?”

“You're thinking about consequences and reactions and all the other crap that comes with planning what comes next. Life isn't like chess, Fork.”

“And I so wanted to say ‘King me!’”

“That's checkers.”

“Oops.”

“Every time people have talked to me this semester, I can see them thinking, ‘Well, if I say what I really want to say, he's not going to be happy,’ so they don't say what's really on their mind.”

“But that's human nature.”

“Screw human nature!” I say loudly, continuing before he can offer any snide jokes in response. “Break away from the mold! Be honest with the world! Come out and say what's on your mind.”

“I could really use a sandwich right now.”

I have to laugh beneath a sigh.

“I meant that as a general commentary. You're hopeless, you know that, right?”

“So my doctor tells me.”  
I take off my glasses, rubbing my eyes for a long moment in time.

“So where does it go from here, Chief?”

I look up at Forkner for a good solid moment. “What do you mean? Where does it go?”

“Well, what should people expect next semester?”

“How the hell should I know?”

He looks down his nose at me, as if I should know the answer to that question, which I do.

“We'll grab the bull by the horns and go down fighting, just like we always have. We'll give our readers our all and hope it's enough for them.”

“Who are they, anyway?”

“The students and the faculty, the righteous and the downtrodden, the hopeful and the hopeless, everyone and no one at all.”

“Deep.”

“Oh, buzz off. It's late. I'm tired. This thing should've been done days ago.”

“You going to thank anyone before we close up shop for the holidays?”

“I'm sure all of you guys – my columnists, my crew – you all know what I think of you. You and Erin have been the most helpful, of course, making me laugh and smile. For that, I suppose I'm thankful.”

“I really should thank the copy desk for all their hard work, especially Diane, the copy desk chief, for saving my butt more than a couple of times.”

“Plus I have to thank Haney and all the artists; Nancy and all the designers ...”

“Geez, anyone else?”

“Just one last one.

I gotta thank the other Erin – Erin Gibson, my boss – for putting up with me and my soul-searching. I've changed more in these past few months than I have the previous three years. That's a testament to Gibs, Erin and you as well, Fork.”

“Aw shucks, Chief. T'weren't nothin'.”

“Let's get outta here. I could use a sandwich myself.”

I send the column from my desk before I can think about it – no time for regrets, merely parting words. Then, I turn off the computer and move out of the office, Fork following, turning off the lights, closing and locking the door and saying goodbye until the new year. Until we meet again.

two?”  
I shrug. “Who knows? That's what I like most about being in this situation. For once in my life, I don't know what's going to happen. My friends could start yelling at me or hugging me at any given moment.”

“Tell me about it.”

“But that's what's so great about it. I've sat and planned so damn much of

“How is that new?”

“For years, I've been telling people they should do what they feel like they need to do. But I've never really taken

“Isn't quitting a job supposed to be easy?”

“Never for me. I have to justify it to



MATT HANEY/DN