

On the second day ...

Millennium sure to be a let down in terms of technological change



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The plow goes up 13th Street, followed by another plow, sparking pavement. Another plow.

I imagine migrations of snowplows from their summer homes in Canada, in formation like dirty gray geese, soiling the snow.

I'm thinking of the future; it always makes me sad.

I'm picturing Day Two of the Millennium, and what a drag it's going to be.

On Day Two of the Millennium you will wake up with tears in your eyes and shake your tiny fist at heaven.

"Where's my hovercar?" you'll squeak at an impotent god and fall back among the bedclothes, sobbing.

I've seen it all, in minute detail, down to the leopard print silk jammies caked in dried vomit: I can smell the ozone of hangover from here.

Then you'll get up and go to whatever job you have, where everyone is just like a big family, and you'll sing the company song with your eyes closed.

I'm not saying I'm a time traveler (no Thorazine for me, Doc, I feel fine); I'm just saying I know. And that it's a false, false hope: Day Two of the Millennium hovers like the Emerald City, by a shoestring.

No more snowplows pass or have passed since I sat down to write. I suppose they all got where they were going.

But "getting there" is over-rated: to lie in the park for all eternity under a big stone reading "HE GOT WHERE HE WAS GOING" is not the epitaph I have in mind. The future is going somewhere, but you and I are going somewhere else, unless, unless ... (I cross my fingers and count on immortality, again.) But you go anyway for sure, and so why bother, why dwell on it?

The future isn't Day Two of the Millennium after all but day number 364,526, just as Jan. 14,

1999, would be the 364,526th day of the lame-duck millennium (the proof of which I leave as an exercise for the intelligent reader).

The future isn't a couple of years from now – when, by any reckoning, the new millennium actually begins – but a thousand years or so from then, from that day, from Day Two.

Try that on for size. And then think:

In 1850, the only music anyone ever heard anywhere was being played right there, live, by live musicians. And it was the same a thousand years before that, and a thousand years before that, and a thousand years before that, and a thousand years before that and all the way back to the mute hominids, whose parasites we have inherited along with their genes.

Just this last century has seen more absolute change in the way people do things than any other, and there have been a lot of centuries, for those who are still counting (and a thousand years before that ...).

Thinking about the next thousand years is somewhat more difficult because of this singular fact. I mean, it's hard to imagine the rate of technological change continuing to accelerate exponentially.

I'd say things have got to slow down a little; you can only have one first-ever trans-Atlantic flight, for instance. And even if I go shopping on the moon next Tuesday, I'm not the first to leave my footprints in the parking lot.

At the same time, it's kind of hard to imagine a millennium with such a head start petering out halfway through. And you sure can't legislate a technological slowdown to appease queasy stomachs – the U.S. moratorium on human cloning simply means some multinational corporation will do it first in Singapore. (God how I miss the Cold War!* In those days we would have raced to close the Clone Gap.)

And with the Human

Genome project nearing completion world-wide, well, you know where that leads. ...

The Beatles Reunion Tour! (Give John Lennon kaleidoscope eyes and Paul McCartney, wings. Ringo, looking like an octopus' gardener, actually plays the drums and sings, "I want to hold your hand, hand, hand, hand, hand.")

It could happen, why not?



DEB LEE/DN

The challenge of the future will be to the imagination, what to do with the unlimited power of biotechnology.

Cold fusion, warp drives and antigravity rays may turn out to have been the worthless pipe dreams of sleepless science-fiction authors, devices to solve literary, and not real, problems. But the power of the knowledge of the secrets of our own genes – that will not be denied us.

Inevitable: The human race will spend the next thousand years learning to manage this planet effectively, its most important tool, the genetic code. No longer a blind process, evolution is a truck and we, Good Buddy, are the truckers.

Among the centuries there will be plenty of time for reading road signs – figuring out the hows and wherefores – the question of "why" answering, as it always does, itself with another question.

But no matter how cloudy, uncertain and downright questionable this game of predicting the future gets, there's one thing sure.

A thousand years from now, when aquaform humanoids ply the seas like Darwinian dolphins with opposable thumbs, they'll be able to choose what music they want to hear, oldie Johnny Cash or moldy Yoko Ono. And they'll have tunes of their own, of course, a thousand years' worth, as well as music composed for playing underwater.

And that's just the top of it.

A case of temporal vertigo sets in, and I've got to get back to the past, to the present, I mean – the future our grandparents never dreamed of.

It's late now. The clock behind me thinks it's nearly 2, but I never fell back this fall, so I know it's only nearly 1.

I've got gas. My eyes blur, and I rub them with dirty fingers.

Something in my apartment smells like cheese. ...

I put another stack of 78s on the old record player, and right on cue, a final snowplow, lost straggler, heads up 13th Street, very early day two of the new year, 1999.

And did you party like it was?

* *The Cold War, for those who missed it: a historical footnote of no importance.*

Hookers, Inc.

Hooters franchise, employees and customers undermine women's equality



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Prostitution has been legalized right here in middle America. Just down O Street, as a matter of fact. Rest assured, the objectification and dehumanization of women continues at Hookers, I mean Hooters.

Hooters, a self-proclaimed family restaurant, has brought corruption and vice to our nice little town without an audible peep from any of the fine, upstanding leaders of our community. I suppose all the sexist idiots running about bought the pitch that Hooters would serve the best wings in town. And you know, that may well be the honest truth. I don't particularly care for wings, so I couldn't tell you.

Let's not play grab-ass with each other, though; Hooters would be successful if the menu consisted of overcooked Ramen noodles and squishy grapes.

The real appeal of Hooters are the sets of hooters on its employees. Clever guy (or gal) who thought of the name "Hooters," eh? It would be interesting to see a marketing plan for this establishment. I suppose it would be somewhat telling

as well!

All this family-schmamily stuff – who do you think their target audience is, the Sunday-after-church brunch crowd? I went in and checked it out before I fully developed my opinion. Please.

Hooters is a restaurant that openly considers the size of a woman's breasts as a qualification for employment. It's a restaurant, a harem if you will, where women get paid to put their bodies on display so patrons can ogle at their leisure. No, I don't think "harem" is too harsh a word.

Prostitution is the act of participating in sexual relations for money (Webster's). It's the sale of bodies. The Hooters franchise has profited directly from its employment of buxom women. It has therefore practiced legalized prostitution.

And although I believe the definition of "sexual relations" is currently being debated by our nation's elected officials, there is an unmistakable element of sex involved over at Hooters. So let's just concede that fact and leave our fearless leaders to hash out the details.

Who cares if it's just *looking*? It's the principle of the entire operation.

This leads us to two very interesting components of this prostitution ring – the employees and the customers. We'll start with the customers because they're an easier target.

Dirty old men and fraternity guys – these customers are the true cause for the perpetuation of sex-based industries. Hooters knows its customers could care less if the waitresses can remember who had what drink and who had spicy or mild, but rather for the willingness of the said employees to strut their stuff.

And of course, who could forget those famed wings?

These customers should be ashamed of themselves. Hooters and comparative businesses are mini-oppressors of women in the big picture of equality.

There is something about prostitution that has compelled legislators across the nation to deem it illegal. It could be that this industry fosters the further digression of family values.

But I would argue that it is because sex-based industries CANNOT operate without exploiting the civil rights of women. This type of "work" is clearly exploitative and negates the years of work spent acquiring equality for women.

I think that deep down, the recent strides made for women in the arena of equality are threatening to the overall male population, because they are detrimental to the time-honored Good Ol' Boy structure entrenched in our society. This dehumanization stunts the realization of equality for women. If compared theoretically, it is not unlike the objectification of blacks in the South following the Civil War – legally equal, but societally subservient.

You want to know what the worst part of the whole deal is? The employees of Hooters. Yeah, yeah, this is a free country – capitalist society, la, la, la. Hell, the Foxy Lady has been in Lincoln for years, and besides, there are male and female strippers in every city.

True, but that doesn't make it right. Prostitution is illegal, and while we may follow the letter of the law and consider intercourse for money illegal, we need to pay more attention to the spirit behind the laws.

And I think the employees of Hooters should have a little respect for themselves and not be hookers.

Nobody forced them into their jobs. There are non-exploitative jobs available at comparable pay.

For instance, these women could wait tables at a more expensive restaurant, perhaps one in our Historic Haymarket District. They could experiment in telemarketing – I hear that can pay very well. These women should at least explore their options before lowering themselves to the standard of this industry.

Perhaps these women would end up bringing home less money, but at least they'd have some dignity. And if they still don't like their options? This is also the "land of opportunity." They could make new options.

They could learn a trade, develop a natural talent or go back to school. Aha! No excuses. Money? I don't have any either. I'm not one of those students whose parents foot the bill. I pay the rent, car, gas, food, tuition – the whole shebang.

Where there's a will, there's a way. Don't accept the rationalizations of laziness.

It's important that women stop willingly putting themselves in positions of subservience, and take personal responsibility for where they are in their lives.

Employment of this kind not only hurts the employees of Hooters and other similar businesses, but it hurts me, along with all the other women who are fighting to be taken seriously. It makes women look stupid.

Women need to reject industries that pad profit margins with women's bodies. And communities like Lincoln need to denounce Hooters for what it is – prostitution.