

# Perspectives

## Letters to the Editor

### Maybe someone else should grow up

This letter deals with the editorial concerning the freshman class (Jan. 25, 1996). Unfortunately, *The Blue Banner* has disappointed me again, this time on a personal level. I understand all too well the antics and hoopla happening in the residence halls. I've been annoyed by piercing laughter and hysterics at 3 a.m. It's a nuisance to all students. Yet, this immature behavior has participants of all ages and class ranks. I can't count the numerous times I've seen upperclassmen (as well as freshman) play the "Let's sneak beer in" game and then throw loud obnoxious dorm parties. A review of past write-ups demonstrates it's not all made up of freshmen offenders. But it's easy to blame freshmen. But, in case you forgot, immature behavior is not limited to freshman year.

Also, the honeymoon metaphor is insulting. Are you people so arrogant and *wordy* to forget your freshman year? Well, let me refresh your memories with the majority of our experiences. Nights of

homesick tears, overwhelming feelings of insecurity, and dealing with possibly the biggest transition in our lives replaced the every night pizza parties. Also, intro courses are taken by all ranks of students. The degrees of difficulty are determined by the professor. Ever had Dr. Maas?

It's sad that your editorial board with all its maturity and wisdom decided to write a condescending, arrogant, basically petty attack on freshmen. Disclaimer or no disclaimer, your editorial was offensive and disrespectful and it offended a lot of people.

I'm surprised people in your field haven't learned to reach intended readers in a positive and constructive approach. Unless, it was your goal to insult and anger the freshman class. If that was your intention, well, all this *youngster* has to say is grow up.

Sincerely,  
Sara Vank  
UNCA Freshman

### Lack of light potential problem during winter

(CPS)-You awaken to the sound of your blaring alarm.

As you roll over and moan, you sneak a glimpse outside your window. Gray sky filled with gray clouds. You begin to wonder where the sun has gone. You haven't seen it in days.

Six hours later, you realize it's about time to get up. You think of the resolution you made just 10 days ago but quickly decide you're really not in the mood to workout. Instead, you get in your daily biceps curls by feeding yourself Cap'n Crunch straight from the box as you sit in front of the TV with Geraldo.

If this is a scenario you know well, then you may be one of the estimated 25 million people who suffers from some type of winter depression, according to "Winter Blues" by Norman E. Rosenthal, from the National Institute of Mental Health.

Winter depression comes in two degrees of severity, said Fred Turek, chair of Northwestern's department of neurobiology and physiology. Turek, who is also director of the Center for Circadian Biology and Medicine at NU, said some people with mild winter depression suffer from the "winter blahs," while others with severe depression suffer from what is called "Seasonal Affective Disorder" or SAD.

Turek, who has studied how seasonal changes and the length of days affect humans' and other animals' reproductive cycles, hibernation, and migration, said lack of sunlight-not cold temperatures-may be a major cause of winter depression. He said about 15 years ago, scientists began to notice that people suffered from the symptoms of clinical depression more in the winter than in any other season.

"What is causing the blahs? It's a complex set of conditions, and we don't have an answer," Turek said. "Look, it's already dark out. I'm getting depressed just looking outside," he joked.

Turek said exposure to artificial bright lights has curbed depression for some people.

"After many clinical trials, it has been found that bright light seems to be an effective treatment for winter depression," he said. "How it works, we don't know, but it's an effective treatment."

Miepje De Vryer, a psychiatrist at NU's Counseling and Psychological Services, said artificial light is an ideal treatment for SAD.

"These are special lights with particular wavelengths," said De Vryer. "You sit in front of these lights at a particular distance for about an hour each day, with your eyes open. In a week or so, most people can tell if it makes a difference."

Symptoms of the "winter blahs" include minor depression, and other behavioral changes, such as minor weight gain, oversleeping, tiredness, inactivity, increased stress and irritability, illness, and sadness, he said.

A recent *Chicago Tribune* article said that many people with the mild winter blahs start overeating in October, gaining an average of 5.5 pounds in the winter season, as they eat more carbohydrates, fats, and sugars. Some scientists say they think this may be related to an animal instinct to bulk up before the 'scarce' winter season.

Eric Haar, who has worked at Dan's Cookies for over a year, said there is a marked increase in cookie sales when winter sets in.

"Some people, when they get depressed, find comfort in food," Haar said. "Everyone

likes to stay in, and we deliver. During the spring thaw, there is a little decline in business."

Turek said those who suffer from SAD experience seasonal changes that significantly alter their daily lives, such as major weight gain, desire to hibernate, excessive tiredness, changes in personality, and other symptoms that won't allow them to carry on their normal routine.

Winter depression, in both its forms, is more common in the northern United States, where the duration and intensity of sunlight decreases in the fall and winter, according to Rosenthal. His studies have shown that between the 40 and 50 degrees latitude lines, which includes cities such as Chicago, Boston, New York, Seattle and Minneapolis, about 18 percent of the population suffers from SAD and 37 percent suffer from milder winter blahs.

Between 25 and 35 degree latitude lines, which includes such southern cities as Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, Miami, and Los Angeles, only about 5 percent of the population suffers from SAD and 18 percent from the winter blahs.

At Northwestern University, De Vryer said winter is a busy quarter at the counseling center. There are 15 counselors who helped more than 1,000 students last year.

"When the weather starts being cold and unpleasant, it can be one of the factors that can make things worse for depressed people," she said. "Despite the fact that spring comes, people sometimes still don't feel better."

"The cold, gray Evanston winters may contribute to the unhappiness of some NU students, causing them to transfer to other universities in warmer climates. University Registrar

Donald Gwinn said the number of undergraduates typically drops off a little bit in the winter. Gwinn said there were 7,603 students in the fall of 1994, which dropped to 7,498 in the winter—a loss of 105 students.

There are many reasons to account for this loss—graduating seniors, study abroad or university dismissal—but some students' departures may be due to depression and winter blahs.

Students from warmer climates said they have mixed feelings about the harsh Midwestern winters.

"Last year, the winter was a novelty," said Jonathan Koshiba, a NU sophomore who is from Honolulu, Hawaii. "The snow was cool, and it was kind of fun. Now it's kind of cold. It makes you wonder why you chose this school. But I don't get any more homesick during the winter than during the rest of the year. I get homesick like everyone else."

Education sophomore Joanne Park agreed that playing in the snow of the winter season is fun—for a while.

"I try to make myself happy in the winter," said Park, who is from Laguna Beach, Calif. "I sit at home and play guitar. It is a little bit harder coming from Southern California. We don't see the sun as often here as we do at home. Even if it's cold, whenever I see the sun here, it cheers me up."

Some students who have never before endured a Midwestern winter said they are looking forward to the winter as a change of pace.

"I've lived in Orlando all my life," said Josh Shader, a NU freshman from Florida. "At worst, I'll only have to deal with the winter for four years. But my answer may be different in three months."



### A cry for more modems

David Nanney

#### Columnist

The good should always come before the bad. Therefore, please allow me to offer some praise to one department on campus. Kudos to Leigh Svenson and Kent Thompson of the Learning Resource Center.

In my ongoing job hunting experience, I needed my demo tape copied to a video tape format reserved mainly for television use. At a very respectable price, Mr. Thompson sold me the tapes and completed the copying.

Due to a lack of cash, Mr. Svenson allowed me a short and small IOU. Thanks to both of these gentlemen for their assistance.

The remainder of this column assumes a limited knowledge of computers and the on-campus computer network. I do not feel this to be a bad assumption because our world now runs on the backbone of computers. However, if you have questions about parts of this article, ask almost anyone else.

Now, the bad. One day last week, I began to log into the

VAX, which I do several times per day. After entering my user name and password, a notice popped up on my screen. To establish the point of this column, I will include the message.

"NOTICE TO ALL MODEM USERS..."

Given the limited modem resources available, we restrict their use to serious academic ventures *only* by students, faculty, and staff.

We prohibit their use for inappropriate activity and by individuals who wish to monopolize them during prime evening hours. Game-playing, MUD, IRC, etc. are deemed unacceptable activities subject to account revocation."

I am one of the modem users. From my hideaway in Hoey, I connect to the VAX to read my e-mail, check weather information from around the country, and locate a plethora of other information available on the Internet.

I agree with restrictions against those who monopolize the modems strictly for entertainment purposes. At times, I

need on the VAX to do some type of homework or to research some topic. Occasionally, my computer's modem meets busy signals for quite some time. Even as many times as this has happened, I have never complained to anyone about the situation. I just have my computer re-dial until I get connected.

Sometimes that takes only a few minutes; at other times, it may be as many as twenty or thirty minutes. Yet, I never gripe to anyone.

Suddenly, the powers-that-be in the computer science department have decided to become Cyber Hitler's. Anyone caught "abusing" the system just might have their account revoked. This leaves several questions up in the air: What are these "serious academic ventures" mentioned in the message? Who decides exactly what is inappropriate? What can a user do, and more importantly, what can a user not do on the VAX from modem?

Anyone can certainly see the subjective nature of these questions.

As I read and reread this message, I attempted to translate the meaning so I might better understand the writer's intention. When I check my e-mail after my evening meal, am I in jeopardy of losing my Cyberspace Credentials? If the subject of academic ventures was left for me to decide, I would say e-mail itself is not academic. Do all of you computer literate agree with me?

If this were true, every time you check your e-mail you place yourself in the position of losing your VAX privileges. Does this upset anyone? Probably. Does this also put faculty and staff at the same risk as students? Probably not.

In past columns, I have stated one should not complain without having suggestions to alleviate the problem. It took a great deal of thinking to arrive at just one feasible solution not involving monetary expenditures, and even this idea is not completely fair.

Between the hours of 5 p.m. and midnight, restrict the use of modems by any one person to an hour or less. This would

at least cause a slight reduction in the bottleneck problem. Obviously, a person working on a FORTRAN assignment would not be happy if the system kicked him or her off while compiling a program.

The only other solution at which I arrived requires some money. I attempted to get information about our modems at UNCA to no avail. Therefore, I will speak from my own limited knowledge. As far as I know, we have ten modems available for faculty, staff, and student use.

To make a future comparison somewhat easier, I will restrict my discussion to only students. Fall 1995 census data, courtesy of Dr. Eric Iovacchini, indicates an enrollment of 3,222 students. Let's make the math easy and say an even 3,000.

A little division indicates one modem per 300 students. In my opinion, that's not a great ratio. A friend of mine attends Middle Tennessee State University. I asked him to acquire similar data for his school. Currently, 18,000 students share 80 modems, with an additional

40 modems on order. Counting the new modems, this provides a ratio of one modem per 150 students — half our ratio. By now, you may be asking where the money enters the picture.

If our computer science department would spend no more than \$1500, we could upgrade and double the number of available modems. If we had 20 modems available, our ratio would decrease to 1:150.

It is of utmost importance for our university to provide convenient access to the Internet.

No one really expected the recent boom in Internet interest, but it has happened. Truthfully, a world of information awaits you on the information superhighway.

Take just a moment and think of something you would like to know. Got it? I bet it can be found on the Internet. Many other aspects of the Internet make it tremendously helpful, and almost a necessity. I submit that with minor effort, the university's modem situation could be resolved.