

Ready or not, it's Parents' Weekend

Students panic as relatives descend.

Parents' Weekend is soon to be upon us, and if your parents, like mine, are planning to spend a quality weekend in Winston-Salem, you will find yourself making certain precautions before mom and dad arrive.

Yes, we are all adults here. We live on our own accord, pay our own bills, buy our own cigarettes and serve our own jail

Christen Balady
STUDENT COLUMNIST

times if need be. Yet although we are mature adults, we cannot escape the fact that we are still children — our parents' children. It is this concept of being a kid that compels us to run around like chickens with our heads cut off before the parents arrive on campus.

We find ourselves making our reputation squeaky-clean before we even begin to sterilize our rooms. We clean out our fridges, empty the coolers, yank the bottles we so proudly displayed from their pedestals and bury them deep into the dark abyss of our closets.

If you're anything like me, you'll even go as far as to remove any incriminating pictures from your walls and frames, so as to avoid awkward conversation when mom and dad take a gander at your home-away-from-home.

Next we clean the rooms. For some of us, this is the first time this year our rooms have been exposed to such extensive cleaning. And oh what a joy this sanitation is!

I've often wondered if paying *Service Master* would really be less painful than

actually having to vacuum up all the hair I've shed from my scalp in these two months.

And then there's that strange, gray, fuzzy substance, also known as dust-bunnies, which dwells in the corners of rooms, in the backs of closets under the radiator and inside the little control boxes of thermostats.

It is a combination of dust, laundry lint, blanket fuzz and popcorn crumbs. So we have our rooms and our reps shining like the top of the Chrysler building. Now what?

I would like to take a moment to thank the planning committees for Parents' Weekend. I realize you have planned a plethora of activities in order for students and parents to spend time attending some and not going to others in a "buffet style" weekend. But, I have a better idea. My parents are like two terminators. This weekend, I'm forcing them to do *all* the activities planned, so that at the end of the day, they're so exhausted they don't have the breath to ask me, "Honey, are you exercising/taking your St. John's Wort/bathing/sleeping/changing the filter in your Brita every month?"

Here's a novel idea: Take a bunch of baby boomers, put them on a college campus and play music that they listened to in college.

Nostalgic music like this combined with the collegiate atmosphere is what prompts my father to say things like, "I bet everyone thinks I'm a student here, because I'm wearing tennis shoes."

Then, when I look at him as if he's touched his lead-brimmed hat one too many times, he'll add something even crazier, like "Well, maybe if I was carrying a bookbag too."

In all honesty, we love our parents. Our parents buy us groceries and treat us to real food. Most of all, a weekend is just the right amount of time to remember how great it is to see your mom and dad, but realize how lucky you are that you don't live with them.

Leaders find way to forgive

Vigil organizers embody the spirit of Thanksgiving.

Robin Williams's character in the recent movie *What Dreams May Come* said the following statement to his wife: "Sometimes you have to lose in order to win." This statement reminded both of them of the poignancy of their lives before and after their deaths.

Joanna Iwata
GUEST COLUMNIST

Though the critics panned this movie as being too existential or "far out" of the mainstream, this was a human drama which focused on powerful themes of unconditional love, self sacrifice, hope, despair, faith and forgiveness.

The main plot focused around the challenges Williams and his wife faced as they were beset with the pain associated with the loss of their two children in an untimely accident, his death four years later and subsequently hers. Through the plot itself might sound morose, there was an uplifting message the director was trying to present: the power of forgiveness and the courageous acts it requires from all of us to move beyond our own fears to access that which is "good" within us and within other people.

To forgive. How easy is it for us to forgive those whom we do not see eye to eye with or who have hurt us? Why is it so difficult for us to forgive ourselves for

those acts which we may have engendered during the course of our lives which do not represent "goodness"?

When is it that we find ourselves leading complicated lives because we cannot forgive ourselves or others? What does forgiveness require from us?

My sojourn to address these issues began two years ago when I lost custody of my daughter (who was five then). Last year, when I turned 40, I created a rite of passage ritual to heal and bring a more holistic perspective back into my life.

Thus, I traveled to the mountains of Asheville. In my meditations, as I reflected on my life to date, I was able to bless and release the past which was then filled with pain, grief and loss for me.

And it's never easy trying to forgive yourself (thinking that I was letting my daughter and other people in my life down) or others who I perceived then as inflicting pain (my ex-husband).

Yet what I discovered then was that by the very act of opening myself to become more forgiving, I suddenly found that I was able to create more emotional space to enjoy that which was "good" in my life. And by allowing myself to forgive, I also brought into my life a new awareness of abundance (rather than despair) and a new reason for enjoying what will be the next best chapter of my life!

Last weekend, I decided to celebrate turning 41 by retreating again to the mountains of Asheville. But this time, I found that my focus was different as it was one that evolved around the spirit of Thanksgiving.

As I prayed, I found myself blessing the special relationships I share with my family and friends. And like the character Robin Williams played in *What Dreams May Come*, I finally felt that I reached a place in my own life wherein I have successfully conquered my fears with the realization that I am not alone.

During the past few weeks, I have also

became acutely aware of some of the challenges and trials the students who have worked so diligently in organizing the "Unite for Peace" vigil have each had to face personally and collectively in their endeavor to create a community-based program to address hate.

There have been moments wherein they felt discouraged by the lack of positive regard by our community, feeling despair at times, but nonetheless they persisted to bring about a wonderful program in the true spirit of *pro-humanitate*!

As I reflected on the different faces of ignorance and intolerance they faced within our university to organize the "Unite for Peace" vigil, I had to ask myself, where do our students find within themselves the capacity to forgive when they are confronted by community members who questioned the integrity of their values if not their faith? What do they feel they have to give up in order to win?

In this case, the organizers of the vigil did not have to compromise their values or faith in order to win, for simply by their acts of courage, they have won the admiration of many with their self respect in tact. As we enter into this time of Thanksgiving, I hope we are all reminded of the ties that bind us in the spirit of *pro-humanitate*.

I don't think it's ever too late to forgive or to extend our thanksgiving to one another in prayer, dialogue, writing, singing, dancing or just "being" there for one another unconditionally. Maybe to what we'll learn someday is how to avoid the pain of having to lose something in order to win. May we all be blessed by the spirit of Thanksgiving and what it means to all of us and the people we care about and love the most.

Joanna Iwata is the director of the Benson University Center.

Gillette remains on the cutting edge

The new MACH3 is deserving of mockery.

According to a story I read in *USA Hooray* the other day, it took seven years and \$750 million to develop the MACH3, but I guess when it comes to our national defense, gargantuan invest-

Joe Gera
GUEST COLUMNIST

ments in time, talent and cash are simply mandatory.

The MACH3, the story said, is "cutting-edge ... looks like a sleek silver jet ... the next breakthrough ... supersonic effect ... soaring above the earth's horizon."

It would be enough to make every American swell with pride, if only it weren't a damn razor. The MACH3 is a razor. Oh, I'm sorry, a "shaving system." That's what Gillette calls it.

For \$750 million, I was hoping Gillette could develop a system of towering razors that would form a gleaming picket fence along America's coastlines to slice nuclear payloads right off any incoming delivery missiles. Or something.

At \$6.99 retail, the MACH3 is essentially the Lincoln Navigator of razors, a preposterously oversized, overdeveloped hyper-utility vehicle for a culture where too much is never enough. Naturally, it's outselling competitors 4-to-1.

It's got three blades ("because you'll believe anything," as the ancient *Saturday Night Live* skit went) and "a set of soft rubber fins that cushion and stretch the skin so whiskers pop up easily."

Men, were you having a lot of difficulty getting your whiskers to pop up? Me neither. My whiskers are still poppin' up better than anything I've got, if you must know.

Even as my face achieves the approximate size of a basketball, I can still shave quickly enough that I don't think I need to go to MACH3.

The Mach number, you'll remember from trigonometry, is the cosecant of the

angle between the shock wave and the line of flight of the body in supersonic flow. I'd miss a spot; I know it.

They called it MACH3, I guess, because Tracheotomy 2 had a difficult marketing posture, and nobody liked the somehow ominous Decapitator 4000.

Gillette's marketing team initially considered some 87,000 names, including, presumably, Stan, Skeeter and The Razor Formerly Known as Sensor.

The MACH3 also has, according to its package, an "advanced indicator blue lubricant strip" that "fades away when you are no longer getting the optimal MACH3 shaving experience."

Again, because you'll buy anything. Over the years, and at a cost of only several billion dollars, Gillette has managed to raise a lot of people's expectations about shaving, probably because, as a design engineer admitted, former test pilot Chuck Yeager "was on our mind a lot when we did the design work." This clearly is where things got out of hand.

Instead of thinking of Chuck Yeager, these guys should have been thinking about my father, whose approach to shaving was always first presented to his offspring with the words: "Be still, because otherwise you'll cut your head off." Not the stuff they tell test pilots, but it was very convincing.

For the first couple years of shaving, I figured we stood over the sink so it would probably catch our heads when we cut 'em off. Mom had a real thing about heads rolling on the floor and possibly bouncing down the steps, but that's another column.

My problem as a reluctant consumer of "shaving systems" is that I do not have any ambitions on "the closest shave ever," which the MACH3 no doubt delivers. All I want is "a shave," which is why I use the disposable pink razors with daisies on them that come five in a pack for \$1.69, each of which can give me "a shave" for up to a month or more.

I don't suppose it's even worth pointing out that the actual physical difference between "a shave" and "the closest shave ever" is virtually immeasurable.

Gillette is currently developing the next generation of razor under something called Project Horizon.

You'd imagine it'll have leather seats.



Hey kids, it's that time again

Daylight-saving time defies educated explanations.

Who really knows? Most students did not realize daylight-saving time ended at 2 a.m. on Oct. 25 and those who did probably discovered it at an out-of-town bar when last call was extended by an hour. When it boils down to it, what difference does the extra hour gained really make for a college student? Not much.

Aaron Meier
U-WIRE

Ironically enough, the idea for daylight-saving time came about from a humorous essay written by Benjamin Franklin in 1784. The idea lay beneath the horizon of modern thought until it was put into effect by several countries during World War I to conserve energy. It was later used to during World War II and was permanently adopted during peacetime. For students who showed up to class early and now have an hour to kill, here are some theories on this modern-day curse.

The Cold War Theory: Basically this theory borrows heavily from the Chris Carter School of Conspiracy Theories.

The entire idea behind daylight-saving time was forged by the government. Franklin never really existed and his entire life has been fabricated by a secret government consortium of the CIA, FBI and the nefarious group known as the Library of Congress. The library has secretly executed multiple paramilitary operations whose primary objective has been to squash out the proof that Thomas Jefferson was a cross dresser who wrote the Declaration of Independence in a pair of patent leather pumps and a Victoria's Secret Miracle Bra.

The Old McDonald Theory: Point: Farmers need the extra hour of daylight to maximize crop production for the American masses. Counterpoint: Tell the four members of the Laura Engels Wilder Fan Club if they want more daylight, they can wake up an hour early. The rest of us will leave our clocks alone. The Sony/Hitachi/RCA Theory: In an amazing display of long-range marketing, the major VCR manufacturers anticipated the invention of the VCR and lobbied Congress for daylight-saving time knowing full well the clocks on those suckers would be impossible to change.

Just think about the number of people that will take a full month before they dig out the VCR remote and spend 30 minutes cursing at a blue screen before they give up, launch their VCR out of the fifth-floor window of Sterling C. Evans Library that opens up and go buy a new VCR, complete with instructions on how to set the clock.

The Prime Time Theory: The boys at NBC, CBS and ABC got together and figured if they made it darker sooner, people would be more likely to watch

prime-time television. Think about it: Ratings go up during the fall after daylight-saving time ends, and they go down when it starts up again in the spring. Of course, logically that would mean getting rid of daylight-saving time altogether, but who said the network execs are smart. These are the same people who give Tom Arnold sitcom after sitcom. If Americans wanted to watch a sweaty, overweight, balding guy tell bad jokes, they would visit their fathers more often.

The Seasonal Depression Theory: Last year seasonal depression was the new must-have mental illness. Supposedly, people get the blues during the winter months because they are exposed to less sun. In response, the great minds behind such stores such as Sharper Image and Brookstone introduced "scientifically designed" machines to rid people of this crippling ailment. What kind of genius does it take to put a light bulb in a box and put a \$100 price tag on it? If GE had been on the ball, it would have created special anti-seasonal depression light bulbs.

They could take the bulbs made during training day for the glass blowers and tell people they were ergonomically correct or some mumbo-jumbo word everyone hears, but of which no one really knows the meaning. Kind of like homeopathic or holistic, it is in boxes all the time, but Americans are too gullible to admit they do not know what the word means so they buy it thinking it is going to help. Will they never learn?

Aaron Meier writes for The Battalion, the student newspaper of the University of Texas A&M.