



Friends too easily forgotten



Donn Friedman

Sometimes we forget the most important people. A few weeks back my mother called me at work about 6:30 p.m. Now 6:30 may mean dinner to most, but to me it means deadline is rapidly approaching. During deadline I get uptight, intense and downright mean.

"What do you want," I snapped at the loving mother who was just trying to talk to her son.

I listened for a few minutes and then insisted, "It's almost deadline, I need to get back to my page."

I deserted the love of my mother and completed the day's work. As soon as I pasted the last paragraph down I checked the spelling in headlines and made sure the day of the week on the page was correct. I realized what I had done. How could I be so insensitive to the woman who bore me, even though on the phone she sometimes bores me — especially that time when I had a young woman in bed with me and wanted to get back to studying and stuff and my mom continued to talk and talk and talk, but that's another story, and this is a family newspaper.

My mother still calls; she understands ... she's my mother.

A couple of weeks back I wrote a column about a get together of some of my old group. We were back together for an unhappy occasion, one of the old group had been killed in a bike-car accident. We all met at my good friend Frank's house. In the column, I mentioned Roy and Dave and Kathy and Paul and Tracey and Tracy (even though I misspelled one of the Tracey's names). I even listed Todd and Tom and Tex, but I forgot Frank.

But Frank understood ... because Frank is my friend.

Sure, I have excuses. I always have excuses. Some people cry when they're sad; some people cry when they're happy. Whenever I'm happy or sad, I write. I was depressed when I wrote the column. Sure, I was working under deadline, that's my favorite excuse for mistakes, especially for grammatical and misspelled words in my columns. But that's no excuse at all.

It comes down to just two words: I forgot.

Too often I forget the people who are important to me. I suffer an affliction; I love to work; I love to chase women. Many times work takes precedence over friends, some times flirting takes precedence over friends.

For now, I've caught a woman. I've got work under control. I tell myself I'm going to take some time for my friends while I still have it, before I graduate and leave this town in December.

But when I don't, and when I forget, and when I snap at my Mom during deadlines or turn down friends' invitations one day, I hope they'll call me or invite me over the next. Or I'll ask them and they'll forgive me. They understand Donn Friedman.

Because they're my family; they're my friends. And sometimes I'm an asshole.

Donn Friedman is a weekly columnist for *The Battalion*. His column appears on Wednesdays.

Lebanese still fighting for democracy

On the twenty-second of November 1943, The French were forced to end their mandate in Lebanon thus leaving it independent, free and sovereign.

Reader's Forum
Reader's Forum
Reader's Forum

Based on democratic and pluralistic ideals, this independence, one of a kind in the region, faced hostile surroundings ranging from political to military and religious fanaticism, characterized by socialistic, communistic and dictatorial ideologies.

Being of hospitable nature, the Lebanese welcomed the influx of foreigners especially those whose rights were oppressed in the neighboring Arab countries.

In the case of the Palestinians who left their country and whose numbers exceeded one third of the population of Lebanon, they were provided with home, shelter and full enjoyment of our system. But, unfortunately with the help of the Arab countries and the materialistic support of the Soviet Union, those refugees decided to overthrow the Lebanese government and to take over the country.

On the thirteenth of April 1975, well-armed, transformed terrorists, Palestinian refugees attacked a packed church that afternoon. That date marks the birth of the Lebanese resistance headed by Bashir Gemayel. This resistance has lasted through 10 years of harsh fighting against hungry foreigners such as Palestinians, Syrians, Iranians, Lybians.

This resistance went on with almost no help from the Western world. However, the Lebanese through endless patriotism proved to the world that they deserve respect and support.

Finally, this resistance was crowned by the election of Bashir Gemayel to the presidency of Lebanon. "Bashir" brought with him the promise of a free and truly independent Lebanon. The U.S. Marines came to supervise the evacuation of the humiliated terrorists and to give moral support to the Lebanese government. Also, Israel had plans to withdraw and Syria had no choice but to do the same.

Unfortunately, the Middle East could not accept for Lebanon to become a strong independent country. On the fourteenth of September 1982, a terrorist bomb killed the elected president

along with 30 other people thus diminishing the hopes of Lebanon's safeguard.

On the twenty-second of November and after 300 U.S. Marines were killed by Iranian fanatics, Lebanon stands as far from independence as ever. Even though the Israelis announced plans to pull out, the Syrians are reinforcing their grip on the land they forcefully occupy. Palestinian terrorists are back along with their surrogates. In short, the Soviets are trying to dominate but they will always be challenged by the Lebanese Resistance which vows to defend Democracy, fairness and freedom in one of the few spots where those values are respected in the Middle East.

John Gebrane, VP
Fouad Voghoeib, Secretary
Mike Karam, Public Relations
Lebanese Association

Learning from foreign adventure

Sunbathing and studying in France

Dear Mom,

Well, I'm finally here — France — and I'm not sure that I like it. Things aren't like home at all. When we left the Houston airport and all the blue-blazered I.B.M. men behind, I was terrified. I didn't know any of the students and there were some I was sure I wouldn't like. But I'm getting to know them a little and everyone seems really neat and just as scared-excited as I am.

Tricia Parker

Things are different over here. They tell you that before you leave, but you don't really realize it until you're here. The first shock was getting off the plane. The sights weren't very different, just another airport, but the sounds ... all around we heard the guttural rasping of the Germans, Japanese over the intercom, French from the stewardess. Everything but English, in fact. I even had trouble buying a newspaper for the train ride.

I'm writing to you from Paris and things here are really weird. On the way to the Hotel Star we passed communist party headquarters, right there on the street, red flags and everything.

We passed some strange people, too. They're not like Americans at all. Everyone here has a funny haircut — guys and girls. They look like mushrooms, shaved up the back and sides, long and puffy on top. I've never seen anything like them especially in College Station. And the funny thing is they stare at us like we're dressed funny or something.

The Hotel you wouldn't believe. We have one bathroom per floor and one shower every two. We have these weird Arabs next door who turn toward Mecca and chant loudly six times a day, a landlady who refuses to speak to us, and a doorman who screams at us in French.

Speaking of the language, I'm not sure these people are speaking the same one we learned in class. We can't understand them and they certainly can't understand us. But I hear we get better.

The money's holding out well, maybe because we're afraid to go into the stores. The clerks are so...Parisian. I know this trip cost a lot of money. I hope it's worth it. I'll write soon,

Your loving daughter.

Dear Mom,

We spent our first week traveling around Normandy and Brittany in a bus. We'd be up by eight and on the bus by nine, traveling through the hilly green thickets along the coast.

We saw the American cemetery at Normandy Beach and we all cried a little at the lines upon lines of stark white crosses and marble Stars of David on the close-cropped grass overlooking the sea. It was cold for June and we couldn't help but wonder how those soldiers, not much older than we, must have felt coming ashore on those beaches.

We saw other, more cheerful beaches as well. You wouldn't believe it but everyone was lying out topless or nude and we were the only ones who seemed to notice. There were girls our age out there with guys, and women your age, mom, all topless. Everyone tried to act very blasé about it, especially the guys on the trip, but no one did a very good job.

We've stayed in some wonderful hotels. The bathroom is usually down the hall but the views and the rooms are lovely and the people wonderful. But the best part of the trip so far has been getting to know the people from A&M. There's not a whole lot else to do on the bus. They are really fun people and one guy does a stewardess imitation that's especially hilarious.

Oh well, that's all for now. I'll write soon.
Your loving daughter.

Dear Mom,

I know I haven't written for a long time but there's never been much time to sit still since we got to La Rochelle. My french mother's name is Madame Noireaud and she's a lot like you only she yells at me in French. I live with another girl from A&M, a man from Germany and a boy from Spain. Our French is improving because we use our English only when we don't want our housemates to know what we're saying.

We get up every day by seven and jockey for position in line for the shower. We go to breakfast and Mme. Noireaud stuffs us full of the long crusty french bread called baguettes.

Then we hop on our dorky bicycles and pedal seven miles into town to go to school. We have class from eight 'til noon and then we ride our dorky bikes seven miles back, out to the ferry which takes us to Ile de Re.

We spend all our afternoons at Ile de Re, an island right off the coast, surrounded by the icy Atlantic Ocean, and we're getting very tan.

And you know, I don't think there's anything wrong with topless sunbathing anymore, everyone does it. And at least this way, on the beach no one knows we're American unless one guy brings his jam box. Then, they come up and ask us if we have any Michael Jackson.

The biggest difference between here and the U.S. I can see is the quality of life. Things are so slow here. Shops close between noon and two. Tellers in banks and clerks in shops never hurry. At first this was aggravating but once I slowed myself down and got on

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There's been adventures as well as learning. We took an early morning taxi ride through the Bois de Boulogne — the red light district — and the biggest thrill was being able to understand the taxi driver when he told us the women in g-strings off to the right weren't women at all.

We spend the mornings in Christian Dior or St. Laurent and the afternoons relaxing in a cafe, staring at the French just as they stare at us. And when homesickness struck right after we arrived, we all went to the only Mexican food restaurant in Paris — maybe in France — tucked away in a dark alley and owned by a U.T. graduate. The waiter was from S.M.U. and the tequila from Texas, but the Montezuma's revenge we had for the next three days was purely Guadalajara.

We're growing fond of the Hotel Star and its abrasive management. The bathroom down the hall and shower upstairs don't seem like such an inconvenience. We've even learned to like the Arabs next door. I think we've all grown a little more aware of other cultures and a lot more tolerant.

We're leaving Paris soon but we're leaving different people than we came. We've made a lot of wonderful friends and wonderful memories. But we've learned things that will stay with us long after the memories fade — self-reliance, open-mindedness, confidence. I think it was worth the money. See you soon,

Your loving daughter.

P.S. By the way, I got my hair cut and I hope you like it. It looks kind of like a mushroom.

their schedule, I really enjoyed it. The French seem to take time to enjoy life. It makes me wonder if our hurly-burly lifestyle is really worth it.

The people I've gotten to know are fantastic and everyone seems to have cut loose, become carefree. Many have started to dress like the kids around us without even realizing, although no one's cut their hair like a mushroom yet. We'll be leaving for Paris soon and I'll be sorry to leave here. I'll write you when we get there.

Your loving daughter.

Dear Mom,

I feel like everyone has changed so much since we were last here, not only because of the classes we've taken but because of the things we've seen. Paris is an energetic city. People are bumping and busting along the narrow sidewalks all the time — a change from La Rochelle. I miss those dorky bikes. The Metro isn't as healthy a way to get around.

We've seen the Louvre, Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, but there's so much there won't be time to see. It's hard to realize you're in the streets Victor Hugo described in "Les Miserables" and just down the street from Toulouse-Lautrec's Moulin Rouge. The whole city has a sense of history, an ancientness, like no place else.

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Tricia Parker is a junior journalism major who spent the summer abroad in France.

The Battalion

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Letters Policy

Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.

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