

Don't worry about time speeding by



Bill Townsend

How long is 60 seconds? I know it's an odd question because the phrase answers itself. But ask yourself — does a minute always feel like a minute? The minutes you spend watching your favorite movie feel much faster than each set of 60 seconds that pass while you hold your friend's hair as she pukes from drinking too much. When we're young, we feel as if we have all the time in the world. As we age, those years feel shorter, as though we have no time.

In an article from *Psychology Today*, Ronald E. Riggio analyzes this phenomenon.

"First occasions are novel events and we tend to make more detailed and lasting memories of those first times," Riggio said. "When we repeat the event, year after year, it is less likely to make a unique or lasting impression."

What this means is when you first are exposed to events and places, time seems longer because you're soaking up more of what you're experiencing.

Consider the concept. During freshman year of college, everything felt like it was going by slowly. Each day felt like a millennium with Truman Week activities and all the new people you constantly were meeting. Maybe during that time you played board games with your floor every Friday night or peed on a frat house's door after they refused to let you in. After the first semester, your friend Sally two doors down kept saying she lost 10 pounds, but everyone knew she was lying because she clearly gained the freshman 15. Meanwhile, Jesus turned his head when you decided to go ahead and eat a whole pizza for dinner. At the end of freshman year, you realize you probably should have worried less about Sally's weight and more about your own, when you no longer fit into the cute red pants you bought from JCPenny for half off. Next year, maybe you joined a few organiza-

tions and got used to how college courses are run. Possibly, sophomore year you didn't do as well as you wanted in your classes, but junior year you managed to raise your GPA. After one or two internships — and hopefully a study abroad experience — you start wrapping things up with your capstone. With no warning, things got quicker and the next thing you know, you've just submitted your final college paper.

During my life, I've found Dr. Riggio's words true. Freshman year felt long, sophomore year quicker, and so on. Interestingly enough, during my junior year I studied abroad for a semester. That semester felt like an entire year, even though I was having the time of my life.

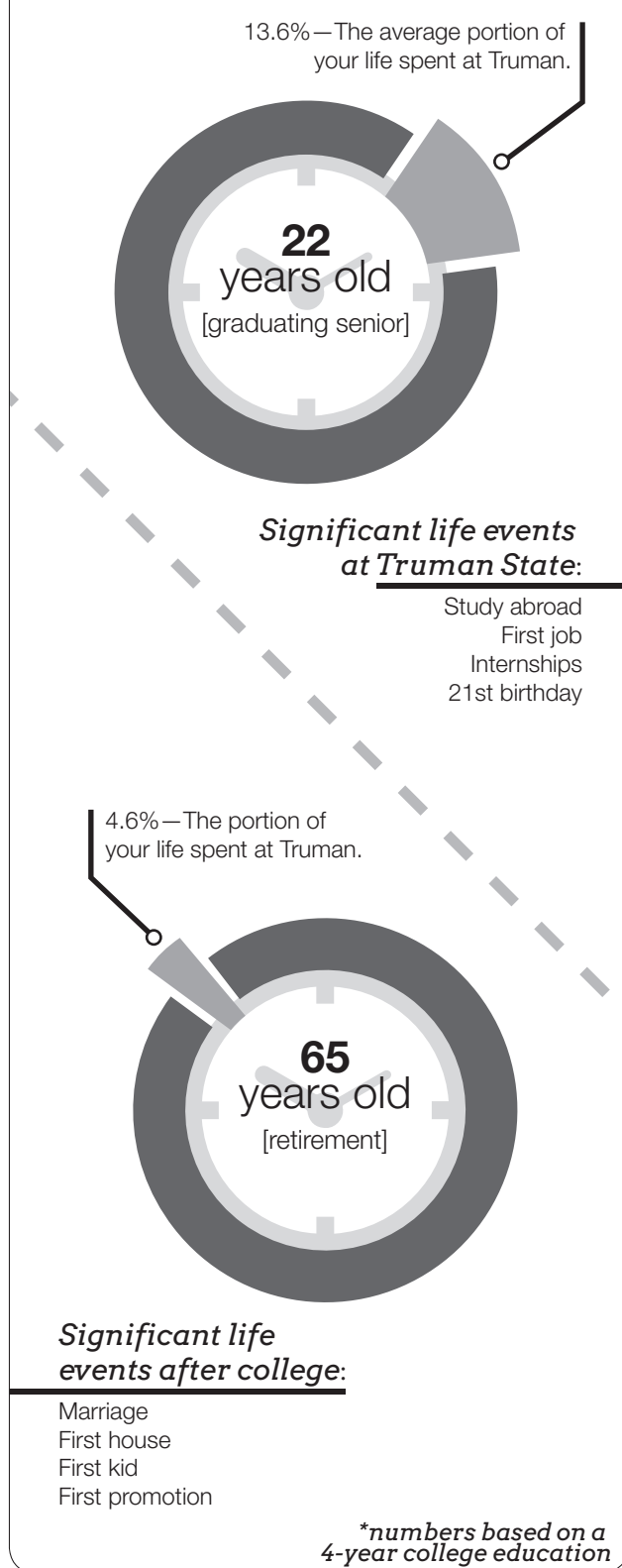
The idea of time flying by is a frightening one, especially if you have no idea what you want to do with your life. Maybe you don't want to think about the fact you are entering the age group where people start settling down and having families. You're expected to choose your career for the next 40 years.

Stop stressing about those things. Now, I know I'm not a doctor, nor am I a professional counselor, but if there's anything I can suggest from research and my personal experience, keep trying new things in life. When you do, more things in your life will stick out. That's when you create more memories. Start training for the 5k you've been saying you'll try. Join a new organization within your community or on campus. Or even when you're at a restaurant, dare to try something other than what you order each time. Yes, I know it sounds crazy and irrational, but maybe branching out from the typical cheeseburger to chicken nachos might be the best thing you did all week.

Seniors, you might feel as if you're not ready for the world, but I promise it will be okay. Try your best to do what you need to get done in the present, and the future will take care of itself. After all, the future really is just a continuation of the present. So make sure you do what you can right now. While receiving your diploma, be glad you made it and reflect on all the great memories you've made. More importantly, smile at the idea of creating more cherished memories throughout the future.

Bill Townsend is a senior economics and English major from Monett, Mo.

TIME ALTERS PERSPECTIVE



Incoming leaders should be trusted



Conor Gearin

Rather than worry our organizations will fall apart as soon as we leave town, we seniors should trust in the abilities of underclassmen.

Around this time each year, the executive boards of student organizations begin worrying about the power vacuum left by graduating seniors. However, I would argue it actually is this vacuum that creates the next group of leaders.

It's interesting how we tend to think the very conditions that created our leadership abilities would overwhelm similarly talented but younger people. Why do we think it would be so different for them than it was for us?

Perhaps this has to do with our confusion about how leaders develop. There are many ways to explain the phenomenon. A person's level of ambition, whether received through nature or nurture, is one reasonable way to

explain why the world generally is divided into leaders and followers.

I have been reading Tracy Kidder's nonfiction book "Mountains Beyond Mountains," which tells the story of Paul Farmer, an infectious disease doctor and medical anthropologist. There is no question he has an ambitious personality. By working and travelling 100 hours or more each week, Farmer created an organization called Partners in Health that provides healthcare to thousands of people in central Haiti who otherwise would have perished. He also has helped lead the fight against the modern tuberculosis epidemic among the poor.

Farmer was driven to do these things because it bothered him so much to know a patient was going uncared for, Kidder said.

While innate ambition can play a role, there are more cynical interpretations of leaders. Laurence Peter and Raymond Hull described one such idea in their 1969 book, "The Peter Principle." They sought to explain a world full of bridge collapses, cars sold with defects and cities built on floodplains.

"Everywhere I see incompetence rampant, incompetence triumphant," Hull said in his introduction.

Instead of being based on innate ambition, the Peter Principle states people tend to rise through the ranks until they reach the level of their own mediocrity.

I first heard of the Peter Principle during an episode of the TV show "30 Rock." I would argue the theme of the show in general is mediocrity — or at least learning to readjust your expectations when life doesn't work out how you wished.

In the show, main character Liz Lemon, played by Tina Fey, finds her dream job of writing for a TV show in New York City, comes with many frustrations. Her best friend and boss Jack Donaghy, played by Alec Baldwin, experienced years of absurd success as an executive for General Electric. But then a cable company from Pennsylvania named KableTown buys out his business division, NBC. The TV station had been performing so badly that KableTown was able to make the purchase a tax-deductible donation.

But maybe there is an explanation somewhere between the Peter Principle and the effect of innate ambition. In my experience and observations of others at Truman State, the lack of leadership can motivate people as much as or more than the presence of strong leaders. Often I have seen students who previously had not considered themselves leaders step up when they saw a need.

To me, this explains why we have so many student clubs, serving such wide-ranging interests and goals

— and why those clubs do not all disappear each year. It was the lack of women in TV writers' rooms that drove Liz to NBC, and it was the lack of leadership in healthcare for underserved populations that drove Farmer to develop Partners in Health.

I have participated in small, struggling clubs and thriving ones. Each has experienced at least one moment during which people were not sure the club would be the same the next year. And each year, people stepped up.

However, it is an act of faith for seniors to leave the power vacuum that was so important to our own development as leaders at Truman. Maybe it's not that we believe no one else could do our jobs, but we have forgotten what it feels like to be a beginner — to be willing to take risks and challenge ourselves.

Whether we want to or not, we are about to return to that feeling in full force after graduation. We again will be changed by serving needs we now cannot imagine.

Conor Gearin is a senior biology and English major from St. Louis, Mo.

AROUND THE QUAD

As a Truman student, how connected are you to the international community?

I don't feel that connected. There are lots of organizations I can join.

Rachel Hanna
Freshman



I'm somewhat connected. I can go to the MAC and talk to more people.

Abraham Copi
Junior



I used to have a lot of international friends when I was a sophomore.

Alesha Pisciotta
Senior



I have a couple friends who are international students.

Christopher Beckmann
Freshman

