

Campus Commentary

My Square Roots

Inspired by Alex Haley, I have just completed a ten year search to find my own roots. I had to know the origin of the Pincus clan and where my people came from.

My search led me to an obscure tribe of Native Americans and my most ancient direct ancestor, Kunte Kinte Pincus. It seems my people lived in harmony in the Catskill Mountains until the white man

the pilgrims at the First Thanksgiving. They were happy to take his recipe for turkey, but rejected his suggestion to substitute a bagel and cream cheese for stuffing and cranberry sauce.

Many fled west and no doubt you have heard of the great contributions they made. Kit Pincus became a famous indian scout and Buffalo Bill Pincus helped clear the prairies of bison. However, Buffalo Bill was forced to go bankrupt when his chain of Kentucky Fried Bison stores went under. Wyatt Pincus was the comptroller of Tombstone until he was removed from office for giving a huge, unsecured loan to his cousin, Buffalo Bill Pincus.

I have been able to trace my relatives to the present day and the spirit of invention they have shown continues to present itself. Clarence "Chickpeas" Pincus is generally credited with inventing the salad bar and Franco "Super-supreme" Pincus invented the artificial sausage they put on pizza nowadays. Sigmund Pincus almost won a Nobel Prize for his discovery of the runaway libido which he found by observing the behavior of his brother, Ron "Don Juan" Pincus. Unfortunately, Sigmund's work was cut short when Ron was arrested in an ugly incident inside the dressing room of the Solid Gold Dancers. Another near miss came when Edison Pincus invented the solar powered flashlight.

I am truly thankful to have found out about my famous relatives and hope to add something to their luster with my own efforts. I intend to follow the advice of my politician relative, Teddy R. Pincus, who said to walk softly but carry a big schtick.

Cynicism & Humor



Alan Pincus

came and took many of them into slavery down south. Evidently, although they lived a rather primitive existence, they had a tremendous talent for accounting. In fact, they are the only known tribe to invent double-entry bookkeeping before the wheel. The slave traders sold them as breeder stock to keep the plantations full of accountants and MBAs. Many were forced to keep two sets of books against their wills. They did not always do all this back-breaking work with a smile on their faces, however. It was my ancestor, Mogambo Pincus, who led a bloody slave revolt shortly after failing his CPA exams.

Despite this cruel treatment, one of my relatives, Squanto Pincus, was there to help

Haunting Noises Heard in Olmsted

By Joe Kupec

I have been hearing some funny noises in the Olmsted Building lately. Around the end of the third week of October it all began as faint whispers and sighs. Initially I shrugged it off as the Central Pennsylvania wind whistling down the river valley and through the windows and walls of the campus physical plant.

As Halloween drew near the sighing grew to audible moaning and the whispers were transformed into tortured choruses of thousands of voices. No problem I thought, after the thirty-first of the month these sounds of the season will recede into the acoustic tile ceiling from whence they came.

Election Day has come and gone and those disembodied voices are still here. During the day the noise of the students in the corridors and instructors lecturing drown them out. At night, when most serious students are awake and at work the sounds can be somewhat distracting. The source of all this unearthly cacophony isn't the unquiet dead associated with Halloween. The arrival of the spring schedule is the real source of the nightly noise.

The number of similarities between Halloween and scheduling are amazing. Many children go to great lengths conceiving the perfect costume for a night's trick or treating. Others create a diversion

distracting mother and then pilfer a percale sheet from the hall linen closet. This ingenious child makes a few modifications with a pair of scissors and in a second a generic ghost hits the streets in time for Halloween.

A parallel may be observed when students set up their schedules. For some students, an amazing amount of research is involved in scheduling. They run a grading profile on the instructors, check with classmates who have already taken the course as to its degree of difficulty and attempt to acquire the last semesters notes and exams. The free spirits simply pick out courses that fulfill minimal requirements for academic progress and schedule no classes prior to 10 am. Forging their advisor's signature on the drop/add form is not beneath the dignity of a free spirit. I'll let you guess which student probably stole their mother's sheets on Halloween.

Halloween and registration just would not be the same without a few pranks. Her at Penn State the system has more than its normal share of "tricks" for the student. As kids, we used to sing a jingle, "Trick or Treat, smell our feet, give us something good to eat!" when we stopped by a house. It wasn't unusual to get a "trick" in the form of a bucket of confetti dumped on us or like the unfortunate Charlie Brown, a rock. The biggest "trick" in scheduling is knowing that the schedule has come out. It's one of the best kept secrets on campus. The next "trick" in the

scheduling adventure is getting a copy of the spring semester schedule from your respective department office and meeting with your advisor to OK your choice of curriculum. The former being much easier to accomplish than the latter leads me to observe that come scheduling time advisors may be as illusive as the great pumpkin. Fear not, the university in its omnipotent wisdom has set scheduling dates so far in advance that there is plenty of time to track down your advisor. Remember though, the last people to see ghosts are ghost hunters. This also applies to students seeking advisors.

Registration has one last trick in store for most students. I am referring to that inevitable wait in the Gallery Lounge. It is not the time in line that I'm referring to but that dreaded

comment, "I'm sorry but that section is full."

Suddenly the possibility of having to repeat the entire process of writing a schedule, tracking down the advisor, and getting back to the Records Office to schedule is like being condemned to cross all the bridges on the Susquehanna between Middletown and Marysville before midnight. It could be worse though. You could get up to the counter in Records and present that slaved-over schedule and the computer could go down. This last prank is like having your outhouse tipped over while you are using it--a great prank except for the guy inside!

Saying Thanks

By Vicki Koon

With Thanksgiving Day approaching in the midst of papers due and tests to be taken we may forget to take the time to say thanks to those that make us feel loved, alive, and human.

Thanksgiving is a day to Respond. Most people take this to mean hugging Mom with a pot of mums in your hand, sitting in front of the TV making football stadium noises with Dad, devouring turkey and stuffing and sweet potatoes and peas and broccoli and carrots and salad and cranberry sauce while saving room for dessert, and finally going to sleep feeling only indigestion tugging at the conscience.

What about the person who called you and said how happy she was to read your

article, or the understanding editor of the paper who sweated out receiving your late assignment? Or the person who lent you his notes when you missed a day of class? What about the person chasing his hat on the expressway that made you laugh, or the person who wrote that book that made you cry? What about your neighbor who signs for your UPS deliveries, or lets you use their clothesline? What about the day your mother helped you clean your new apartment when you moved, or when your father was understanding when you quit your job? What about your teacher who gives you confidence, and inspires you to set higher goals for yourself? What about that Chuck Brown tune that made you feel like rolling your chair out of the office and dancing instead of going home at three in the morning? What about that person that smiled back at you?

When you respond to life around you, you are asserting your aliveness, your humanity. The more you respond to others, the more they respond back. It's a boomerang full of all the unpredictable surprises of life. On Thanksgiving this year give thanks for all of life, and then Start Responding to it. Soon enough, you will be thanking yourself.



A visit to the Sculpture garden at dark reveals some interesting shadows that make the statues appear almost lifelike.

Photo By Joe Kupec