

Noping

As an English Language major, I find I am constantly looking for the right word. And occasionally—or more than occasionally—this entails making one up when it appears there isn't one.

Perhaps my very favorite word to describe the classic college experience came to me at about 2 am—a time I could claim is the most creative time of day with plenty of evidence.

This particular time was the end of the first semester of my sophomore year of college during the last few days of finals. I had dutifully put off my final essay for my advanced grammar class and so had sequestered myself in the library all day—with one exception.

When one of the journals I was editing for announced they were having a year-end social with pie, I had to be there. And once there, you can imagine the incentive to go back to the library was pretty low. I also noticed that there was quite a bit of pie left. *What will they do with all this pie?* I wondered.

And so, I loitered until there were maybe five of us left in the room. At that point, I had the luxuriating sensation of a near accomplishment. As one of the boys in the back got up to leave, someone shouted to him, "Take a pie!" Here was my moment! I stood up, wandered over to the table, and grabbed a completely untouched banana cream pie. On my way out the door I snagged two plastic forks, because you never know what fate can throw at you—a strapping young man, a good friend, or perhaps just two free forks.

A while later I met my Mandarin study group in the library. My friend Rachel arrived late because the basketball game had made parking horrendous. After the study group, I offered to walk with her back to her car. We were walking down the ramp to the Helaman Halls when my friend sat resolutely on the curb. Wondering if everything was alright, I sat down beside her. "What are you doing?" I asked. "I'm *noping*," she replied.

For the next half an hour or so we sat down and *noped* together. We listened to the cars pass overhead, to the small conversations of exhausted freshman coming down the ramp, to the sound of the sprinklers coming on.

From where we sat on the curb we could look out on the west side of Provo. To our right was a bridge on which the traffic that Rachel would be headed into shortly had come to a near halt, and so, in part, it justified our *noping*. We decided we would wait for the traffic to clear up, realizing this could be a long wait. But the thing is, it didn't really feel like waiting.

When you nope, if you do it properly, you don't take time into account anymore. This means I really have no idea how long we sat there talking. It also means I forgot all about the unfinished research paper waiting for me in the library.

At long last we got up and walked the rest of the way to her car. It was at this point I remembered the pie. My two forks proved serendipitous. We took out my two plastic forks and ate straight from the tin as we sat in her car and talked. I introduced her to the Wikipedia game and we spent another hour thus engaged. By now it was nearing midnight.

"Do you want me to drive you home?" my friend asked.

"Actually, I have to go finish a paper."

Be it known, the paper was finished.

So what exactly is *noping*?

Have you ever heard the song "Chasing Cars"?

The chorus goes, "If I just lay here, will you lie with me and just forget the world?" Ignoring the stanch grammatical crime this song commits (the first lay should be lie), we find in these beautiful lyrics a pretty good definition of *noping*. The song continues, "Let's waste time chasing cars around our heads." That is also a pretty good example of *noping*.

I guess you could say that *noping* is a lot like demolishing a banana cream pie--it's good in most any proportion because it remains just as sweet with every bite. It's most enjoyable when you really ought not to be doing it. And it's best done with a friend and two plastic forks.

But what does *noping* have to do with college?

My first semester was one of my best academically. The second semester was the same. But as I neared my second year I started to realize what I'd missed. I hadn't made many friends. I had been to only one basketball game. I had no one to room with the coming year.

My second year, I met Rachel and things changed. We found the Star Wars bridge in the maze of the HFAC, we stayed late in the library drawing Mandarin characters on the whiteboards, and we formed study groups. My third year I found the balance harder as my friend group expanded. We went to hot springs, learned guitar, had late-night movie nights, and occasionally we sat and worked.

Sometimes, faced with work, school-work, and the opportunity to go axe throwing I had to say no to the axe throwing. Other times, it was late at night when a friend called needing help editing a paper or just needing to talk and I learned to say nope to sleep. Still other times I learned to say nope even to the homework and essays. And eventually I realized that *noping* is about knowing what to say no to. And knowing when to say yes to *noping*.