

Opinion

Unclogging the mystery of the missing sock

Laundry. One of the most gruesome, tedious and time-consuming chores known to man. Laundry, like cancer, is something we have to live with. Laundry, like cancer, is something that must be taken care of soon, otherwise it will grow and grow and GROW and GROW until it's nothing but an ugly, misshapen mass. Laundry must be dealt with before it takes on a life of its own.



Karl Pallmeyer

To do one's laundry one must be prepared. To do laundry you need four things: dirty clothes, money, detergent, a washing machine and a dryer. Finding dirty clothes is no problem since most people have an overabundance of this commodity. Money, as always, is a problem. The biggest problem is that most washing machines and dryers only take change and having the exact change in the exact amount takes an inordinate amount of luck. Detergent poses a problem because you always seem to be running out.

But the biggest problem is finding a washing machine and dryer.

Most people do their wash on Sun-

days. Most people don't have time to do their wash during the week, and Saturdays are usually reserved for more entertaining prospects. With so many people doing their wash on Sundays it becomes nearly impossible to find a washing machine or a dryer. To get a washing machine or dryer on a Sunday you have to get up pretty early.

Last Sunday, like most Sundays, I got up pretty early so that I could beat the after-church crowd to the washing machines and dryers. I was lucky, there was no one except a repair man working on one of the dryers.

I put my clothes in the washing machine, poured in the last of my detergent and sat down to wait while the suds did their stuff. Since I couldn't do much else until my laundry was done, I struck up a conversation with the repair man.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I'm fixing the dryer," he replied.

"What's wrong with it?"

"The Alpheratz Specialized Sock Sucker is stopped up."

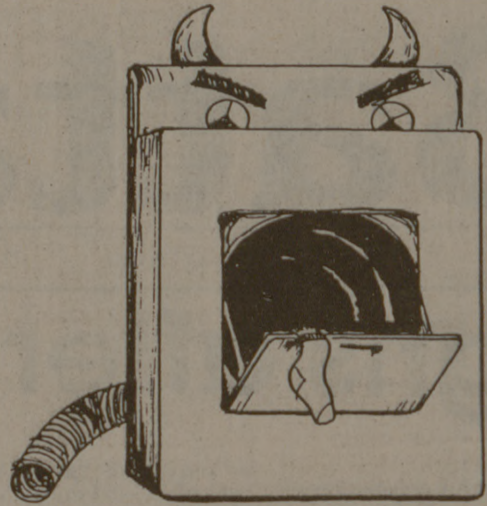
"The what?"

"The Alpheratz Specialized Sock Sucker, it's a marvelous invention," he said as he pointed to a box with a tube that led into the drum of the dryer.

"What, I'm almost afraid to ask, does it do?"

"You know how almost everytime you

do your laundry you lose a sock? Well, this is the reason. The primary function of this device is to suck one of your socks



out of your laundry, but it does other things too."

"Like what?"

"Well, once someone else puts his laundry in the dryer, it will deposit your sock with his load."

"That explains where I got that purple and pink striped sock last week."

"Yes, the Alpheratz Specialized Sock

Sucker is good at finding the most tasteful items of apparel in the state. It's designed so that you never get anything you would be caught dead in."

"Is it possible to get one of the socks you lost earlier?"

"Yes, but it wouldn't do you any good. Mr. Alpheratz made sure that you would never get anything useful out of a dryer. The only way you could get one of your own socks back is if you throw the other one away. The Alpheratz company has installed devices in all the trash dumpsters across the state to scan for old socks."

"Who is this Alpheratz dude anyway?"

"Fred J. Alpheratz, the most ingenious inventor since Thomas Edison. He's the man who invented those blow dryers that have replaced paper towels in most public restrooms. He's the man who invented the people-proof lids for aspirin bottle that only kids can open. He's the man who invented both MTV and The Nashville Network. He's the man who invented 'People's Court'. He's the man who invented those speed bumps in parking lots that ruin your front-end suspension if you drive faster than 3 1/2 mph. He's the man who invented the machine that puts more than

300 subscription cards in every text

book you buy. He's the man that invented the new Coca-Cola. He's the man who invented Swatches, we're still laughing about that one back at the office."

I watched with interest as he pulled about two dozen of the most strange and grotesque socks I've ever seen out of the Alpheratz Specialized Sock Sucker tube. Then he pulled out a small computer chip out of his tool kit and installed it in the Alpheratz Specialized Sock Sucker's control box.

"What's that for?" I asked.

"That's the Alpheratz Embarrassing Situation Creator," he chuckled. "Mr. Alpheratz's newest invention."

"What, pray tell, does it do?"

"It scans for sexy female undergarments and sucks them out of the load."

"What's so embarrassing about that?"

"Well, it waits until some couple is doing their wash together and then deposits the negligee, bra or whatever in their load. Without fail, the wife screams 'where the hell did this come from' and the husband can't come up with a logical answer."

"Sounds like fun."

"It is. You should watch Mr. Alpheratz's favorite show sometime, it's called 'Divorce Court.'"

Karl Pallmeyer is a senior journalism major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Terrorism made easy

The Italian and Yugoslavian governments are throwing away America's first chance to prosecute some of the people responsible for the recent wave of international terrorism. They are allowing these terrorists to get away with murder. They have allowed politics to take precedent over law.

The Italians released Mohammed Abbas, the alleged engineer of the Achille Lauro hijacking, despite the considerable evidence of his guilt. Italian Prime Minister Bettino Craxi Thursday assured the United States that Abbas and his accomplices would be held for trial. A U.S.-Italian agreement puts a legal obligation Italy to detain anyone sought by the United States until Italian courts can render a decision.

Italy's reasoning was probably based on internal political strife and diplomatic pressure applied by Egypt rather than legal justification. The release had no legal reasoning — it was ordered by the government.

Italian and American law holds leaders of terrorists groups responsible for the actions of their organizations. Yet Italy freed Abbas and retained his lackeys. This is just a shadow of the justice Americans — and everyone else involved in the Achille Lauro incident — deserve.

Abbas, now believed to be in Yugoslavia, has been granted diplomatic immunity by that country because it officially recognizes the Palestine Liberation Organization, which Abbas is affiliated with. Recognition does not automatically guarantee diplomatic immunity. By sheltering Abbas, Yugoslavia is denying justice to the victims of the terrorist attack.

In a self-centered submission to political pressure, the governments of Italy and Yugoslavia have struck a fatal blow to dealing with terrorism through legal means. Justice demands that terrorists be prosecuted despite detrimental effects to a country's political and diplomatic needs.

America will find it difficult to "get tough on terrorism" when our supposed allies are aiding the people we need to get tough on. With friends like these, who needs terrorists?

The Battalion Editorial Board



Flush and pay the European way

I was fortunate enough to spend most of this past summer traveling through Europe. Before crossing the Atlantic, I had heard that many Europeans treat American tourists with disrespect, seeing us as greedy and self-centered. Initially, I thought this anti-American attitude might be due to our high standard of living, our inability to speak a language other than English or some other issue of similar magnitude.

Mike Cramer
Guest Columnist

As my travels began, I spent many a gut-wrenching hour pondering this issue when it suddenly hit me — the Europeans resentful attitude towards Americans is not due to economics or politics, it is due to public bathrooms.

The first two overseas public bathrooms that I used were located at Gatwick Airport and Victoria Station in London. At both places, the urinals were free, but the toilet stalls required money for their use. I remember thinking to myself, "I'm glad I'm not a woman, and I'm glad I only have to do number 1." Otherwise, I really did not take notice. If I would have realized that this was really a European bargain, I would also have done number 2. My trip had only progressed a few days before I figured out that free bathrooms appear in Europe like Texas A&M in the Cotton Bowl, but I was optimistic.

Now, there are a lot of things in this world that I will pay for without a second thought (and do not read anything in that statement that is not there). However, if there is one thing in this world that ought to be free, it is relieving one's self in a facility with adequate plumbing. It's not that the cost is going to break me. Shoot, if I did number 1 and opted not to wash my hands, I could get away for about three cents.

But what happens if I do not have the proper change or if I have no money at all? Well I would say I'm up a nasty creek. Such a situation could put someone in such a frenzied state, it scares me

to think what might happen. Free public bathrooms are good for everyone.

So I resigned myself to the fact that public bathrooms were not going to be free. Worse still, I am an avid bathroom user, and I feel good when I am finished using one.

I decided to turn this adversity into a game, because I like games. Mike vs. Europe. I tried to hold it in until I got back to the hotel at night. Needless to say, Europe beat me, but I did not give up easily. There were days when tears formed in my eyes, I had to go so bad. Sometimes the hotel was within sight, but, more often, I broke down and paid.

Entering public bathrooms feeling defeated, I had no idea of the surprises that were ahead of me. First, there was the free-standing, self-contained pay toilet in France. It looked like a port-oilet from the 21st century. A space shuttle looking thing.

The appearance was impressive enough, but when I put my money in, I knew I was getting the best. The semi-circular door slowly revolves open, revealing a clean, sparkling white toilet. Then, a pleasant, relaxing sort of music begins playing to make the whole experience that much more enjoyable. And it was, except for the fact that I could not decipher the flushing mechanism. Being an engineer, I felt embarrassed by this French toilet.

Then there was the one where I paid a female attendant the proper fee. She kindly escorted me to the toilet. And stayed. I'll be darned if she didn't wait outside the stall for me to finish. I realize that Europe is a liberal continent, but this was too much. I feel the toilet represents the ultimate in privacy, and I should be able to use it alone.

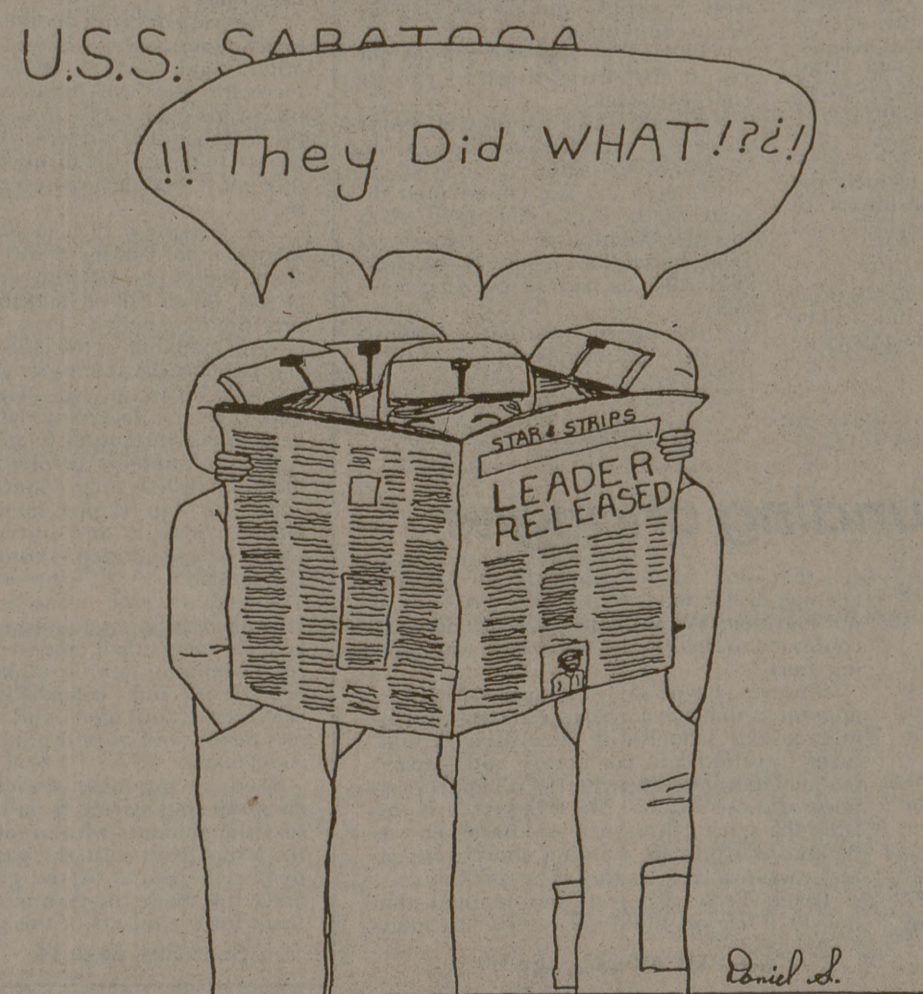
In Germany, I was the victim of what I will call commodal discrimination. I gleefully entered and used what appeared to be one of the few free European public bathrooms. On the way out, I was confronted by an attendant who made it rather clear that this was not a free bathroom. Dejected, I reached into

my pocket to pay for services rendered. At this time, a German who also had used the bathroom exited and said a pleasant "good-bye" to the attendant. That's right, he did not pay a thing!

After these frustrating encounters, you can imagine my incredible joy when I paid 500 lire at a Venice train station and experienced an electronic bathroom. I expect a lot for 500 lire anything, and I was not disappointed. I finished using the urinal, it flushed. I put my hands under the faucet, water came out. I put my hands under the blow drier, hot air comes out. Incredible stuff! This was an exception to the norm.

We have a lot to be thankful for living in the United States. We have a free enterprise system, democratic government and the Bill of Rights, but free public bathrooms are right there. Other countries only dream about them. Is this a great country or what?

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