

I apologize beforehand for the Karl Pallmeyer-esque tone of this column. I'm not a rabid person by nature. But the subject of this editorial makes me foam at the mouth. You see, I'm a waitress. And I'm writing about the worst tippers in the Western world, who, 99 percent of the time, end up being C.T.s.

While I don't want to be harsh or unfair, or to stereotype the good with the bad, that's simply the way it is. I've seen the occasional C.T. pay his bill and leave a decent tip, or one lone C.T. take it upon himself the gargantuan task of persuading his buddies to leave a quarter. But they are few and far between, lonely individuals among the hordes of marauding Sunday night C.T.s who wreak havoc on incomes and egos before they trudge back to Duncan.

I used to think, in an effort at being objective, that C.T.s *seemed* to tip less by virtue of the fact they have no hair and were easily identifiable as a group. Guilt by association, in a way. So I looked for other groups. Slowly but surely, I found fraternity and sorority people, for instance, or the Entomology Club. Strangely enough, they all tipped well.

Then it dawned on me that these reasonably nice, not moderately rowdy, guys were all C.T.s. And whether they don't tip because they're in the Corps or whether they joined the Corps because they don't tip, I don't know. Is it caused by ignorance or apathy?

For purely scientific, sociological reasons, I'd like some C.T. out there to tell me why C.T.s don't tip be-

cause there are a lot of waiters and waitresses all over town who'd like to know too.

For many of us, waiting tables is a way to put ourselves through school. It's great because you get to help people and learn to be pleasant, efficient and responsible. But this isn't the Boy Scouts. We aren't doing it for fun alone. Yes, my khaki-clad lads, we're in this for the money and you're screwing up our income.

For example, waitresses generally get taxed on 8-10 percent of their total sales in food. That means if you don't leave at least 8 percent the waitress is subsidizing your meal by being taxed on money she didn't make.

The management is able to pay her less because she theoretically makes over minimum wage in tips. Because they pay her less, they can keep food and labor costs low. Because food and labor is cheap, the food remains in a reasonable price range and you can afford to eat there. So when you don't tip, sure, your meal is a little cheaper; but it makes the waitress angry, gives the Corps a bad name and causes normally mild-mannered people to write rabid columns.

Now before you start telling me Highway 6 runs both ways and I'm a commie-pinko journalist, let me tell you that when I started this job I thought C.T.s were just peachy. I couldn't understand why all the other, more experienced waitresses cringed when The Spirit of Aggie-land arrived en masse.

It took me about three tables to find out. At first, I thought, "O.K. I'm a lousy waitress. I deserve to get 'stuffed'" (waitressese for not getting a tip). After a little experience, I thought maybe they just forgot to tip.

But, after the third and fourth platoons disembarked, I began to realize it wasn't me, and it wasn't a mistake. They were doing it deliberately, holding dear to the conception that a tip is optional.

Wake up and smell the coffee, you ignoramuses. A tip is not optional. In European countries, they add it to the bill so they won't be stiffed by ugly Americans. A tip is part of the price you pay when you go out to eat. If you don't believe in tipping, or you simply can't afford it, don't go out to eat some place where a tip is expected. It's as simple as that. I'm sorry if you're poor, we are too, which is why we're working.

I hold firm to the belief that how you treat a waitress is a reflection of your upbringing, specifically, and your character in general. If you are well-brought up, have some manners and a modicum of social decorum, you try to adhere to society's standards of good manners.

Good manners is all tipping really is, little different from opening a door for your grandmother or taking off your hat in the MSC.

But for some reason, the visible majority of C.T.s are able to ignore matters of etiquette, maybe because etiquette isn't of particular importance when you're living in a herd.

But it's not ignorance, I feel sure. Some C.T.s are bound to come from what my mother would call a good family and two or three have heard of Emily Post. A convenient memory lapse doesn't explain the C.T.s who yell a cheerful good-night as they shuffle out of the restaurant, leaving a 35-cent tip on the table. So that eliminates penury and ignorance.

Why does the figure 15 percent never permeate their fuzz-covered brains? Maybe their heads are se-

lectively permeable? Have they been turned to mental mush by the pressure of push-ups and yells? Maybe they're just cheap food and drink consuming zombies, who couldn't justify to Mom and Dad an extra dollar spent to give the waitress a decent tip?

It seems to me that our heroes equate being gentlemen with offering girls their arms when walking across campus. Carrying their manners off-campus is another matter. If you had half the manners you pretend, you'd act politely and you'd leave a decent tip in return for decent service. Emily Post, outdated though you may think her, says a standard tip is 15 percent and 35 cents is the absolute minimum.

I'm not saying that waitresses never give lousy service, or if they do, that you've no right to complain. But if the service is so terrible, why do you come back again and again. If the service is so lousy that it's worth zero percent of your bill, complain to the management. If she's really that bad, this is far more effective than "teaching the waitress a lesson" by not leaving a tip.

What I'd really like to do is see the Corps do something about it. While I'm sure they have better things to do than operate a charm school for undermannered, overgrown social midgets, I'm equally sure that the cadets who do tip and treat a waitress courteously are embarrassed for their buddies who give the whole group a bad name.

I'm not suggesting you read Miss Manners aloud every night or add Emily Post to The Standard. But a little positive P.R. never hurt anyone and being aware of a little thing like tipping would go a long way toward improving your image. □



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