

# Opinion

## I'll buy American when it's worth my while

"I see you don't support America," the old man said.

"Do what?" I replied. I didn't understand the reason for the old man's question. He didn't look like the type that read my stuff in *The Battalion*. I wasn't wearing my Soviet Union T-shirt. I didn't think I was doing anything that could be viewed as anti-American. I was just standing in line at a store, waiting to buy some blank videotapes.

"Did you happen to see that special they got on Scotch brand videotape?" he asked. "It's just as good as that stuff you've got there. You get three tapes for \$13.98, and it's made by Americans."



Karl Pallmeyer

I did see the special the store was running on Scotch videotape, but I also saw the special on Polaroid videotape. It's just as good as Scotch, and you get five tapes for \$18.88 and a coupon for a \$5 mail-in rebate. Who cares if it's made by Koreans?

It's a strange form of patriotism that requires one to pay a higher price for the same, or sometimes inferior, product. If the Koreans, Japanese, Germans or Martians are able to make a good product for a good cost, it's foolish from a consumer's standpoint to spend more. That's business.

My VCR, stereo, camera, keyboard and acoustic guitar were made in Japan. My car and electric guitar were made in America. My television was made by an American company that just sold out to a Japanese company. One of my favorite writers, Yukio Mishima, and one of my favorite directors, Akira Kurosawa, were made in Japan. I enjoy drinking Japanese rice wine and saki.

I usually don't care where a product is

made as long as it's better and/or cheaper than another product. Although I would rather have an American-made Martin acoustic guitar, I had to settle for a Japanese-made Sigma acoustic guitar because of the price. Since Sigma is the Japanese division of Martin, I got a good guitar for a good price. The Japanese have been making some pretty good acoustic guitars and even Bruce "Born in the U.S.A." Springsteen uses a Takamine acoustic guitar in concert. But no matter how hard they try, the Japanese have yet to make an electric guitar that plays as well as my American-made Fender Stratocaster. Instead of making guitars that can compare to those made in America by Fender or Gibson, the Japanese make a lot of cheap, dumb-looking guitars that teenaged head bangers love.

There are no American-made cameras or keyboards that can compare to those made in Japan. There are no American-made cars, VCRs or stereos that can compare to the quality of those made in Japan at the same

price. If the Japanese can't do it better, they do it cheaper.

The Japanese have been taking a lot of flack for their industriousness. The government has placed high tariffs on imported goods and has been trying other methods to decrease the trade deficit. Some Americans have developed attitudes like that of the old man I met in the store and those who put "Buy American" bumper stickers on their pick-up trucks.

Some Americans are losing their jobs because some companies can't compete with the Japanese. But you can't blame the Japanese. They're just trying to make money. Just like we Americans.

There are several problems with the American corporate system. Most corporations have no respect for their employees and would gladly return to the days of slavery. Why don't more corporations understand that their workers will produce more if they are treated like

individuals instead of machines? The gap between the factory owner and the worker is broader than the gap between Medieval king and peasant. That does build a good working relationship.

Another problem is labor unions. Unions are necessary to protect the workers from the corporation but have lost sight of the goals. So many labor unions are now men who use the union as a tool to increase their own wealth instead of protecting the welfare of the workers. The unions are powerful and that power is easily abused by evil men. The last president of the Teamsters Union that didn't end up in jail was Jimmy Hoffa. Who knows where he ended up?

Instead of blaming the Japanese for the problems, America needs to adapt and improve its business practices. I'll start buying American once the American way is worth my while.

Karl Pallmeyer is a journalism graduate and a columnist for *The Battalion*.

## I'm from Washington, but I'm no yankee

It usually happens like this:

"Can you guys tell me where I can get a quart of oil?" I ask, innocently. But I carelessly pronounce the word oil as "oy-ul", like most civilized people.

"Whar ya from, boy," growls a friendly native Texan, his highly trained ear detecting my verbal indiscretion.

The "Native Texan" sticker on his windshield verifies his state of origin. I guess the sticker is issued along with your birth certificate.

"Washington," I answer confidently. "Washington D.C.?" The native Texan aggressively asks.

"The state. Washington state. State of Washington. You know - Mount St. Helens, apples, the Space Needle - you've seen pictures," I reply cheerfully.

To be honest, I'm a little tired of our nation's capital shamelessly using the moniker of my home state. Our nation's capital is Washington with a D.C., and the state is Washington. period. I mean no other state is obligated to include the word "state" in its title. You never hear, "Hi, I'm Debbi from the state of Florida," or "Pleased to meet you, I'm from Iowa - Iowa state."

Washington the state is Washington, and Washington D.C. is Washington D.C.

Anyway, at this point the native Texan mumbles something about "damn Yankee" and then drives off into the sunset in his trusty pick-up.

Now, I don't mind being called a Yankee. In fact, I know several and some are even allowed to operate simple appliances and take meals at the table. But I do feel a little embarrassed for pedigreed Texans who show their ignorance by referring to me as a Yankee.

A short lesson in history and geography should shed some light on this confusion.

Y'all listen up.

First the history.

Washington, our nation's 42nd state, was admitted to the Union in 1889. Only 98 years ago.

The U.S. Civil War, contrary to what you may have been told, ended April 9, 1865, with a Union victory, 122 years ago — 24 years before Washington even became a state.

What kind of people settled Washington? European immigrants who came as farmers and loggers, and families from places like Kentucky, Missouri and Texas (yes, some people

actually leave the Lone-Star state) who came for the same reasons.

My ancestors moved west from Tennessee, hardly a haven for Yankees.

In 1972 The U.S. Surgeon General warned that calling a native of Tennessee a Yankee may increase the likelihood of being hit along side the head with a pool cue.

I think even native Texans can follow the lesson so far. (I realize I'm assuming a lot.)

Now a brush-up course in geography. When someone is called a Yankee, it's because he or she lives above the famed Mason-Dixon Line, the extended imaginary line that separates the North and the South and the states of Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Washington is north of the Line. But, hey dudes! Surf's up in Los Angeles and San Diego, both which are south of the Line. So are the genteel southern cities of Baltimore, Md, Dayton, Ohio, and San Francisco, Calif. So is (gasp) Atlantic City, N.J. New Jersey? Look it up.

However, an imaginary line means nothing to a state that wasn't even a twinkle in the eyes of the U.S. Congress during the Civil War, when the Mason-Dixon Line became such a big deal.

So the Mason-Dixon Line, which seems to mean a lot more for the people who live south of it, has no relevance to the residents of Washington.

Some of you will say that the Mason-Dixon Line is meaningless anyway, because any place north of the Dallas is Yankeeland. People in Kentucky, Tennessee, and North and South Carolina might find this somewhat of a surprise. Since this claim borders on the asinine, it warrants no further discussion.

Like I said, I don't mind being called a Yankee. Yankees, generally referring to the inhabitants of the Northeastern United States, gave their lives fighting for the establishment of the good ol' U.S. of A.

They also died fighting the Confederate Army, believing in their cause as much as the Confederate soldiers believed in theirs.

Being a Yankee is nothing to be ashamed of, but when erroneously used to derogatorily describe someone like myself, who, unfortunately, has not been east of the Mississippi River, is slightly offensive.

I'll make you a deal. Don't show your ignorance by calling me a Yankee, and I'll forget that parts of New Jersey are south of the Mason-Dixon. Sounds fair to me.

Clark Miller is a senior journalism major and a guest columnist for *The Battalion*.

Clark Miller  
Guest Columnist



## It sounds like a wrong number

Before you go out and spend a lot of money to have a telephone installed in your car, ask yourself, do I really want to do this?

It occurred to me recently to have a telephone put into my car, mainly because a lot of my friends were doing so, but then I remembered just how much of a nuisance a telephone can be.

It's bad enough having one in your bedroom, which means that no matter how much you need a good night's sleep, somebody can awaken you with a telephone call at any hour.

There's some dentist, who apparently once had the telephone number I have now. I got numerous calls each day, some as late as midnight, asking for him.

I am forced to explain to each caller that



Lewis Grizzard

they are speaking to somebody who wouldn't know a molar if one bit him.

I've decided it's mainly ego that makes people do stupid things like having a telephone in their car.

If I have a phone in my car, then it must mean I think I am so important I can't drive to the convenience store and pick up a six-pack without being out of touch.

A lot of men probably put phones in their cars to impress girls. In the old days, we hung foam-rubber dice from our rear-view mirror to impress girls.

The fact is, the automobile is the setting for many a romantic interlude and who wants to be at the height of passion and get a call from his mother wanting to know if he's wearing clean underwear.

There's also a safety factor involved here. We have campaigned urgently to get the drunken driver off the roads.

But what about some mover-and-shaker cutting a million-dollar business deal on his car phone at 70 miles per hour?

I see enough people driving while doing

"seated" dancing to their favorite songs on the radio, applying various cosmetics, searching madly for a cigarette that has fallen between their legs, gazing open-mouthed at everything other than the road and trying to steer with one hand while dialing their bookie with the other.

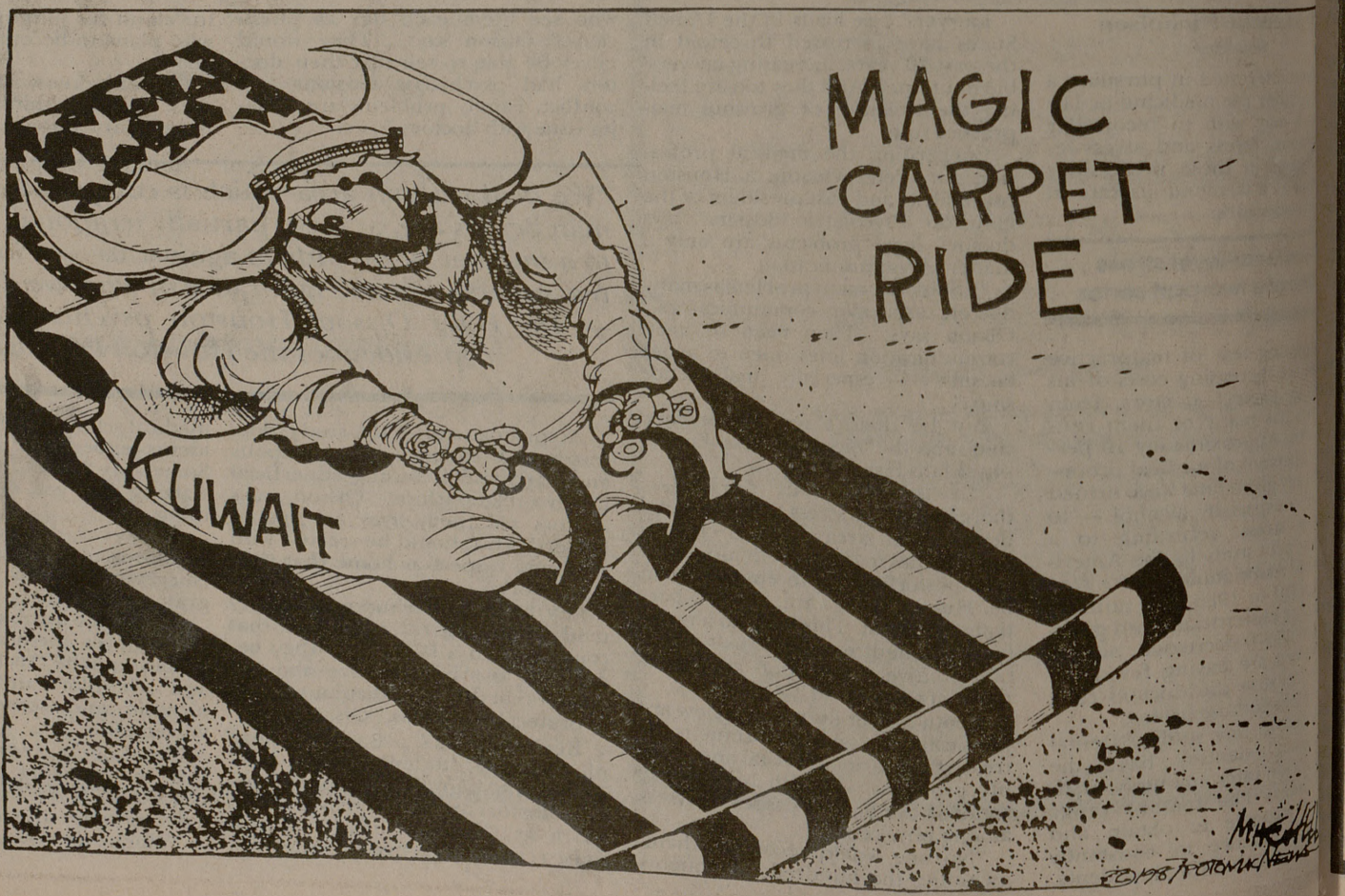
I look at it this way. If I'm in my car and really need to get in touch with somebody, it's not that much trouble to pull a service station and use the old reliable immobile phone.

The problem with any status symbol as a car telephone is that it won't last. Somebody will always be able to get you better.

Samuel Goldwyn, the eccentric Hollywood producer, had a bitter rival who had a phone installed in his limousine.

Not to be outdone, Goldwyn had one installed in his limousine, and his first was to his rival, who answered in the back seat and, upon hearing who was calling, "Hold it a minute, Sam, I've got a call on other line."

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