

Jingling pockets will never change

It started a few years ago.

The minute I would walk into a room, someone would invariably look up and say, "I could tell it was you coming."

The first few times it happened I didn't pay much attention. But, as it continued to happen I started getting curious.

Could they tell it was me approaching because I am a person of virtue (i.e. Truth, Justice, The American Way) and I radiate a field of goodness wherever I go?

No.

Is it because I have poor hygiene habits and rarely take a bath?

No.

IS IT BECAUSE I AM A TRUE MAN, A TOWERING PILLAR OF MASCULINITY, WHO WILL DRIVE WOMEN MAD WITH PASSION AND CAUSE THEM TO QUIVER WITH DESIRE AS I APPROACH?

No.

The truth, plain and simple, is that people know when I'm approaching because of one reason: they can hear the change jingling in my pockets.

So what's the big deal about having a few coins in your pockets? Everybody has some change, right?

Wrong. On any given day, I can be expected to possess enough change to solve this nation's debt crisis. The sad part is that I used to be ashamed to tell anyone about it. Even though most people could hear me jingling as I made my final approach to any destination, my bulging pockets and loud walk were rarely mentioned. Besides, I always had change for a dollar, so who cared anyway?

It wasn't until a few semesters ago when I went to lunch with a friend of mine that I discovered I am not alone with this problem. The two of us jingled and clanked our way to a table and ordered a couple of beers.

When the first round came, I threw out a \$5 bill and then stuffed the change into my pocket. When the second round came, my friend did the same. Eventually we began to notice that, even though we were both sitting on a mountain of change, we were still paying with dollar bills.

Being the brave and adventuresome soul that I am, I waited until he mentioned it first.

"Bad with math?" he asked.

"Terrible!" I said. "What about you?"

"I don't have \$20 worth of nickels in my pocket for nothing," he responded.

"How many times have you taken algebra?" I asked.

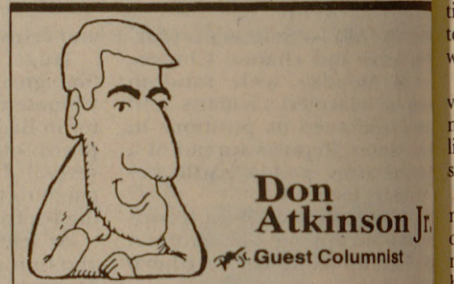
"Three," he said.

"And how many times have you dropped it?"

"Three," he said again.

At that point, I noticed that we were both wearing calculator watches.

As it turned out, both of us had struggled with math so much over the years that now the simple act of counting out change has us petrified with fear



— so petrified we avoid counting change by using only paper money. Consequently we end up with a lot of change in our pockets.

That afternoon turned out to be good therapy for me. I learned how to spot others like myself with poor math skills. The obvious way is to listen for jingling as they walk, but that will not work in all situations.

For example, what if you are in a classroom and everyone is sitting down. If it is any type of math course, they will always be the ones with the terrible looks on their faces. If it is a class that involves any type of creative skills, they will be the ones with the big smiles paying rapt attention to what the teacher is saying.

I also learned how to spot people who fake bad math skills to avoid embarrassment. Before any math test, many students will moan and wail about how bad at math they are. Of those complaining, very few will actually be telling the truth. Most of them are faking bad math abilities so that the rest of the class will not skin them alive.

The only way to recognize who is telling the truth is to watch them during the test. The ones who were telling the truth will stare at their papers in undisguised horror, their eyes bulging with and their pencils motionless. The fakes will briskly write their answers while smiling contentedly.

Please remember who the fakes are so that if you ever see them again, you can run them over with your car.

By the time lunch was over, my friend and I had consoled each other. We agreed that people who were good at math were missing out on life in some way and that they are probably boring at parties, too. We also decided that God had not intended for the human animal to be any good at mathematics. Why else had he given us so many fingers to count on?

After coming to these conclusions, my friend and I paid the bill with paper money and then jingled and clanked our way out of the restaurant with even more change in our pockets than before.

That was almost two years ago. I don't know about him, but I still have one algebra course looming ahead of the distance before I can graduate.

With any luck, my future math instructor will read this and perhaps show some compassion to me. If he or she does, I solemnly promise that I will be that instructor several beers.

With paper money, of course.

As with all columns, opinions expressed by Guest Columnists are not necessarily those of The Battalion. Persons interested in submitting guest columns should contact the Opinion Page Editor at 845-3314.

There is no turning back

It's good to be back.

Now don't get me wrong. I don't mean I'm glad to be back to the old routine of dragging myself out of bed at 8 a.m. for a class I put off until the last minute. I mean I'm just glad to be back in College Station for the summer. Two weeks of the parental units was enough to cause a family overdose.

It's not that I don't enjoy being with my family, it's just that I'm not used to being around them for extended periods of time.

It all started when I walked in the door. Mom, after not seeing her little baby in three months, welcomed me the way a puppy greets his master after being left alone all day. After the formal greetings — the hugs that squeeze the air right out of you and the kisses that ring through your ears for hours — Dad casually dropped THE QUESTION.

So honey, about that report card?

To his utter amazement, I mumbled that I outgrew crayons and blocks years ago and with those went my report cards. To avoid further questioning, I retreated to the other side of the house taking my suitcase and 20 pounds of dirty laundry with me.

On my last trip to lock the car and pick up the dirty socks lining the walkway, I passed the mailbox and affectionately placed my hand on it as if welcoming back an old friend. The daily ritual of standing and waiting to intercept my grades during the first two weeks of all vacations has made us rather close.

I always look forward to the day when my grades come so I can stop conjuring up excuses to satisfy my mother's curiosity about why, day in and day out, I stand and talk to myself by the mailbox.

Over the Christmas holiday when she asked what in the world I was doing out in the cold, I came up with a good excuse. I told her that since I was away at school and hadn't seen the mailman for a while I wanted to be the one to personally wish him a happy holiday and present him with a McDonald's gift certificate.

Timely excuse for Christmas, but



Juliette Rizzo
Opinion Page Editor

how do you explain standing by the mailbox in the scorching heat of summer? Easy. Wear a bathing suit and tell your mother the patch of lawn by the mailbox is the best place to get a tan.

This summer, though, I felt I wasted all my time endlessly waiting. The old parents must have slipped the mailman an extra five to hold my grades until Friday when Dad came back into town.

Once I was inside the house, Mom followed me around with a bottle of After Sun and told me not to sit on any of the furniture. She kept reminding me that the house isn't like my dirty dorm room.

Actually, I think I've outgrown the house. It just isn't home anymore. I should have realized this when I first walked into my newly remodeled bathroom and found the beautiful bar of soap with the words "Be Our Guest" scrawled on it. Anything you're not telling me, Mom?

Looking around the house, I realized the playroom was no longer a playroom, either. All the remnants of my past were, without my permission, sold at what Mom called "a very profitable garage sale." Of course, even though I was the sole contributor to the sale, I received none of the profits.

And the poor refrigerator in the kitchen certainly didn't welcome me back. Absolutely no real food was to be found. No junk food. (By the way, veggies are not considered real food.) There were, however, several beers which could satisfy my thirst, but even I know my parents could do better than Schaefer Light.

So, I went out and bought my own food, "waved" it and sat down to eat in front of the television. Of course I had to turn up the volume to drown out

what Mom was saying about the contents of the food and how it was just yesterday on Geraldo that he interviewed five young people with high cholesterol. (It's at times like this you wish remote controls worked on the family.)

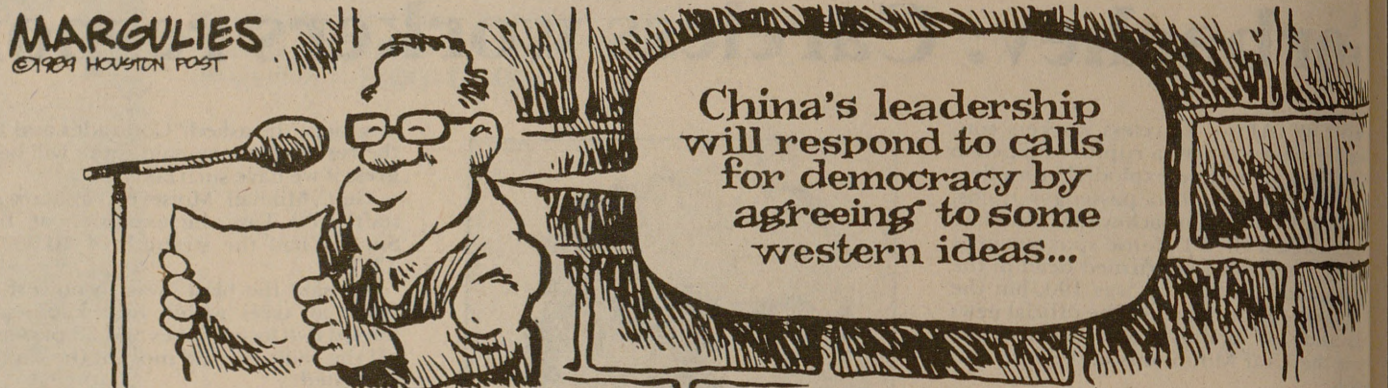
Sleeping at home is also not tolerated by the parents. It shouldn't be too hard to sleep considering the fact that I don't have any inkling of time or date because I left my alarm clock at school. But, Mom's maternal instincts tell her it is not healthy for me to sleep late, because I'll mess up my sleeping habits and never be able to get up on time for school when it starts again.

And, how about the constant ringing of the telephone, which triggers the image of Mom waking you up to talk to some long lost relative you really don't know. (You do get up and talk them, however, just in case they'd like to drop a few dollars in the mail for your upcoming birthday.)

The cue that a family overdose has set in and that it's time to leave is when you wake up early one morning on your own without Mom's nagging. This means that, after searching unsuccessfully for that ultimate summer job, it's time to impress your parents and tell them you want to further your education by going back to school for the summer. (In other words, it's time to get back to your friends and back home.)

Yesterday, as I unpacked my last wrinkled shirt and hung it in the closet in my dorm room, I realized how good it felt to be home. It's back to school for a vacation from the vacation.

Juliette Rizzo is a junior journalism major and opinion page editor for The Battalion.



The Battalion

(USPS 045 360)

Member of Texas Press Association
Southwest Journalism Conference
The Battalion Editorial Board

Ellen Hobbs, Editor
Juliette Rizzo, Opinion Page Editor
Fiona Soltes, City Editor
Drew Leder, Chuck Squatriglia, News Editors
Steven Merritt, Sports Editor
Kathy Haveman, Art Director

Editorial Policy

The Battalion is a non-profit, self-supporting newspaper.

per operated as a community service to Texas A&M and Bryan-College Station.

Opinions expressed in The Battalion are those of the editorial board or the author, and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Texas A&M administrators, faculty or the Board of Regents.

The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Journalism.

The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holiday and examination periods.

Mail subscriptions are \$17.44 per semester, \$36.62 per school year and \$36.44 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.

Our address: The Battalion, 230 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843-1111.

Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, 216 Reed McDonald, Texas A&M University, College Station TX 77843-4111.