

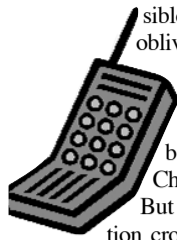
Cell phones are not the enemy

Megan Martinez
Commentary Editor

At the University of West Florida, it is rare to attend a class that isn't interrupted at least once by a cell phone with obnoxious pop music ring tones.

There is no escaping them. Sometimes you can't see them, but they are there, in restaurants, bathrooms, airports and movies. Concealed in briefcases, purses, pockets and even more commonly displayed in a hand pressed to an ear, cell phones are inescapable. They attend funerals and weddings, making their presence known with a shrill ring.

Cell phones are an easy, addictive way to keep in touch with friends and family and have grown in popularity. Over the last five years, cell phones have dropped in price and increased in technology, making them easily accessible to the entire spectrum of the human race — from granny to pre-teen. While this means that communication is unbound by distance, it also means that face to face communication is impos-



sible because cell phone users are oblivious to others around them.

But a cell phone is so handy you say. It is always there when you need to call and ask your boyfriend if he wants the Count Chocula cereal or the Lucky Charms. But when does asking a simple question cross the line and turn into a debate over whether the count or leprechaun mascot would win if they got in a fist fight, a conversation sure to annoy the people around you?

While there are no defined laws when it comes to cell phone etiquette, there are many Web sites out there that offer advice on the subtleties of cell phone usage. There is even a book by T.M. Fitzpatrick titled, "Leticia Cellbridge's Official Guide to Cell Etiquette," offering a tangible guide to the visual learners out there. The most important rule to remember is to be respectful to the people around you.

While cell phone abuse can be annoying, it can also present a danger to drivers as more and more people talk on their cell phone while they are driving.

There will always be inattentive drivers out there, but the added distraction of a voice talking directly into your ear as you drive is more than even the average driver can handle and has resulted in car accidents and death.

This is an issue that has sparked numerous bills to be written all over the country, most notably in New York. Politicians in New York have drafted a bill that would prohibit the use of any hand-held cell phone when operating a motor vehicle.

As more and more states are drafting similar bills that restrict the use of cell phones in cars, there is a rise in the popularity of hands-free headsets that allow the user to drive without the hindrance of a cell phone.

Many businesses have had to start erecting signs that specifically ask its patrons to refrain from cell phone usage while shopping, a request that seems to have replaced the traditional 'no shoes, no shirt, no service' signs.

If people finally don't need a sign to remind them to wear clothes in public, then maybe there is hope that soon people won't have to be reminded to turn their cell phones off in public places.

Columnist struggles with headline

Earl Newton
Contributing Writer

They say first impressions are always key when meeting new people, but since I have not yet met any of you, I feel I can completely spill my problems to you without fear of reproach. It's just like Jerry Springer only I can assure you without reserve, none of you will be struck by a flying chair during this column. At least not one thrown by me.

It's my first column, you see, and I'm a bit nervous. I had a lot of ideas about what I would write here, but it seems that I'm a bit 'out of line' with the mainstream news media. Let me give you an example.

In my brief time here at The Voyager, I have learned the following:

A) I cannot write an article completely in shizzle-talk. As much as I know you readers would enjoy a sentence like "The quizzle brizzle fizzle jizzled over the lizzle dizzle," it seems there is some kind of unwritten ban against that. And I'm just supposed to know.

B) It also seems I cannot include various forms of subliminal messaging. I was mortified to hear such bizarre and disturbing news!

C) I cannot claim that this article is in any way the indirect work of some divine force delivering — through me — a message of fire and retribution. There was something about 'inciting a riot' or 'mass hysteria' or 'copyright infringement.' I'm not really sure, at that point in the meeting I was thinking about Taco Bell.

All told, you can imagine my frustration. What's left to write about? Sure, there's the political scandal, international conflict and the dwindling reserves of our natural resources.

But who wants to take the easy route? I want these columns to be hard hitting! It's time to shake up the system!

We need more drama in our news! We need scatological humor on EVERY PAGE! Lower taxes! Higher wages! Abolishment of all Gordon Rule classes in favor of 'quiet time' with finger paints and little crackers! More exclamation points in every paragraph!!!

After the wonderfully patient editors at The Voyager brought me down from my soapbox and gave me a good talking to in the parking lot (they are wily with paper cuts, those editors), we began to settle down to real business.

A headline! What could be the headline of this column? Did columns even have headlines? I tried to remember all the columns I'd ever read. I tried to remember ANY column I'd ever read. I tried to remember if I KNEW the DEFINITION of the word 'column.'

This is why you should never take Ritalin if you are not professionally diagnosed ADD. (It's fun at first, but really, finding a supplier is murder. Have you ever tried propositioning an eight-year-old at recess? If you have, you may not want to answer that).

So we sat down and began to list possible headlines. Let me tell you, I was bursting with excitement, and I came prepared with a long list of suggestions for what I could possibly title this beloved article. The beautiful Voyager editors sat and listened very carefully to each one, and I was amazed at their open-minded thoughtfulness.

When the beating was finished, I was helped back into my chair. My limbs were arranged in a discrete fashion, and then it was gently explained that at no point could the headline of a column feature words referring to genitalia, illicit activities or Michael Jackson's personal life.

Most especially, the term 'extravaganza' may NEVER be combined with any of the above.

So, you see my dilemma! Although a rose by any other name will still smell as sweet, a column without any name at all pretty much stinks. So it is in you, readers of this beloved publication, that I place my hopes. If YOU have an idea for what this column should be called, why not e-mail me?

Yeah, I know. I don't have an answer for that, either.

♦♦♦

If you have a headline for this column, fire off an email to: titleideas@southernronin.com.

Nostalgic designs: Retro or counterfeit?

Robert Leitch
Staff Writer

There's a lot of excitement among today's automobile enthusiasts concerning the new crop of thrilling models being introduced by the 'Big Three,' General Motors, Ford and Chrysler. Their nostalgic designs are evoking pleasant memories for many baby boomers and are making scores of today's youth dreamily expectant of their first new automobile. But maybe we are getting excited over nothing. These ultra expensive, plastic renditions are clearly counterfeit and disappoint many who get excited about them.

First, consider the 2004 Chrysler Crossfire. When introduced to the public, it was touted as a modestly priced, high horsepower hotrod with an aggressive frontal design. But what did the public get? They got a high-priced, modestly powered, disappointingly designed variant.

Second, consider the 2002 Ford Thunderbird. Although it made it to showrooms pretty much as advertised, on arrival the sticker price was about

\$12,000 higher than its predecessor. To add insult to injury, dealerships added an additional \$5,000 to the sticker price as a 'market adjustment' once it arrived at the dealership. Ford got its dues when there were still many 2002 Thunderbirds sitting on dealerships even as the new 2003 models were arriving. Ford mistakenly believed that everyone would be clamoring over the new rendition despite the fact they are overpriced and underpowered. A 'quick fix' came a year later with the addition of a V8 engine with more horsepower, and the disappearance of market adjustments.

Third, consider the 2004 Chevrolet SSR. During the design stage, this crossover vehicle was touted at a reasonably priced \$35,000 hotrod with a retro design. One has to credit Chevrolet for the design, but the \$45,000 sticker price is a drawback.

Furthermore, the Chevrolet dealers require a market adjustment of \$5,000 bonus in order to drive one off the lot. Most likely, this will last for the first few customers who just have to acquire the newest thing, but will the high cost have the same long-term effect it had on the Thunderbirds?

Last, consider the Chevrolet Corvette. Although not classified as a retro vehicle, one can recall how the Corvette Z06 hardtop was claimed to be Chevrolet's entry level Corvette at its birth. The supposed base price of \$29,999 was very attractive. But what did we end up with? It now has a base price of around \$50,000. However, the 405 horsepower powerhouse under the hood is a plus.

If the somewhat disappointing performance levels and extreme prices of the retro vehicles were the only thing we had to worry about, enthusiasts could probably just shrug it off. The extensive use of plastics destroys the image of the new vehicles. The entire interior of the new Corvette is plastic, and the Chevrolet SSR has plastic covered running boards.

The classic automobiles these cars are supposed to echo had painted metal dashboards, chrome bumpers, metal grilles, durable vinyl headliners and hoods that stayed up on their own.

Although these retro vehicles evoke memories of the days past, a closer inspection can be disappointing.

Anti-marijuana ads overstate dangers

Simon Samano
The Daily Aztec (San Diego State U.)

(U-WIRE) SAN DIEGO — In 2003, the war on drugs experienced a new high when a barrage of anti-marijuana ad targeted at teenagers hit television and radio airwaves.

It started during last year's Super Bowl with an ad in which a teenager becomes pregnant because she smoked pot. The ad begins with a mother in the bathroom holding a positive pregnancy test, while her daughter sits on the rim of the bathtub. Then her father walks in to receive the bad news. A voice then says: "Smoking marijuana impairs your judgment. It's more harmful than we all thought."

Now, I've heard some lies in my life, but blaming weed for teen pregnancy is a scare tactic that is just plain wrong. Fifteen-year-old boys and girls going through puberty create teen pregnancies. Weed does not. If young women want to make love to anybody while they're stoned, it's probably to a carton of Ben and Jerry's or a box of Mike and Ike's.

This ad, along with many others like it, began airing last year when Congress decided to use billions of dollars in taxpayers' money to launch a huge media

campaign aimed at teens. The original proposal included anti-alcohol themes, but that quickly came to a halt after intense lobbying from the alcohol industry. Surprised, anyone?

They decided public money was best used to try to prevent teenagers from using marijuana despite the fact that, according to www.changetheclimate.org, driving studies reveal that marijuana produces "little or no car-handling impairment — consistently less than that produced by low to moderate doses of alcohol and many legal medications."

It would be perfectly fine to provide kids with facts about marijuana effects and abuse, but instead the government decided to revert back to the "reefer madness" days of the 1930s. As a result, we've been subjected to watching and listening to anti-marijuana commercials that range from absurd to bona fide lies.

One such ad depicts a group of stoned teenagers in a car who are at a fast-food drive-thru ordering some food (naturally), when all of a sudden they hit a little girl on her bike as they're leaving. OK, I guess it's possible for that to happen. But is that really the norm? The message is that something tragic will happen if you smoke and drive. I understand the combination can be dangerous, but it isn't nearly as dangerous as

drinking and driving — the No. 1 killer on our highways.

There's another ad that shows an infant girl wandering around a pool, as if to assume she's about to fall in and drown. Apparently the baby sitter is in the house puffing the magic dragon, because a voice then says in a sarcastic manner, "Just tell her parents you were busy getting high."

Then there are the irresponsibility ads. One commercial is about an older brother forgetting to pick up his younger brother from practice because he was stoned, while the other is about a kid who forgets to get a tuxedo and make other preparations for his prom because being stoned all the time made him too lazy.

These are nothing more than propaganda ads that blur the line between typical marijuana use and its extremely rare effects.

Don't get me wrong, I don't have a problem with educating young people about marijuana, but these ads are simply ridiculous.

Until the number of teenage smokers exceeds the number of teenage drinkers and people stop getting hooked on drugs that can actually kill you from overdose, such as cocaine and heroin, marijuana is hardly worth all the attention it receives.

Letters to the Editor

Warning to Transfer Students (Particularly the Math-Impaired): Learn From My Predicament



I am writing this to implore each and every transfer student to understand every single item on his or her SASS audit.

I began at the University of West Florida as a junior-year transfer student from another state. When I first arrived at UWF, I discussed with a prerequisite advisor my concern about taking the two required math classes. The CLAST was never mentioned.

During my senior year, I spoke with my assigned advisor because I

wanted to make sure that I had all the classes and credits I needed for graduation. Again, the CLAST was never mentioned.

I found out about the CLAST quite by accident in the summer and had planned to graduate that December. I not only did not graduate in December, but also was denied financial aid to continue as a graduate student. Because I am not considered an undergraduate, I cannot get financial

aid in that capacity either.

I thought my only worry was passing the two required math classes with a C-. As it turns out, that C- refers to the Gordon Rule requirement. I made a C and a C+, barely missing the state required C+ average for the two required math classes that would have exempted my having to take the CLAST math exam.

Know that it is not possible to request a waiver until the CLAST is taken four times and be sure to have documentation. If you have tutoring as I did, have that tutoring documented.

If you are a transfer student who has recently arrived at UWF, find out about your CLAST status, and should

you have to take an exam, give yourself time to take it more than once. There is a thirty-one day waiting period before CLAST exam retakes. The clock ran out on me because I did not know about the CLAST in time.

Because I was a transfer student who had attended schools in states where the CLAST is not required, I had never heard of it. It never occurred to me to ask my advisors about state required exams. I was concerned about credit hours and upper division classes. It has been pointed out to me that the CLAST appears on my SASS audit. I always had trouble understanding the items on my SASS audit. Apparently, my advisor did too.

— Jennifer Blalock

VOYAGER

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