

Give me your angry, frustrated, and dysfunctional registers

Undressed from the neck up

Becky Weindorf
copy editor



I have a great job. I really do. It's just that other people really don't understand why I like it so much. To clarify, I work part-time at the Wegmans on Peach Street as a front-end coordinator. It seems like a long-winded title, but generally, it means that I am a problem solver, nurse, friend, and (more times you would think) the enemy. As one who has gone from close-to-minimum-wage cashier to a position on a management team, I might be able to defend why I (literally) earn my wage.

First, as a problem solver, this embodies several other subcategories. As a technician, I solve problems with the cash registers whenever they decide to go fubar (if you don't know what this means, stop by the *Beacon* office and we'll gladly tell you). Sometimes, it's as simple as a piece of paper caught between the printer and the register tape. Other times, half of the registers will completely shut down, rendering them and half your cashiers useless. Often times, the coordinator will be the object of looks that could kill (although, if I happen to be with another customer, the service desk will be the recipient of that fate).

Other times, I fetch customers their forgotten cheese or a bag of chips; I deal with customers who have no way to pay for their groceries. I have wrapped flowers. I've stepped in as maintenance (have you ever seen \$5.99 worth of pistachios explode across a linoleum floor? I admit, I would have laughed if I didn't have to clean it up). And, most frequently, I solve the check-cashing policy discrepancies. One customer told me I could take her groceries and "shove it" because I was young and refused to take her starter check and should "know better" than to refuse ANYTHING from her. This type of thing is an everyday occurrence during my shifts.

As a nurse, one is bound to encounter plenty of health problems. They sure don't stop during a cashing shift: do you know how many different objects can give you a severe paper cut (instead of the paper bags)? I can think of five off the top of my head: I've had them before as a cashier, too. So, I make lots of trips to the medicine cabinet, usually for Band-Aids, sometimes to retrieve Pain-Away for headaches (cashiers swear by that stuff), once in a while for nail clippers (broken nails are abundant). Tissue trips for the allergy sufferers and emergency cashing for those who can't finish an order have all been amended by some quick acting. I'll admit it's not glamorous, but it comes with the job.

As a friend, this is a role that is hard to juggle. Being a cashier means being trapped behind a register all day and being told when to take your lunch break. It means asking, "Is plastic okay?" for seven hours. It is not the best job in the world. But as a coordinator, you have the freedom of roaming the front end and having an agenda in front of you; you have the responsibility and freedom of keeping the front end running smoothly.

Often times, these cashiers get difficult customers in their lines and don't know what to do. They need to know that someone will be there to help out, and a certain level of trust is needed between coordinators and cashiers. Most of the cashiers are 15 to 19 years old; they have a job just for extra money, not to deal with issues like denied credit cards and angry customers. That's my responsibility and, with my help, the cashiers know that and are comfortable with me taking over any situation.

Finally, a small minority of customers may see me as the "enemy." Maybe more fitting to this role is "bearer of bad news." Several times in any given night, we get denied credit cards, debit cards, checks, EBT cards, you name it, and we have a code for it. The denial code is a four-digit number that represents anything from insufficient funds to expired cards to not having check cashing privileges.

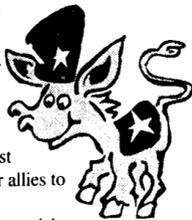
Coordinators are needed to relay this information to customers, and woo boy! You'd think it was our fault that they spent all their plastic cash! I have been told by customers that I was actually "wrong" and that they would never shop at Wegmans again (another popular phrase is that "Well, Tops does this for us, why can't you..."). Well, if it's a bad credit history, then they won't be shopping anywhere for awhile.

So why, in all this mess that I have described as my job, have I chosen to take this wildly complicated job? I'm only a college student, that's true. But who else gives their part-time employees full medical insurance benefits? What employer establishes a scholarship program for all employees that keeps giving for four full years? What employer is so flexible with your schedule that they let you leave town for college and guarantee you a job over the summer? What employer has a credit union that has college loans and free checking with no minimum balance and extended membership to family, spouses, and children? I can't think of anyone else. My job, no matter what fubar thing happens to those registers, is worth keeping.

Enough said.

Weindorf's column appears every three weeks.

The Donkey says...



Sept. 11 will probably go down as one of the most tragic days in American history, rivaling that of Dec. 7, 1941. The perpetrators of this cowardly sneak attack continue to represent a clear and present danger to the security of this nation. Though our hearts and prayers should and will continue to go out to the victims and their families, this is a time that must be used to evaluate the readiness and ability of the United States and our allies to deal with and prevent future acts of terrorism.

As Prime Minister Tony Blair said, the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon do not signify the start of a battle between America and terrorism, but a battle between the free democratic world and terrorism. Most (if not all) of the media have assumed that these terrible actions are the works of Islamic fundamentalist groups, such as the one lead by Osama bin Laden. I think it is important to state that not all, or even most Muslims condone this kind of belligerent, cowardly action against defenseless civilians. That said, it is disheartening to see video of people in places such as the West Bank cheering at the news of the destruction and death in Washington and New York. As every talking head said on Tuesday, an operation as sophisticated as this could only be the work of a few organizations, perhaps with the support of one or more foreign states.

We should put partisan politics aside and rally around our president in order to combat this lethal threat to our safety. This is not a time to squabble over trivial issues that are significantly less pressing than this threat to our national security. That is not to say that domestic issues are not as important as our national security, but just less pressing at this time. We need to present a united front in support of our leaders who should take every practicable action to bring these barbarians to justice. The attacks on Washington and New York constitute an act of war against the United States and we should react accordingly.

The efforts undertaken in the past by America to retaliate against and deter terrorist attacks have resulted in utter failure. We need to take decisive action to eliminate this terrorist threat once it is decided who is responsible for this plot against democracy and freedom. President Bush made a bold and commendable pronouncement when he said that not only will we punish those terrorists involved in plotting these attacks, but also any group or state that is harboring them. The United States must be firm in its effort to apprehend those responsible while being aware of the international pressures of the world we live in.

We must also reevaluate the security measures that are in place. There is a balance to be reached between freedom and the measures needed in order to provide us with the security necessary to live and prosper. While we must rally our support behind the leaders of this nation, we must also work together to alleviate the pressures of this disaster. An email by Ken Miller said that there would be disaster relief efforts by students, student organizations, and college offices, such as blood drives. It is essential that we all participate in these efforts. The President said that these cowardly murderers could not defeat America and the American spirit. Supporting disaster relief efforts in the coming weeks will be one way that the students of Behrend can prove him right.

- Dave Beichner

The human condition is a complex one, and it is often difficult to understand the motivations of others. However, it is clear that the actions of the terrorists on Sept. 11 were a direct result of their hatred for our country and our way of life. We must stand firm in our support of our leaders and our country, and we must take every possible step to ensure that such an attack never happens again.

'The Hot Debate of the Week'

Does violence beget violence?

Should we respond in full force to the Sept. 11 attacks?

To have something as horrendous as what happened last week actually happen in America means that something swift and severe needs to be done. Americans feel powerless against these attacks, and we want to see the military avenging what was taken from us: our freedom and peace of mind. If the greatest country in the world is not safe from the hands of terror, then no country is. If we go to war, or simply take any sort of military action, we will be protecting all nations, not just our own.

Call the troops, call them all to fight for us, but please remember that just as we are fighting for those who were innocent and lost their lives in such a tragic way, we must not do the same to the innocent of other nations. The terrorists have shown us that they in no way care about the "human collateral" that they have caused. Let us show that we do.

Remember the faces of the victims, remember the faces of the highest leaders of the free world, openly weeping in church services across the country. Remember all of that, go and take arms, and remember who is to blame for this. No one should have to feel the way that we felt last week, let us be better than those who made us feel that way. Avenge us, but only against those responsible. Please don't let the human collateral number climb any more. It's already too high.

- K. Galley

Every week, two editors from the staff will debate a topic that is hot. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to email suggestions for the hot topic. Send ideas to behrcoll2@aol.com

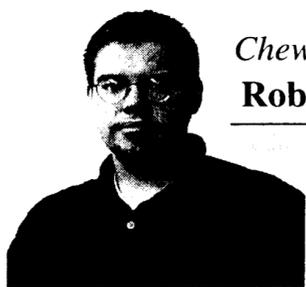
When terrorists launched an attack on our country on Sept. 11, they wanted to throw America into a state of chaos and panic. Our lashing out with force in response is exactly what those attackers would have wanted. We are still uncertain at this time as to who is responsible, but it is pretty clear that this was the work of a network of individuals, not a country. At this time, most of the world stands with us. If we attack, we may make enemies in countries who are currently friendly to us.

More enemies are the last thing we need right now. America is a major world power, and if we launch an attack on another nation, other countries are sure to become involved. Technology has advanced to the point that victory might not be possible if we came to a third world war. But even if we were to bomb Afghanistan and that was the end of it, we would be left with the blood of thousands of innocent people on our hands. We would be guilty of causing the same atrocities overseas that were wrought upon us on our own soil.

Obviously, an attack of last Tuesday's magnitude necessitates some sort of retaliation. But it should be retaliation deeply grounded in justice and national security, not revenge. How we choose to proceed will have a drastic effect on our future. Individuals are responsible for this attack and individuals are the ones against whom we should take action. We should tread very carefully and strike only when we have certainty on our side, curtailing further widespread suffering.

- E. McCarty

Debt: It's all thanks to that material we call 'plastic'



Chew on this
Rob Wynne

Last fall, I was on my way to the Turnbull Barn when a pleasant, young lady in her 20s summoned me over to her. The stranger was sitting on the grass with a backpack at her side and some papers sprawled on the ground. She asked, "Hey, can you help me out here?" Thinking that perhaps she had a question about some homework, I jokingly explained that I was a history major and I wouldn't be able to solve any of her engineering problems.

Before I knew it however, I was caught hook, line and sinker by a credit card solicitor. Before I knew it again, I was filling out applications for three different credit cards. What's the worst that could

happen, anyway? I was offered a free miniature basketball hoop with those suction cups that don't really work unless you use glue on them. Turns out, I ended up receiving all three cards in the mail within a couple of weeks.

Note to self: Stay away from pretty girls who are sitting in the grass that ask for help.

One year and thousands of dollars later, I sit in debt wishing I hadn't succumbed to that temptation. Don't get me wrong, I have built a substantial amount of credit, but the price of credit is expensive. During the summer, I could afford to make payments on everything and still have some cash left over, but now that I am back in school and have car and insurance costs, finding enough cash to cover all of these expenditures can be quite a stressful task.

After juggling work and school for the last two years, I think I have a somewhat organized way of paying on my cards. I also learned, however, that the same friendly banks that send dozens of advertisements to my house and offer "membership privileges" also are the ones

that stab me in the back. For example, the first bank that I acquired a credit card through is seeking to raise my interest rate. Why? Because my balance comes close to my amount of credit allotted. In other words, it's almost "maxed out." Keep in mind I have never made a late payment to this bank, and I have always written out a check for above the minimum amount due on my monthly statement. That bank is making good money off me right now, so why would it choose to raise my interest rate? Perhaps it is seeking to dig deeper in my pocket. Turns out that I won't be dealing with that bank anymore.

Now I'm sure we've all listened to lectures from investors and bankers on TV, the ones that tell stories of students with multi-thousand dollar debts and how to avoid them. The reality of the situation, however, is those people actually have full-time jobs that pay at least decent wages. Of course they're going to be able to manage their money differently. I don't know how many times I've told my parents, "It must be nice to just have a full-time job."

Another story involves a payment that

I sent one of my creditors that got lost in the mail. I did have the check number and payment amount written down on my invoice stub, so I knew I had sent the check. When I found out that my new statement said I had missed a payment, I wrote a letter explaining what I thought had happened. Do you think they offered me a chance to send the payment again? No way. That was a late-payment fee.

I think banks could do better business if they offered some benefits to college students. Perhaps a "one payment late" deal for people who consistently pay on time, or a reduced interest rate for college students who have above a 3.0 GPA or something to that effect.

What's the moral to this tale? Be careful of who lends you money, because no matter how well you maintain your credit card accounts, one mistake will leave a permanent blemish. Your bank will shake its finger at you, the same finger that shook your hand when you decided to accept a card from their bank that offers "exclusive membership benefits."

Wynne's column appears every three weeks

The day the world will never forget



Oh, you didn't know?

Karl Benacci

features page editor

On Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2001, an event occurred that not only crippled America, but also sent a wave of ripples across the world.

On that morning, terrorists seized four commercial jets and sent them into significant buildings, including the World Trade Center, creating havoc and ruin.

At 10 a.m. Tuesday, I was in my first class of the day, French 3, in the Academic Building. Before class had started, a girl was telling other students that a plane was hijacked, and I heard nothing more. So I did not assume the worst, for I did not know about the severity of the situation.

After class was over, I visited Professor Kerwin to discuss my features page for the *Behrend Beacon*, and was told the dark truth of what had happened earlier that day.

Shaken, I traveled over to the Reed Union Building, and went to the *Beacon* office to work on the features section of the newspaper.

As I walked into the office I said hello to the other *Beacon* staff member, and learned that a few members of the *Beacon* staff were frantic with worry, for loved ones of theirs had either taken flights or were in the New York City area.

As they explained their fears to me, I grew nauseous, and began trembling, feeling the urge to wretch.

I decided to leave the office and pass by the Back Room, where I caught a quick flash of the big-screen television, and the chaos in New York City. Like a magnet, I was drawn to the television, and watched in revulsion as I saw fellow Americans fleeing down the streets in terror, with smoke billowing after them.

My knees grew weak, and I quickly retrieved my backpack from the *Beacon* office and passed by Bruno's, seeing

hundreds of students intently watching the television.

As I walked farther down the hall, I passed a classroom packed full of students and faculty, praying in silence. I wanted to go into the room and join them in prayer, but I felt the urge to be alone, and once alone, I began writing this editorial.

Where to start? I have so many questions to ask, but they can all be summed up into one, universal question: Why?

Why would anyone or anything want to kill innocent human beings and destroy lives?

The answer seems obvious...we were targeted because we are Americans. Americans. A group of terrorists hijacked a few planes and crashed them into populated areas simply because we are Americans. For some reason, they hate our country to death. They hate us so badly that they want to kill us all. I ask this once again: Why? I have no answer to this, and I am unsure what America should do to these evil, hate-filled terrorists. But I know what America can do for America.

We need to all pull together and battle all of this hate aimed toward us. What can we use to battle hate? Easy...love. We need to comfort those who need comforting, talk to one another, and above all, help one

another.

As I write this, I feel as if I am having a surreal nightmare. The last (and only) time that I have ever felt this way was on a cold February night, when I wrecked my car into a tree. A feeling of misery and doom enveloped me that night, and I feel the same way once again.

In order to help dispel this nightmare, (which will never be fully possible), we will need to heal with one another.

In closing, I have one plea for all of you. Please value life. It is the most fragile, beautiful gift that we are blessed with. Never take it for granted, for anything can happen and life can be snatched away from someone at any time. It's appalling when a tragic event occurs, but one thing that we can learn is how blessed life is, and in this we discover what truly matters.

When you part from your family and close friends, always remember to hug them, and tell them how much you love them, for, as we learned on Sept. 11, 2001, anything can happen at any moment, and you never know when you'll see someone for the very last time.

Benacci's column appears every three weeks.