

Trading more minutes for my minutes

By **JAMES BLAND**
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Driving in Hempfield is getting more and more stressful. Juggling kids, corners and calls while behind the wheel was beginning to get to me. It was time to introduce a slightly more relaxing experience to my day – but how? I needed to trade in my anytime minutes for my-time minutes.

It all started while pumping gas. I was one of eight strangers trying to top off our gas tanks. Most likely, we all lived or worked within ten minutes of each other. Perhaps some of us went to the same schools, ate at the same restaurants, and shopped at the same stores. Maybe our kids played sports together. I may never know. We were all talking on our cell phones from the moment we turned on the pump until after we got back in our vehicles. I doubt any of us even had a chance to extend a friendly nod toward each other.

With the hustle and bustle of day to day life - full of Internet connections, cell phones, and talk radio – it is hard to find minutes in the day when we are not getting bombarded with information. I

wanted to temporarily scale down the information superhighway to my brain. Those that know me best may say the highway has been closed for some time now.

I began to focus on the car phone. I'm not sure when I bought my first car phone but I know I didn't rack up the minutes a decade ago that I do today. I made a pledge to refrain from using a cell phone while traveling.

A friend suggested one thousand miles while I pushed for one hundred. We compromised at five hundred with a promise that I would go longer if I could. I set the tachometer to zero, put the phone in my trunk (I was afraid to have it too far away), and hoped for the best.

Driving while not talking on the phone is a lot like watching TV without holding the remote control. Every other mile I wanted to hit the buttons and call someone - anyone. But I didn't have a phone.

After going through several days of withdrawal, I began to notice that I was becoming more observant. Like the blind man who became more aware of his surroundings through his hearing and other senses. I began to see more of my world – just in a

different way.

After about thirty miles, I passed about forty cars and noticed more than half were driven by people talking on the phone. Where they calling each other? Perhaps they were calling my cell phone. Has the cell phone call replaced the friendly wave or beep of the horn as we passed someone we knew? Imagine getting home and having a dozen messages, "Hi Jim, just passed you over by the school and wanted to say hello. No need to call back."

After about sixty miles I was stressing out by not having a phone. I was convinced that everyone over the age of twelve had a cell phone. I was going a little nutty and wanted to have some simple fun so I decided to conduct a sociological experiment. I would use my found car-time minutes to interact with people and see what kind of a reaction I would get. Saying hello wasn't enough. I wanted to see if the person would blindly respond to me or take a moment and think about what I would do or say and enjoy the moment.

First, I hit the McDonald's drive-up window. I was alone in the car, put on my sunglasses

and asked for the braille menu. The workers scrambled to find it. Three people got involved and it was eagerly passed to me through the car window with a firm sense of accomplishment. The customer focused teen even made sure I grabbed it before she let go. I waved my hand over the page, ordered a Quarter Pounder with Cheese and fries, paid, and drove on. The workers at McDonald's receive high marks for great customer service and consideration but failed to observe the situation and enjoy the moment. Several times I reached for my cell phone to share the story but the phone was not there.

Nearly one hundred miles passed since my McDonald's experience. I was still suffering from Acute Cell Phone Separation Anxiety (ACPSA). Not having a cell phone was bad enough but now I realized that I didn't even know where to find a pay phone. I often found myself scanning the roadside for pay phones and came to the conclusion that these things are really hard to find.

I didn't have a reason to call anyone. I didn't even know how much it cost to make a local call with a pay phone. After about

twelve miles, I found a phone booth and was so excited I had to pull over. In the rain, I got out of my car with an ashtray full of change. While I was standing there I realized that there wasn't any call that was worth making that required standing on the side of the road, just a few feet from traffic, in the pouring rain. But since I just spent the better part of an hour looking for a phone booth I needed to call someone. I placed a random number of coins into the slot and dialed the cell phone in my trunk to check for messages. There were eight. Thank goodness none of them were important because I didn't have the call back numbers, they are all programmed in my cell phone's Caller ID.

Finding a pay phone helped me to stop obsessing about getting in touch with the world and enabled me to focus on my time on the road. I frequently noticed dangers that cell phone drivers present. I watched them swerve slightly over the center line; forget to disengage the turn signal; and fail to notice the traffic light changed to green. These are real concerns but I also noticed something else.

The experiment lasted 657 miles. It helped me to identify

another danger of cell phone obsessed drivers like me – the call was causing me to overlook the little things that represent the best of the region. It could be the friendly teenager learning the basics of customer service at her first job; silly bumper stickers that bring a fresh smile to your face; or the opportunity to rekindle a friendship while pumping gas.

Six hundred and fifty-seven miles passed since I set the tachometer to zero and put my phone in the trunk. Today, my cell phone is always nearby. I noticed that I make fewer calls. I try to spend more minutes experiencing my surroundings rather than just driving through it - and I still have a hard time finding pay phones. I lasted 657 miles.

What happened? I was putting groceries in my trunk and the phone rang. It was a wrong number and rather than putting it back in the trunk, I put it in my pocket and never looked back. I made it to 657 miles. It wasn't easy but I was glad I did it.

Go ahead and give it a try. Start with a goal of one hundred miles and let me know how you did. Just leave the kids at McDonald's alone.

Twenty-Five thousand candles and a glass of water

By **JAMES BLAND**
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As spring approaches I began to hear people talk about how much they missed the flowers, sun, and sounds that make the season. My sarcastic wit caused me to chuckle as I thought ahead to what these people will voice as they complain of allergies, rising temperatures, and the noise of mowers and kids playing. Some people see the world as being a bit greener on the other side and their glass often seems to be half-empty.

In February, I turned thirty eight. Notice I didn't refer to my age in the common "years old" format. I stated a fact. Thirty eight is thirty eight. I don't know if I'm young or old. People say you are as old as you feel. Well, I feel like I'm seventy and my wife accuses me of acting like a child.

As my birthday approached, people expressed their apparent surprise that I made it through yet another year. Based on the gifts, cards, and well wishes, this year must have seemed like some kind of a long-shot.

Since I became an adult, I never really thought much about birthdays. Sure, I change a little each year but I usually just let my pants out and skip the fanfare. To make the birthday celebration more meaningful, I think people should celebrate their birth in days rather than in years. For example, when I turned thirty eight, it was also my 13,879 day since my birth. I await my big day three years from now when I turn 15,000 days. Now that's a reason for a party.

We emphasize birthday milestones like one, sixteen, fifty, and seventy-five with special parties. With children, we celebrate the day of birth through the first month. There is often a party at about 100 days for a baptism or other religious tradition. On days 250 and 500 we see noted differences from the tiny bundle brought home from the hospital to the sixteen month old that is taking first steps, exploring, and forming words.

At five hundred days a child can open a package but at one thousand days they know why they got the package. Between the ages of six and seven years a person turns 2,500 days. They enter into teenage years at 5,000 while many become "established" with a spouse, a place of their own, and even a child at 10,000

days. At 25,000 days we retire and cherish the days gone by and the days yet to come.

My method of celebrating birthdays rather than birth-years seems to be consistent with major life happenings. For the glass is half-empty person, you may not get birthday presents each year but for those that see the glass as half-full, it also reduces the number of presents you need to buy. It is all how you look at it. Is your glass half-full or half-empty?

To more closely examine the philosophical concept of how we view the contents of our glass as a reflection on our soul, I decided to turn to the glass experts at Susquehanna Glass in Columbia, PA. Entering their factory store I was surrounded by glasses of all sizes, shapes, and colors (I'll skip over the metaphor that compares glasses to people). I quickly set up an experiment with a juice glass, wine glass, and an iced tea glass. We drew a line at the mid-way point of each and poured water to the line. Visitors were asked a simple question, "How would you describe the amount of liquid in each glass?" Most people were focused on the wine glass and repeatedly asked, "Is that real wine in there?" Mary H. from Mount Joy even took a swig.

The continued focus on the wine glass forced us to make a different selection. The wine glass was removed from the experiment. Enter the clear-glass Irish coffee mug. Things moved quickly from that moment on. In all, fifty-four percent of the shoppers described the glass as half-full while thirty-two percent described it as half-empty. I guess the remaining fourteen percent found the question too deep or, perhaps too difficult, for them to ponder while shopping.

For some reason, these people can't seem to pick the right size glass for their need. People should adjust their glass selection so it may be full from the start. Perhaps they need to look at the glass situation, like birthdays, a little differently. I offer a few simple tidbits for people to ponder as they stare into the abyss determining if it is half-empty or half-full.

My advice is simple, enjoy springtime, drink from a can, and be sure to get some rest because one day you may need to blow out 25,000 candles. Just be sure to have a glass that is half-full by your side just in case you need some help.

James' suggestions for seeing half-full:

- 1) As your glass begins to empty, don't focus on the amount remaining. Instead, focus on how to get a refill.
- 2) As the liquid dissipates from the glass it overflows with memories
- 3) Backwash is one way to keep your glass half-full.
- 4) An empty glass can be dangerous. You never see anyone stomp on a glass that is either half-full or half-empty at Jewish and Greek celebrations
- 5) If you place a beverage of high quality into your glass, each sip will be savored.
- 6) A glass that is not full with beverage is always full with potential
- 7) Everything tastes better through a silly straw.
- 8) Glasses are often bought in sets. No one should drink alone.
- 9) A tinted glass escapes judgment
- 10) Sometimes a glass is just a glass so get your issues out of my cup.

Look for more from James Bland in the next issue of The Capital Times.

Spring into the season of spring



By **LISA MAUTI**
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Ladies, there is a warmth in the air and a light breeze just waiting to let you feel like Marilyn Monroe. Yup, you got it! Spring fever is in the air.

Everyone has it. It is like a natural high that everyone walks around buzzed by. I wait all winter long for it.

Now don't get me wrong, I love skiing and playing in the snow, but spring is a fresh start! You can let go of winter woes and shed the warmth that you put on over the cold months.

It is a time to start new, and forget about the past. Fresh flowers, long walks, and knowing that it will only get better from there. It is like spring fever makes you feel so glorious, that you are on top of the world.

And besides, the guys come out of their hole in the spring. They start playing basketball without their shirts again, and are extra

eager to make a good impression at the clubs. Speaking of guys, I believe that spring is the best time to start a new relationship.

Winter makes people depressed. And during that long, cold haul, you sit there and count the reasons why having a boyfriend would be great. New love thrives in spring and blooms into wonderful things.

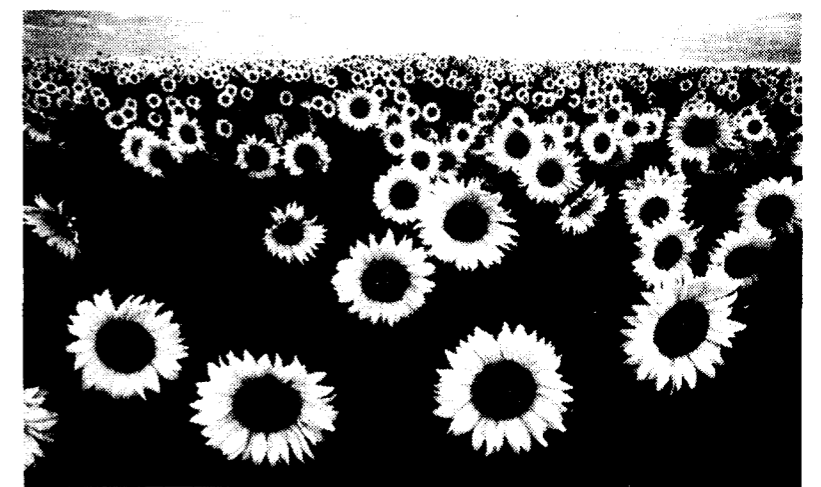
Okay, so I admit that I sound like I am on drugs, but did I not already warn you about the high spring can put people on??? But for those that are less willing to believe this fairy tale-like hubbub, then you just might like my next option.

Spring is also the time where you might just find a hottie that

will roll over into a summer fling. Notice I said fling, and not relationship. Just fun, no hooks. And why not?! We are young and flings are great.

It reminds me of that Kenny Chesney song, *Anything But Mine*. You go into it with a laid back attitude and ready to have fun. And then at the end of the summer, you bid fair well and go back to the crazy lifestyle of a college student. (If you're really lucky, it will turn into romance. You should know by now that I fancy that hubbub, so I had to stick it in).

So hold tight kids, even though Spring Break is over and it's back to the daily grind, there are carefree, romantic days ahead!



A field full of daisies offer a cheery reminder to stressed college students to take a moment amid all the chaos and enjoy the sunshine.

Capital Times exhibits embarrassing journalism

By **JEREMY N. KIEHL**
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To the Editor:

Once again I feel obligated to write regarding my disgust with the Capital Times' most recent display of poor journalism exhibited in their March 27th "newspaper". During the final weeks of last semester I recall reading the Capital Times sensationalized reporting of the impeachment proceedings brought against Student Government Association (SGA) President Michael Edwards. The Capital Times reveled in its negative reporting style by splashing the news all over its editorially deficient pages. There was a front page article stating some of the facts, an article speculating on the effects of the impending impeachment, an article devoted to cheering Mr. Edward's demise, and an article expounding the history of impeachment in the United States. Just recently, however, the actual decision

of the Impeachment Board was reached and delivered to the SGA. The decision exonerated President Edwards of ALL impeachment charges brought against him.

In response to this, the Capital Times relegated the news to a small, terse two-paragraph blurb on the second page of the paper hidden among the other mundane activities of Student Government meetings. Was the failed impeachment attempt not of equal newsworthiness as the submission of impeachment charges? Didn't the actual decision of the Board warrant at least its own article just as the impeachment charges were apparently worthy of numerous articles? Or wasn't this story scandalous or sensational enough for the Capital Times' version of "news"?

Regardless of how disappointed the Capital Times staff may have been with the Impeachment Board's decision, the student body nonetheless deserves to be informed of the decision just as they were more than adequately alerted to the original trumped up charges. As a campus

"newspaper," the Capital Times has seemingly done its best to destroy the image of Mr. Edwards through its negative articles, and this example proves to be on equal footing with its overall agenda to undermine his administration. By emphasizing Mr. Edward's guilt in the first slew of articles and failing to adequately reveal his innocence, the Capital Times has succeeded in its attempt to malign his credibility on campus. In an instance such as this, where the top campus news is abjectly ignored and found unworthy of even an article, this "newspaper" has absolutely lost all credibility. Regrettably, the Capital Times remains an embarrassment to the journalistic world and this campus.

All Penn State Harrisburg students and faculty interested in learning more of the SGA Impeachment Board's final decision please look for the Board's official press release submitted to the Capital Times with this letter.

See page 2 for press release