

Americans buy in large quantities to save money

Jessica Patchett
Columnist

Editor's note: This column will appear every other week while Jessica is studying in London.

One of the things Elon students in London miss most about Burlington is going to Wal-Mart. Going to four different stores to buy shampoo, coffee, school supplies and a newspaper doesn't cut it for those accustomed to one-stop shopping. Despite the proximity of the four stores within easy walking distance of the Elon flats, students searched for the equivalent of Wally World's cheap conveniences. We never found Wal-Mart, but eventually we heard of a store that rolls back prices every day.

Advertisements for Asda, Wal-Mart's British grocery store, frequently air on the BBC, showing giddy employees at work for the bright corporation where everyone wins: college employees, elderly greeters, smart shoppers and the community all receive thousands in charitable donations from the Wal-Mart corporation annually.

This 'everybody wins' attitude is probably why Elon students relate the size and modernity of their hometowns to the number of Wal-Marts within a 20-minute drive of their homes. For most college students, saving money is something everyone understands.

But light-heartedly using Wal-Mart as an indicator of our community's economic health, we hadn't yet realized exactly how we save money by shopping at Wal-Mart rather than Target or why K-Marts across the country can't compete with Wal-Marts. Buying in-mass quantities and capitalizing on our desire to save more money and consequently spend more explains the success of these types of stores in general – but what makes Wal-Mart work? News reports have made it more clear why we save \$3 at the cash register when we rack up a \$25 bill.

Behind the spotless white floors and clean toilets in some U.S. Wal-Mart stores is the hard work of underpaid, illegal immigrants. In fact, many U.S. companies have contracts with cleaning companies who hire illegal



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immigrants as a cheap form of labor.

Fair compensation for work, be it for an assigned paper or a shift at the Campus Shop, is something about which Elon students remain adamant, despite an apparently apathetic attitude toward other campus issues. It should outrage Elon students that they have unknowingly supported Wal-Mart's cost-cutting technique of exploiting hard-working individuals because of their desperate position in American society. How many other companies have we supported financially that have ille-

gal or unfair labor practices?

Hearing the allegations against Wal-Mart's illegal and unethical practices, most people have dismissed the controversy as far removed from their local Wal-Mart store, staffed by their friends and families. But the issue extends throughout the corporation as an economic entity. When hundreds of people save \$3 each in the Burlington Wal-Mart, hundreds of workers in another store are being deprived of fair wages – and of an honest entry into the American workforce.

Is it worth the livelihood of others for us, as middle-class Americans, to save \$3 and put it

toward more accessories for our luxurious lives?

Perhaps by our paying full price for a gallon of milk, some of our working neighbors will one day be able to afford the gallon of milk as regularly as we can. Until Wal-Mart finds a company they can trust to hire workers legally and pay them fairly, check into other businesses' labor practices before you patronize them and go a little out of your way to make two stops to buy a snack and a hammer- Winn Dixie and Lowes are just around the corner.

Contact Jessica Patchett at pendulum@elon.edu or 278-7247.

Dining services have a poor attitude

To the Editor,

I am writing to express the concern that I have about the people who work for dining services. I can think of one word that would encompass most of the Aramark staff who serves food to students on campus: miserable. I have worked in the restaurant business for the past five years. It does not take someone in management to know that customer service is a crucial part of working in the restaurant business. There have been so many occasions this year where I have been deterred from eating at various campus dining venues due to the uninviting attitude of Aramark food service workers.

Varsity, the newest addition to campus, is filled with unpleasant servers and bad food, as well as the typical unfriendliness that graces the air. What annoys students and myself even more is that when you eat at Varsity, an 18 percent gratuity is tacked on to your bill, no matter how poor your service was. I believe that a server should *earn* their tip, and there is no incentive for servers to do an outstanding job (as they should) when they are automatically receiving one. While I eat at Cantina on a regular basis, they too have their small share of unpleasant workers. I have

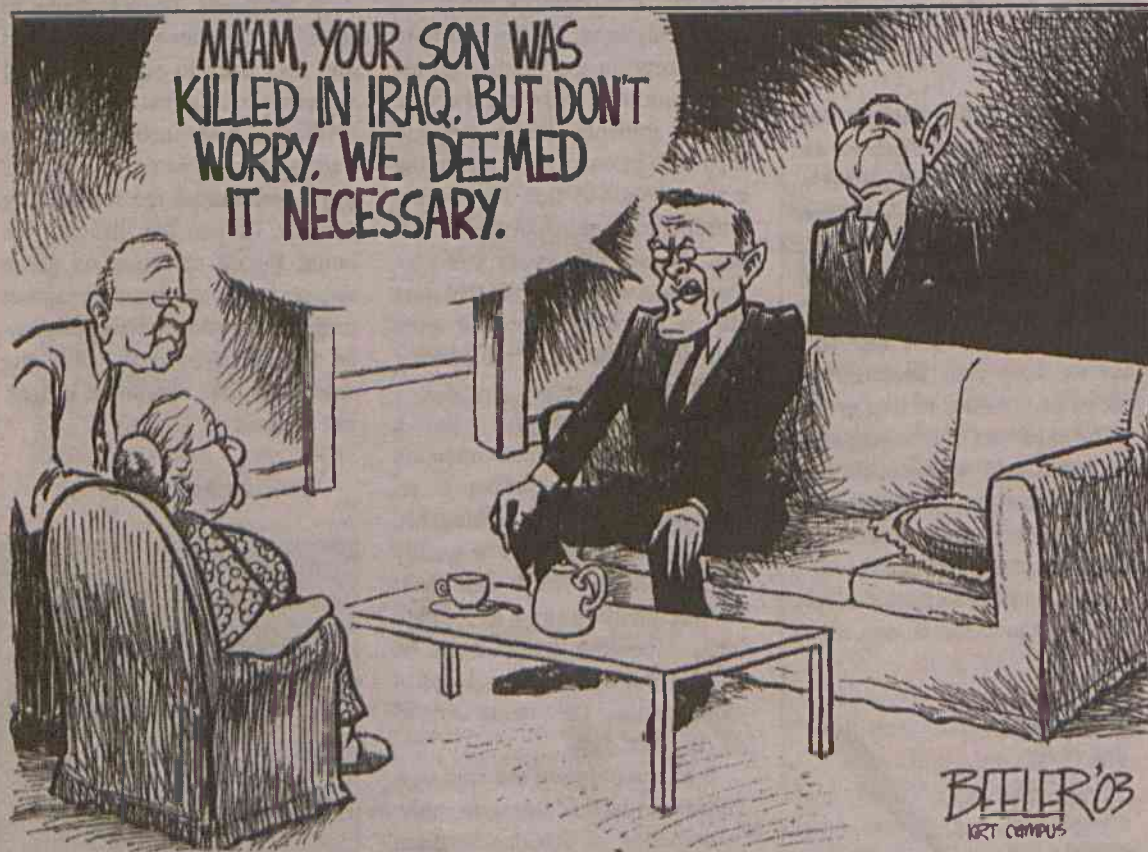
found, however, that they are one of the best venues on campus for dining, and 90 percent of the time their waiters and waitresses actually deserve their tip.

Call me picky, but I, as well as many others, just feel that our money is being wasted when I know that it is paying for the undesirable service we receive on a day-to-day basis. It really doesn't take a whole lot for the staff to say hello and smile, and not look like they absolutely hate their jobs. After all, our dining service is just one representation of what Elon has to offer, and they too should have the responsibility of making a lasting impression on students, faculty, staff and people who chose to come and visit our campus.

- Kristi Stadelman '06

Correction

- In the Oct. 26 edition of The Pendulum, Alana Black was credited for breaking the university's cross country course record. The course that she ran was 35 meters shorter than the standard 5000 meters. The school - best still belongs to Clara Urquhart, with a time of 19.56 minutes.



Nate Beeler, KRT Campus