

the perspective

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Altered Perspectives

Can you hear me now? Not good.

by Ty Fagan

Hello, gracious readers all. A new(ish) semester, a new timely(ish) *Perspective*. I thank you all for your patience; I know the pain of not having a warm, fresh-baked *Perspective* every week or so must have been agonizing—I thank you for maintaining yourselves, and let me assure you that the pain is over. Really over. St. Louis Blues' playoff chances-over.

Part of the reason this issue has been so long in coming is that there's been a new, cuddly little arrival at my house that has been taking up a lot of my time. I'm talking, of course, about my new cell phone. For many years, I had been a stoic member of

la résistance against these tiny digital demons. I like my privacy, and the prospect of people like my parents being able to reach me whenever they got the urge was terrifying. Plus, they always seemed like frivolous items for the average citizen to carry—does anyone have such an important life that they need this kind of round-the-clock accessibility?

About two weeks ago, I finally caved. I bought a tiny, gorgeous phone packed with bells and whistles, and a two-year contract that I signed in blood. By the time I left the store, my life had changed drastically. I used to snicker at people obsessed with their cell phones—constantly chatting away, checking messages, fiddling with their virtual address books. Now I find myself ensconced in the cellaholic subculture I used to despise. My speech is peppered with phrases like “peak time,” “upgradeable plan,” and “tex-mex.” If I'm meeting you for the first time, I'll tell you my name and that my evenings start at seven, not necessarily in that order.

Of course, there is a major upside to owning a cell phone, as any user will tell you. Having one has made my life more convenient, more

efficient, and exhilaratingly global. Now I can easily stay connected with what matters most in life...which, for me, has come to be my phone. In lieu of making human contact with those around me, I can whip out my phone and futz with it a million different ways: downloading new ringtones (right now it's the *Godfather* theme), taking blurry, pixellated photos, or even send an urgent text message to my friend hundreds of miles away (“U R DUM”). I don't know why everyone makes such a fuss about cell phones causing cancer; the mental and behavioral deterioration they promote is bad enough.

A paradigmatic case of cell phone insanity: my phone has voice-activated dialing—it's a pretty standard feature, but I am taking it way too seriously. I have fallen in love with the idea of a voice-controlled phone that responds expertly and courteously to my every verbal command...and the results are bizarre. For example: by default, on my phone, I can check my voicemail simply by pressing “1” for a second or so. So why would I want to check it by press a sequence of three or four buttons and then saying “Voicemail” in a comically robotic voice? Because it's cooler, that's why.

At this point, I'm rambling, and reminding myself of those new parents who want to tell you every single detail about their new baby, regardless of how inane their stories are. And right now, I might be those parents, pushing my insipid blather off on you. You may be wondering, “Where are the insights? Where is the thoughtful commentary? Are you just going to talk about your stupid phone?” As the editor, I remind you that this publication is an open forum for your thoughts, and you should feel free to write in and express your displeasure. Or you can just call me...any time after seven.



Above: The object of my affection (the phone, not the person).

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Santorini, Stupidity and Sheets, Part One: Consultant Todd Ruecker's Travels in the Greek Isles, Reported in Stream-of Consciousness Form

Too bad mom can't be here because this is definitely her idea of Greece: beautiful water and sunshine. Those houses perched on the edge of the caldera seem like they're going to fall off. They're so white and clean, much different from the dirt and grime of Athens. Oh, and the island style blue church domes are everywhere. Fantastic. As long as the weather keeps up, this will be an amazing time. Loads of sunshine, perfect temperatures and no crowds. Days filled with Spanakopita, Baklava, stunning sunsets and narrow white washed streets and cityscapes.

"Please prepare yourself for disembarkation; the ferry will be arriving at Santorini in a few minutes."

The ferry ride went by faster than I expected. Eight hours of music, reading and staring at mysterious islands is not a bad way to travel. But it will be dark soon, I need to find someplace to stay. Are the hostels open? What if that travel agent was right? No, he was a liar. But we did get a good deal on the car. It is beautiful here but not quite as beautiful as I expected. I suppose that travel books and word of mouth raise expectations to unrealistic heights. But it is nice, spectacular actually. Not the most amazing place in the world though. I'm just partial to mountains I guess.

"Bye, good to meet you. Have a great time on the island."

They were a nice couple; I hope that they find a place to stay. Maybe I'll see them on the bus. The *Lonely Planet* guide is invaluable. I practically memorized the section on Santorini so I should have no problems. Ok, time to get my bag from the luggage drop. I hope that no one took it, they don't lock it and people board and leave the ship at every island. Why am I so distrusting? Crime is low in Greece so I have nothing to worry about. The first thing I plan to do is eat because that one *Spanakopita* can only last me so long. I should have gotten two.

"Thank you for sailing with us."

"*Efkareisto. Jas sas.*"

I need to use my Greek vocabulary; it's respectful and helps me blend in. Thank you. Bye. There's most of my vocabulary. More people than I expected for the off-season. Oh, there's the potato truck from Naxos. Funny to think of these ferries as a highway. Ok, the bus, I must find the bus,

the sun is setting. Ah, there it is. Don't talk to the people with brochures. Don't talk to the people with brochures. Go to Fira. Fira.

"Hi, you need room?"

"No"

"How much you want to pay? Twenty Euro?"

"That's too expensive, I don't need a room."

"Ten Euro? Nice place, very nice place."

She does look friendly and has a great smile. She definitely looks Greek, dark hair and skin. Wait, that's probably not a good thing, remember the travel agent, he was very Greek. But ten Euros, that's very cheap. What should I do? I know that I probably won't stay anywhere cheaper than that. Is the hostel open? I would like to meet other people. I've hesitated too long. The bus, go to the bus.

"Look at this. Isn't it nice? Come with me, I give you free ride from port. By bus you pay five Euro, by taxi twelve. How many nights you stay?"

"Um three."

"You come to my place, you can pay night by night. If you don't like it, you leave."

"Is it in Fira? Can I see the brochure?"

"Very close to town, very close."

She won't show me the brochure. Remember *Lonely Planet's* advice; always ask to see a map showing the location. Is she lying? She seems so friendly, but that's her job. I hate being so distrustful. But that damn travel agent. He lied through his teeth and was so pushy. Maybe I'll trust again. I'm in this country for two more weeks; I'd better start trusting someone.

"Ok, I'll pay for one night."

Why did I say yes? Stupid. Stupid. There goes the nice couple from the boat. They are going to the bus. Why didn't I stick with them?

"Come wait by my car. I drive you to hotel....You wait here, I'll be back."

Going to get more suckers. People like me. Read the book, ignore the advice. Well, can't always stick with the book. Need some adventure, a good story. You need to trust people and look for the good in the situation. Oh great, there goes the bus. No getting out of this now because I'm too cheap for a taxi. Ok, I'll try one night. If it sucks, I'll leave. It's almost getting dark anyways. I won't do anything to night because I'm exhausted. But alone? I'm

trusting this strange girl six thousand miles from home to drive me to some undisclosed location on this mysterious island. Why did her brochures say Perivolos? Where the hell is that? By Fira? Hey, she found a couple more backpackers. Like me. Backpackers? Suckers? At least I'm not in this alone. Strength in numbers. Hopefully they know English. They must. You can't travel Greece alone speaking only Korean. Relax, relax, relax...

"Hi. I'm Todd."

"Hi, I'm Kim." "I'm In-Ki." "I'm San."

I stink at names. I'll figure them out later. At least someone is coming with me. How I long for someone to talk to. Traveling alone can be lonely, but you're more likely to meet new people; people on the ferry, people at the hotel, and people on the street.

"So you got pulled into this deal too?"

"Oh yes. So cheap and looks pretty."

"Yes, we can only hope that it is nice."

"Let's get going."

"The hotel is by Fira right?"

"Five minutes from town. Buses run every thirty minutes."

"Is there Internet?"

"Yes, at the tourist center."

"Where's the grocery store?"

"A short walk."

Is she telling the truth? From town? From which town? Perivolos? Calm down. Oh look, there's a sign for Fira. Damn, we turned the opposite way. Stupid. Why didn't I take the bus. Make the most out of it; it will make a good story. My friend Steve would understand, we always talk about having a good story. These Koreans seem friendly and should provide much needed company. I really enjoy meeting people. We're in this together, I'm sure that we'll have fun.

"Here we are. Roberto's Villas. Let me show you your rooms. You stay on second floor. Balconies and best views."

Seems okay from the outside. Clean, white washed, and a nice tropical feel. How bad can it be? Oh look, the ocean is right over there. I can always go to the beach. Hey, we even have mini-kitchens in our rooms. So hungry. We can make pasta or something. For only ten Euros this room is nice. I bet people pay seventy Euros in the

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Todd
Ruecker's
Greek
Travels

HELP. I NEED SOMEBODY. HELP. NOT JUST ANYBODY.

Attention talented Writing Consultant! *The Perspective* wants YOU to contribute your ideas, words, and images to this humble newsletter. We are looking for the following: stories, photography, art, poetry (ferromagnetic or otherwise), right-wing rants, left-wing rants, wingless rants, shameless self-promotion, and Lyotardian historiographic metafiction. Email any of these, or anything else, to crizzledizzle@hotmail.com or drop a copy in Ty's staff mailbox. Don't be shy--let's make this YOUR publication. Or else...we will visit rabid



A blue-domed church and a view of the Aegean sea from the northern town of Oia, the second-largest city on the crescent-shaped Greek island of Santorini. [photo by Ty Fagan]

Wine, yes. Let's get that now before she forgets. Why did I buy that wine? I did feel sorry for her but she LIED to us. Any more stupid mistakes today? Why don't I go to Fira? It's almost dark; I'm trapped here tonight. She has my money and the money of my new friends. Don't want her to have the satisfaction of free money. I know she won't give it back.

"Excuse me, we would like our wine."

"Oh yes, come with me. This is my father and mother."

"Jas sas."

Using my Greek again. At least it's a family run place. How bad can it be? Ok, where's the wine.

"Here. Two small bottles for you. One big bottle for you."

"This doesn't look like wine."

"You want big bottle instead? White wine?"

"Yes. We want big bottle."

Those small bottles did look strange. Wine isn't supposed to be cloudy and brown. It's probably spoiled

wine. Mine looks strange too,

a cloudy red. Maybe it's Vinsanto? Why does the seal have the name of a Peloponnesian winery? She must be lying. Her grandfather my ass. Well, its wine. As long as it's not poison. Oh, their new bottle looks much better. A white, clear wine beats a brown, cloudy one. And it has a Santorini label, but it doesn't look homemade. I could probably buy that in a store. We'll check it out and compare prices. Ok, got the wine. It's time for food.

"Where is that grocery store?"

"Down the road. Five minutes."

Does she only know the number five? Five minutes, five Euros.

"Lets go guys. I'm very hungry."

The setting sun is fantastic; I can't imagine what it looks like on the other side of the island. A beautiful day, much better than the chilly, rainy days with mom. It was cold and windy on the ferry though. I suppose the open sea does that. It's cold now too and the sun is going down. We must be back before dark. It's a strange place and I don't know my way around.

"What do you think of Roberto's Villas?"

"That girl is weird. She tried to sell us everything: pizza, safe, wine, map."

"I know. I only got wine. Where is this store?"

"Not five minutes away. She lies."

"Oh there it is."

"What do we want for dinner? Oh, *Ja sas*. How about pasta with tomato sauce?"

"Ok."

"Oh there's your wine. Five Euros. At least you didn't get cheated. No great deal though."

"Ok, anything else? Well, time to cook. Let's head back."

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Todd's Travels (cont.from page

I can wander around this part of the island tomorrow and if I want to leave, I'll be able to explore Fira and Oia on Friday and Saturday.

"Twenty Euro. You want wine? My grandfather makes it.

Five Euro for big bottle, two Euro fifty for small."

"I'll take a small bottle. Here's five Euros."

"I don't have change. I give you small bottle, map, and safe deposit box."

"No, I don't need those."

"No change. Sorry"

Bull.

"Just give me a big bottle."

She doesn't have change. I don't trust the safe deposit box and I have a map. Better off with the wine. Santorini is famous for good wines, especially dry white wines, and Vinsanto, a fine red wine. I can drink the wine but can't drink the safe deposit box. Hopefully it is good. Her grandfather made it? I'll believe that when I see it.

"Ok, bye."

"What about my wine?"

"Oh, I'll bring it later."

Sure later. Money now, wine later. Great system she has. Time to find my new friends. I'm sure she tried to sell them all sorts of things: pizza, wine, and a map. She's desperate for money since it's the off-season. Few visitors but unseasonably beautiful weather. No rain and cold yet.

"Hi guys, how are your rooms?"

"Very good. We got wine. And a map. She didn't have change so she gave us a map. Very detailed map she said."

"She pulled that trick with me. Five Euros for this, five Euros for that. Oh well, do you want to get dinner?"

"Yes, that's funny, everything five Euros. Let's get wine first. Where is she?"

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Todd's
Travels,
cont.**

CATEGORY	THE HOT	
<p>Numerically titled movie</p>	 <p>21 Grams</p>	 <p>50 First Dates</p>
<p>Cell Phone</p>	<p>My cell phone</p>	<p>Your cell phone</p>
<p>Liquid</p>	 <p>Lobster Bisque</p>	 <p>Nitrogen</p>
<p>19th Century President</p>	<p>Millard "M-Fizzle" Fillmore</p>	<p>Grover "Mustache" Cleveland</p>
<p>Virtuoso Performance</p>	 <p>Charlize Theron in <i>Monster</i></p>	 <p>Charlize Theron in <i>The Italian Job</i></p>
<p>Looking Lovely</p>	 <p>Charlize Theron in <i>The Italian Job</i></p>	 <p>Charlize Theron in <i>Monster</i></p>
<p>Staff Meeting Food Item</p>	<p>Sweet Swirly Bread</p>	<p>Sweet Nutty Bread</p>

p.4
What's
Hot,
What's
Not