

Just another backseat driver?

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We've been traveling quite a bit of late, Missouri, around Texas, a lot of new places we haven't experienced before. So, last Christmas when it was suggested that we needed a GPS (Navigational System) to take along on these trips I didn't disagree. We have had a few nasty incidents I wouldn't care to experience again due in part because we were in the middle of nowhere and needed to find someplace fast and in part due to planning (or lack thereof).

Personally, I have a really good sense of direction. If I am someplace I have never been before I can still navigate around and if I have been some place one time I can usually find it again even years later. But when you're somewhere *really* remote where you cannot see more than the horizon and trees no matter which way you look, well, it's nice to have something that can help you find a place to eat, the nearest gas station, fix a flat, or a place where you can spend the night; you get the idea. It's a handy little device; a miracle of our times. (It helped us find a bike shop we had an appointment at which apparently didn't exist until the GPS gave us the course because no one could tell us where it was, it wasn't listed in the "book" and information had no clue.)

When we first purchased the little box I played with the voice choices we had for English. There were male and female with accents from Australia, Britain and America. I would have liked Jamaican but no luck. I

started with Australian. You know mate, I love that accent. That is until he started getting snippy with me when I didn't follow his instructions to the letter.

"Turn right."

I didn't want to turn right because I could see a gas station straight ahead so I ignored the command and headed to gas up.

"TURN RIGHT."

I swear the little guy in the box was getting upset with me because I didn't do what he said. I promised him that I would make a correction as quickly as possible as I whizzed by the street. It sounded a lot like he sort of groaned and then said "Re-cal-cu-la-ting". It wasn't too long before I was changing out to one of the British voices because the Aussie had done got on my nerves with all his recalculating. We just did not see eye to eye.

Quite frankly, it didn't turn out any better with Mr. or Ms. British Accent. Actually both the male and female voice sounded even snippier to me than the Aussie when their paths weren't followed. I found that I was really beginning to dread hearing the word "Re-cal-cu-la-ting" and indeed I began to feel sort of guilty when I didn't do as I was told. Let's face it, no one likes to be corrected and especially when you are told to turn and there isn't a street to turn onto, but even worse is when it is a

around the bend...

machine and you can't win an argument! Well, I'm not saying I didn't argue with "it" – I talked back all the time. I even called s/he/them names – I felt it might sort of "connect" us.

Finally, I was forced to switch to the American Male. If I am going to have a machine be ill-tempered with me for not following commands, I think an American accent actually sounds less exasperated with me.

I still think it's a great tool for instructions but more so for finding places. My suggestion for the next versions would be to add a choice of voices, maybe personalities and different choices of terminologies (like maybe "wrong way stupid").

I think I might have felt a little better being snipped at if maybe Dr. Phil had asked me "How's that working for you?" after I ignored a command or maybe Rod Sterling?

"At the road ahead...you've just entered The Twilight Zone" ... dodododo dodododo.

