

# Internet Littering

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Thursday, March 07, 2024

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My Daddy's folks are from Kentucky. My Mama's folks are from Oklahoma. Our childhoods were passed overseas or on the east coast, always around a Navy or Marine base. My father was first in the Navy, and then he went to work for Kaman Aerospace. I mention this as a frequent summer trip was back to Kentucky and/or Oklahoma. This was in the 50s and 60s. Initially there were no Interstates. Even later when the Interstates were under construction it was still a hodge-podge of Interstates and two lane roads. These were long, slow trips, not uncommonly in bumper to bumper traffic on two lane roads not always in the best repair. Heaven forbid if there was an accident. It would back things up for hours. Air conditioning in a car, surely you jest.

## Vivid Childhood Memory

A vivid memory that implanted on my very young conscience was how littered, how trashy the highways were. With nary a thought, folks would just toss out of the car whatever they were done with, food containers, drink bottles, all sorts of trash. It was not a pretty sight. While still remaining a problem, it obviously has improved since then, in no small part due to educational programs undertaken by various levels of government, and increasing fines.

## A Country Drowning Under Trash

A couple years ago *Señora* and I took a trip to Honduras which I told about here: [¡Guau! ¡Honduras!](#) One thing I did not mention in that blog posting was how littered the country was. Whenever I took photographs, I very purposely attempted to frame the pictures so as to not include the ubiquitous trash. It reminded me a lot of the highways from my youth. The sad part is that Honduras is really a very beautiful

country, and then you have litter everywhere. Of course, a big part of the problem is that they do not have good services there, including trash. I remember once we drove by what I supposed passed for a landfill. Think of something out of a Mad Max movie.

### **Our Screens Littered with Ads**

Now we have what was to be the savior of mankind, the Internet. It is more and more reminding me of the highways of my youth or the littered nation of Honduras. Like everything in our capitalistic society, businesses striving for our eyeballs and wallets have, in large part, corrupted it. I am finding it harder and harder to read articles in my news feed due to the number of pop ups and advertisements placed nearly ever paragraph. And then there is an Internet style of writing, a teaser headline with the information that tweaked your curiosity at the bottom of the article forcing you to scroll pass advertisement after advertisement. I understand that there is a cost to maintaining a website, even my silly, little blog would not be classified as a cheap hobby. But at some point the poor donkey that is the Internet user is going to collapse under the load of all these ads.

### **The Curmudgeon Off to Jail**

And it is not just the Internet. *Señora* at some point is going to have to bail me out of jail. It is all I can do sometimes to not grab a tire iron and start beating the screen on a gas pump that is screaming at me that I need to come inside for their bargain on two hot dogs and a soft drink, their cigarettes on sale, and don't forget that 12 pack of Bud Light. Only thing that stops me now is how bad I look in a mug shot. I'll be polite and not relate what my urge is to do to the adverts they put over urinals at truck stops.

### **A Line That Should Have Not Been Crossed**

Something recently that irritated me beyond measure was from a doctor's office. Of course, now days they hound you to death with texts and emails to not forget your appointment. Which was what they were doing, plus they wanted me to "check in" online a couple days before my appointment. I answered all their administrative questions, completed their survey of my symptoms, pushed yet another button that said NEXT, when an advertisement for a medication filled the screen. The only way I could see to go ahead was to push a button labeled CONTINUE. This launched me into a push survey – think political push polling – about the medication. I closed my browser. Some things are just not right. I would complain to the doctor, but he would just put it off to whatever company is administering the practice.

What was really the salt in the wound was that I am on this particular medication which between me and the insurance company costs over \$600 a month. Can you say Medicare donut hole? It just reinforced what I already knew, how Big Pharma is spending my money... advertising. The sources vary on the amount they are spending on advertising, but somewhere between 8 and 12 billion dollars a year. Using the higher figure that is more than the budget of 12 or 13 states. The lower figure is roughly equivalent to the budgets of Oklahoma or Alaska. Wow.

### **Kurt Vonnegut – Seer**

One of my favorite authors is [Kurt Vonnegut](#). His first novel, [Player Piano](#), was published in 1952. It details a future where practically every method of production is automated and humans are only left with

the function of buying their output. He describes a device that every one carries that could only be a cell phone, although it had another name. Like our cell phones, these devices tracked everyone's location, but more blatantly than our phones it was pushing advertisements to the citizen consumers as they moved for place to place.

There is no doubt in my mind that we are ruining Lifeboat Earth with our over consumption and over production of goods that we really do not need. For just a glimmer of this problem here is an interesting video: [Mountains of dumped clothes pile up in Chile's Atacama Desert](#)

And how do you drive consumerism... yup you got it, advertising.

And so it should not be.

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I am not sure what circle of Dante's *Inferno* the inventors of plastic shopping bags and disposable Styrofoam food containers should be placed, but certainly one of the lower ones. We pay too high a price for convenience.

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