

opinion

How un-American can anyone get?

by Art Buchwald

I have a confession to make, and the sooner it gets out in the open, the better I'll feel about it. *I don't drive a car.*

Americans are broad-minded people. They'll accept the fact that a person can be an alcoholic, a dope fiend, a wife beater, and even a newspaperman, but if a man doesn't drive, there is something wrong with him.

Through the years I've found it very embarrassing to admit it to anyone, and my best friends tend to view me with suspicion and contempt.

But where I really run into trouble is when I go into a store and try to make a purchase with a check.

It happened again last week when I went to a discount house at a large shopping center in Maryland. I wanted to buy a portable typewriter, and the salesman was very helpful about showing me the different models.

I decided on one, and then I said, "May I write out a personal check?" "Naturally," he said kindly. "Do you have any identification?"

"Of course," I said. I produced an American Express credit card, a Diner's Club credit card, a Carte Blanche credit card, a Bell Telephone credit card, and my pass to the White House.

The man inspected them all and then said, "Where's your driver's license?" "I don't have one," I replied.

"Did you lose it?" "No, I didn't lose it. I don't drive a car." He pushed a button under the cash register, and suddenly a floor manager came rushing over.

The salesman had now become surly. "This guy's trying to cash a check, and he doesn't have a driver's license. Should I

call the store detective?" "Wait a minute. I'll talk to him," the manager said. "Did you lose your driver's license for some traffic offense?"

"No, I've never driven. I don't like to drive."

"Nobody likes to drive," the floor manager shouted. "That's no excuse. Why are you trying to cash a check if you don't have a driver's license?"

"I thought all the other identification was good enough. I had to be cleared by the Secret Service to get this White House pass," I said hopefully.

The floor manager looked scornfully at the pass and all my credit cards. "Anyone can get cleared by the Secret Service. Hey, wait a minute. How did you get out here to the shopping center if you don't drive?"

"I took a taxi," I said.

"Well, that takes the cake," he said. By this time a crowd had gathered.

"What happened?"

"Guy doesn't have a driver's license."

"Says he doesn't even drive. Never has driven."

"Lynch him."

"Tar and feather him."

"How un-American can you get?"

The crowd was getting ugly, so I decided to forget the typewriter.

By this time the president of the store had arrived on the scene. Fortunately, he recognized my name and okayed the check. He was very embarrassed by the treatment I had received and said, "Come on, I'll buy you a drink."

"I forgot to tell you," I said. "I don't drink either."

This was too much, even for him, and he pushed me toward the door.

"Get out of here," he said, "and don't come back!"

Businesses slowly learning sexist ads turn small profit

by Maxwell Glen and Cody Shearer

WASHINGTON — American Express Co. has always had a knack for advertising. Through an appealing series of ads, the financial giant some years ago implied that its cardholders could walk into any watering hole this side of Calcutta and see waiters snap to attention.

Later, of course, it conceived the much-parodied "Do You Know Me?" series.

This summer, AmEx is back with a new theme: "The American Express Card — Part of a lot of interesting lives." Designed to lure more women to the card-carrying set, the new campaign features, in various scenarios, women taking their children and husbands out to eat.

In one of the better spots, a man just treated to dinner asks his wife, "First it was back to school, then a job, and now it's an American Express card... what next?"

Replies the woman: "You're cute when you're worried."

American Express's new pitch might seem to reflect a new sensitivity on Madison Avenue: With more women working, advertisers can't afford to alienate the female market.

AmEx's new series represents an unusual break from an otherwise unfortunately archaic tradition in most advertisements.

For example, in the latest pitch for Neet, a cream depilatory, actor John Stamos of television's "General Hospital" runs his hand over the calves of three women, announcing after each caress whether the limb has been smoothed with Neet or simply shaven.

The overt sexism of the ad is enough to make you toss your TV (and bottle of Neet, if you keep it around) out the window.

For Keith Reinhard, chairman of the Chicago-based advertising firm of Needham, Harper and Steers, the Neet spot typifies commercials broadcast during daylight hours (when the audience consists largely of female game-show and soap-opera buffs).

As Reinhard found in a recent survey of network advertisements, compiled on a single afternoon, ads remain remarkably behind the times.

"We haven't come very far in the way

Advertisers seem wedded to an image that women fret only about the whitest wash, the richest coffee and the best way to prepare au gratin potatoes.

we portray women in advertising," Reinhard said last month in a speech to the Women's Advertising Club of Chicago. "... it is primarily, perhaps uniquely, in the world of television advertising where women have made no appreciable progress (in the last 20 years)."

Despite gains by women in the workplace, Reinhard said, advertisers seem wedded to an image that women fret only about the whitest wash, the richest coffee and the best way to prepare au gratin potatoes.

That males increasingly shoulder kitchen chores clearly hasn't dawned on Madison Avenue: In most instances, ad writers leave men perched at the dinner

table, either to decry drab life or applaud their spouses' latest assertions.

Reinforcing outdated sex roles enough. But advertisements rather than respect the consumer's intelligence will, in the long run, be enemies than friends.

Indeed, one need only recall around the collar" series of years ago to know the inane jingles and slogans obscure a brand name and slog for sales.

Ultimately, backward notions of lifestyles only keep Americans conscious of advertisers and their products. "As the number of insulted viewers goes up each effectiveness of all advertisements down," Reinhard said.

Some companies are waking modern times. Procter & Gamble's Cincinnati-based maker of toothpaste to orange recently discarded its age-old flick Head and Shoulders ads with couples arm in arm. It change P&G essentially confesses woman's world doesn't revolve around dandruff.

DeBeers, the diamond broker, launched a sharp campaign that turns the tables on tradition: "From a woman to a man." And Forbers, the capitalist's capitalist, more than once in recent years gated companies for "demeaning ages of women in advertising."

Yet it remains for the bulk of companies to "know, honor and their customers. Unless they do they may find their products from "a lot of interesting lives."

Cancer-fighting bug spray one of summer's U-turns

by Dick West
United Press International

WASHINGTON — Weather apart, this truly has been a strange summer.

The U.S. Postal Service shows a surplus, gasoline becomes plentiful, the Social Security system is reported in good financial condition and the Agriculture Department discovers an insect spray that cures cancer.

Talk about your U-turns! This may take the cake — made with an artificial sweetener that enables the baker to claim: a slice a day keeps the doctor away.

The insect spray switch was turned up by two researchers experimenting with a chemical called diflubenzuron.

"Diflubenzuron is widely used to control such agricultural insects as the boll weevil," says a department news release.

But when some of the stuff was tried on mice, it stopped the growth of certain skin cancer cells.

Anyone who has been even partly awake during the last couple of decades can immediately grasp the potential significance of this development.

In case after case, insecticides have been found to cause cancer in laboratory mice. Now, at last, the shoe has been dropped on the other foot.

If an insect spray that harms mice is assumed to be dangerous to human beings, it would seem to follow that an insect spray that benefits mice is a boon to the human race.

Diflubenzuron, be it noted, is not a poison, as many of the banned products

were. Rather, this chemical is described as a "growth regulator" that prevents certain insects from developing complete body coverings.

Apparently, it has much the same inhibitive impact on a type of skin cancer in mice.

Should further research show the chemical works as well on human skin, this could be the opening of new opportunities in the environmental and ecological arenas.

Some of the possibilities are illustrated in the following futuristic news items:

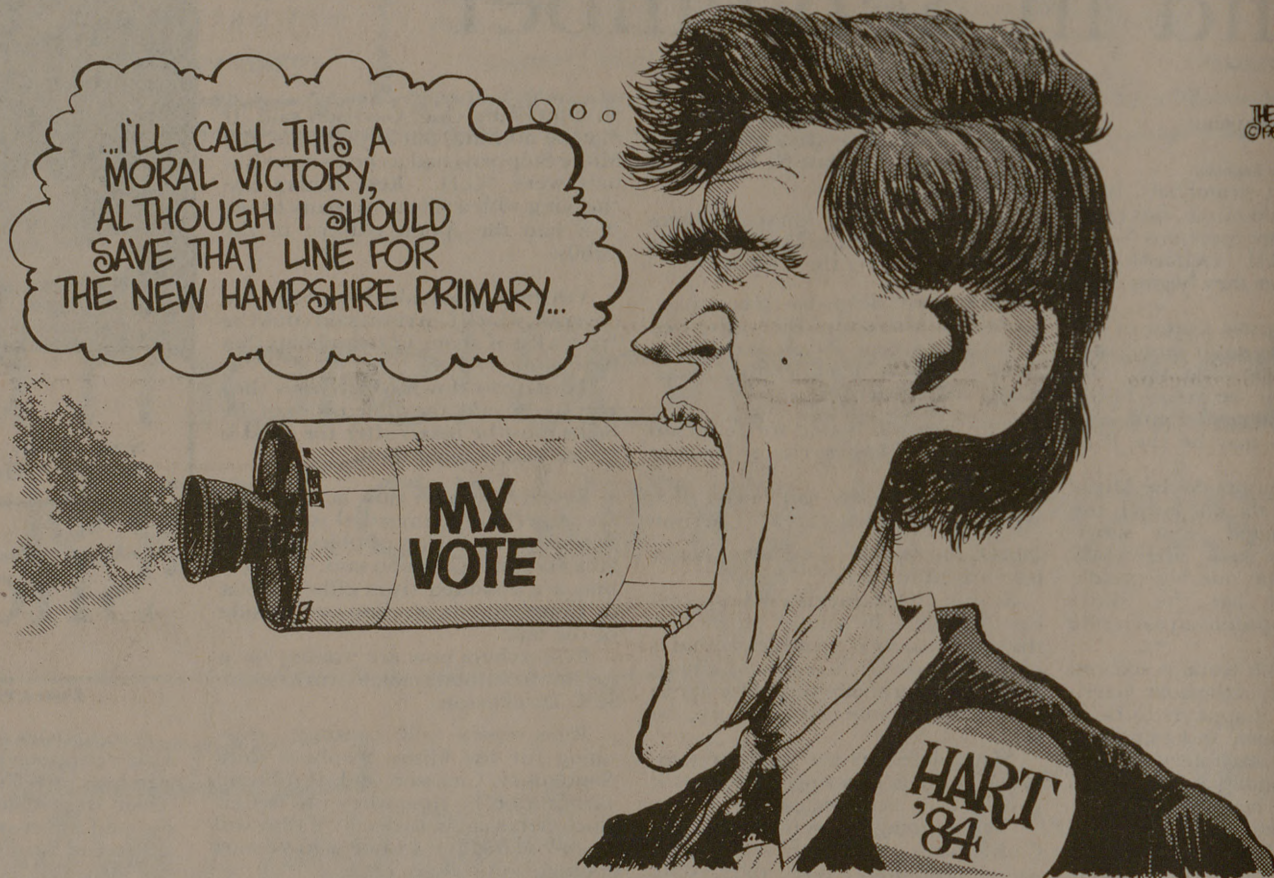
WASHINGTON — The Veterans Administration moved today to collect millions of dollars in medical fees from former servicemen who were exposed to a chemical used for insect control.

A VA spokesman said the chemical diflubenzuron was sprayed on crops in fields near where the GIs were participating in training maneuvers.

It has since been shown to inhibit disease growth in human beings. Thus the veterans may have accidentally received free immunizations, the spokesman pointed out.

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency announced today it will provide funds to build an entire new city on a plot of Missouri farm land that was heavily sprayed with diflubenzuron.

The EPA said tests showed the soil contained enough of the chemical to prevent the growth of cancer cells in at least 10,000 people, the projected population of the town.



Lead poisoning: still a problem

By Children's Express
United Press International

(Editor's Note: Children's Express, a privately funded news service, is real world journalism reported entirely by children 13 years of age or under whose tape-recorded interviews, discussions, reports and commentary are edited by teenagers and adults.)

NEW YORK — Younger kids will do strange things. They put all kinds of things in their mouths.

Stupid as it sounds, they eat dirt when they play in yards. Some kids will eat paint. When you're younger, you don't know what's good for you. The dirt contains levels of lead. In older buildings, the old types of paint contain high levels of lead.

A lot of kids between the ages of 1 and 6 have lead poisoning. Ninety-seven percent of them don't know it.

In fact, it's very common. Most people don't realize the minor symptoms, because they're not very noticeable. Everybody gets headaches or gets irritable. Everybody doesn't pay attention sometimes in school.

When you look at someone who has the measles, you can look at him and say, "He's got the measles." When you look at that kid you can't say he's got lead poisoning.

"Lots of people think that because kids aren't dying like they were in the early '70s that lead poisoning isn't a problem anymore," Kirk Johnson told us. He's a member of the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

"We've been trying to let people know that lead is still a hazard. It doesn't really cross people's minds to associate a learning problem with lead," Johnson said.

"We're seeing lots of subtle mental problems coming from lead."

"It really is a pervasive problem," Johnson continued. "The lead inches all around our environment. In some communities, the water supply comes through pipes that are made of lead. We drink it in the drinking water."

You can get lead poisoning from inhaling the air coming from cars which contain gasoline with high levels of lead. Cities have lots of lead in all the factories.

Johnson said that the Environmental Protection Agency has reduced levels of lead in gasoline. But some people wanted to start putting more lead into the gasoline because it's much cheaper when you have lead in it.

"We're very frightened by it," Johnson told us. "The thought of putting more lead into the air just didn't make sense. We banded together with lots of scientists and child health advocates and generated enough pressure to cause the EPA to back down."

We asked Johnson if lead poisoning can be detected in a routine physical examination by a family doctor.

"If a child has a blood test, then there's a chance it could be detected," he said. "Often if a child has low-level poisoning, the child might also have anemia. But generally a doctor has to really be on his toes to find lead poisoning at a low level in a child."

If detected, lead poisoning can be treated through medicines that dissolve the lead in the bloodstream.

There are lead screening programs that have been established. They go into neighborhoods with high risks of lead poisoning — neighborhoods where buildings are very old and the paint's all peeling and the children are coming in contact with high lead items.

Although treatment has been prevention is still a problem. The show that lead poisoning is a disease more than all of the other minor measles and mumps put together.

"All a person has to know is where it comes from," Johnson said. "It's a major catastrophe — little boys dying in the early '70s — before we realized that."

Berry's World



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