

# False advertising

by Matthew D. Cissne  
Co-editor

A few weeks ago I was driving home from work when a billboard on 12th Street caught my attention.

Normally, I don't notice these eyesores unless they are promoting something with the help of a beautiful woman in skimpy clothing (sorry, I have hormones too!).

The reason this particular billboard caught my eye was because of the huge bald eagle in the middle and its overall patriotic aura. Unfortunately traffic was moving too fast for me to notice the message printed on it.

The next day I made a point to slow down as I approached the billboard and I was appalled at what it said. It was something to the tune of "If you let them take this one, which one will be next?"

I also noticed that it had "the right to bear arms" written on it. The advertisement was sponsored by the NRA.

I am sick of the NRA's efforts to persuade our nation that it will fall apart if we take any precautions to limit the amount of guns in our country.

By the way, when has freedom of speech killed an innocent child?

I would never allow a gun in my house, real or fake, and I have never gone hunting. I see nothing wrong with placing complete bans on civilians purchasing guns, but I am a realist.

Obviously, we could never get all guns off the street or out of people's homes, but I do have a few suggestions on how we could lower the immense number of gun deaths in our country.

The National Center for Health Statistics says that more people between the ages of 15 and 24 die as a result of handgun use than as a result of all natural causes combined.

My first suggestion is to not only enforce a waiting period on the purchase of guns, but to create a mandatory class for

those interested in purchasing a gun.

This class would include a video that shows statistics and actual photos of those who were accidentally killed because of a gun.

My hope is that the consumer would be more educated and aware of the imminent dangers of purchasing a gun, and would seriously weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the product.

My second suggestion is to raise the minimum age requirement for purchasing a



gun to 21. If someone is not responsible enough to drink a beer, should they be permitted by law to handle firearms?

Alcohol is only dangerous when abused, but guns are dangerous as soon as they are

loaded.

The argument that lawmakers had for raising the drinking age to 21 to decrease the amount of deaths caused by drunk drivers could be stronger to lower the amount of gun deaths. Simply put, it is not the gun that kills, rather it is the person who pulls the trigger.

My third suggestion is actually a plea to those in television and movies to stop dramatizing violence.

We do not need to see another film in which a muscle-bound hero takes out some ridiculously powerful killing machine and spouts out enough bullets to wipe out the entire nation of China.

These films never have the hero leave her gun on the living room table in reach of her four-year-old son.

I guess moviemakers are afraid to own up to the fact that guns are not able to discriminate between ugly criminals and cute children.

The good guys hardly ever get shot, but if they do, more often

than not, they find a way to survive.

It would be nice if Mr. Smith's son survived after he was killed by a stray bullet on his way home from school.

Schindler's List and Boyz in the Hood were criticized for being too graphic in some of their killing scenes.

I have some news for you: there is nothing pretty about death.

We need more films like these that are realistic and show the real effects of violence.

I am also troubled by the nonchalant attitude of death from some of today's popular singers. Our entertainers are portraying an image that violence is cool.

These suggestions may seem small and meaningless, but their impact would be felt immediately.

There is no rational way to completely wipe out deaths caused by guns and I would not want to take away the NRA's right to arm the country, but every life saved is a life saved.

# Seventh grade party

by Dave Barry  
Syndicated Columnist

If you don't have enough drama in your life, you need to chaperone a party for a group of seventh-graders. ("Chaperone" comes from the French words "chape" meaning "person," and "rone," meaning "who is aging very rapidly.")

We recently had a party for our son's 13th birthday. We rented a Holiday Inn function room on the theory that it was roomier and less flammable than our house.

We hired two nice young DJs to play ugly music really loud so that the youngsters would enjoy it. We ordered a large quantity of cold cuts for the youngsters to ignore, as well as a nice fresh vegetable platter for them to actively avoid.

We stood near the door and greeted the guests and their parents as they arrived. There seemed like a LOT of guests, more than we recalled actually inviting.

Apparently this party was giving off some kind of powerful airborne adolescent hormonal chemical attractant that was causing 13-year-olds as far away as Homer, Alaska to demand that their parents drive

them to it. People were streaming into the function room.

The kids would melt instantly into the throbbing blob of youth that had formed in the middle of the dance floor.

Their parents would look us over, trying to discern whether we were decent people or Branch Davidians or what. There was no way we could talk to them, because the sound system was cranked up to KILL ZONE, playing songs that consisted of angry men shouting things like:

"This song is PAIN!

Makes you inSANE!

This song grows big warts

On your BRAIN!"

So we'd smile at the parents like Ward and June Cleaver and gesture to the vegetable platter as evidence that we were responsible. They'd nod and scurry out of the function room before their ears started to bleed.

Meanwhile, in the center of the room, things were getting very dramatic. Of course we had no clue what was going on, because we are grown-ups, and therefore way too stupid to grasp the complexities involved in being a seventh-grader.

Later on, our son gave us a much simplified version, which was that this girl had been going with this boy, but she dumped

him, although she liked him and wanted to still be his friend, but the boy's best friend got angry at the girl and called her a bad name, which caused her to be



extremely upset and burst into tears, and she thought that the ex-boyfriend had put the best friend up to this, which he hadn't, in fact he didn't even KNOW the best friend had done this, and now he (the ex-boyfriend) was VERY upset because she thought HE was responsible, and he was also angry at the best friend, who was ALSO very upset because he was just trying to help out his friend and now EVERYBODY was mad at him, so EVERYBODY was upset, and

everybody's FRIENDS were upset, and things were just so dramatic and awful that it did not seem possible that life as we now know it could continue on the planet Earth.

As I say, it was actually far more complex than this, with dramatic new developments occurring every few seconds and important news bulletins circulating through the party at well beyond the speed of light.

The central throbbing youth blob was constantly pulsating and mutating and splitting into smaller groups and subgroups to whisper, hug, discuss, commiserate or -- if it was a group of boys -- punch.

Every few minutes, a group of maybe 14 girls -- at least two of them crying, and at least one of them saying something like, "I can't stand it!" -- would rush past us out the door and into the ladies' restroom.

Moments later, a clot of boys would rush out and go into the men's restroom. Then there would be tense diplomatic negotiations between restrooms, with a small party emerging from the men's restroom to talk with a party from the ladies' restroom.

("He just wants to talk to her!" "She's VERY UPSET!") Then everybody would surge

back into the function room, and the throbbing blob would change form a few times, and then, suddenly, the priority code red alert signal would go out again: BACK TO THE RESTROOMS!

At times virtually all the party guests were engaged in high-level restroom conferences, leaving us grown-ups virtually alone with the vegetable tray and the sound system, our eardrums torn to shreds, wondering if next year we should skip the function room and just rent two large restrooms.

At one point, as small groups of seventh-graders were streaming urgently past me in both directions, a young lady, having clearly been briefed by her parents on proper etiquette, stopped momentarily and said to me: "Hi! I'm having a very nice time. So far."

The party lasted three hours, which is 46 years in chaperone time. Finally the parents came back and the music (thank God) stopped and the lights came back on and all these urgent, dramatic figures turned back into seventh-graders, politely saying good night and leaving with their parents, going back to the boring old world.

Our son told us it was a good party. I kind of wished I had been there