

Tidbits From Earth

Joe Examines The Seedy World of Fast Food

by Joe Albrecht

I have no problem with the concept of fast food restaurants - serving the customer quickly so he can eat and get on with more important things in life such as bowling. Beyond that it's pretty shaky. Generally I dislike eating establishments where when you leave them you are dirtier and oilier than the Alaskan shoreline.

For one thing, these places should hardly be called restaurants. My idea of a restaurant is a tidy, atmospheric little bistro where I am attended to by a portly waiter named Francois - where the wine list features a dry yet full-flavored 1964 Chateau Le Blanc - and where a cup of coffee alone costs more than effective singing lessons for Bob Dylan.

Fast food places should be given names more akin to their atmosphere - like Palace Of Grease. If I were President, the second law I would pass would be that an eating establishment could not be called a restaurant

if it operated a drive-thru or ran witless promotional games like Scrabble in which customers are encouraged to collect letters on game pieces via purchases to spell words such as G-R-E-A-S-E-B-U-R-G-E-R to win a million dollars when everyone knows there is only one letter "B" printed and that it is located in a remote outpost in Kenya. (The first law I would enact would involve Swedish sunbathers, down pillows, and Hershey's Chocolate Syrup.)

For those people who value their health and do not wish to expose themselves to the pollution of the insides of the fast food restaurant, there is always the drive-thru. The drive-thru was invented originally to protect employees from having to look at homely people. A guard was posted at each entrance to the facility and would direct to the drive-thru any person who did not meet his standards of attractiveness. As the months went by managers across the country, especially in California, discovered that many



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of the guards, despite wearing protective eyewear, were permanently blinded. Lawsuits ensued. It wasn't until the landmark Supreme Court ruling of 1971 that the general public was allowed unconditional freedom of choice between eating in or using the drive-thru. SUPREME COURT RULING #3271.639-A/7 - And

it is hereby decreed from this, the highest court in the land, altitudewise, that peaceful uninterrupted entrance to those establishments labelled as that of the fast food variety shall be granted to those persons deemed unattractive by the general consensus. Because, hey, even some of us judges would like to eat inside once in a while.

The major problem I have with drive-thrus is that the person taking my order always sounds muffled - as if he's phoning for ransom money.

ME: I'd like a cheeseburger, two large fries and a chocolate shake.

DRIVE-THRU PERSON: Mumph phum fzz mumph?

ME: I said I'd like one cheeseburger, two large fries, and one chocolate milkshake.

DRIVE-THRU PERSON: Fzz mum fum fzz fzz phum mumph.

ME (taken by surprise): Leave \$10,000 in small, unmarked bills in the phonebooth on the corner of 10th and State or you'll take a

fork and do what to my cousin Roger?

To overcome this problem I now always order my food inside with help from the friendly, over-zealous counter help, who lay on their fifteen minute, "Good Afternoon - Welcome to the finest

McDonalds in all of North America - Can I interest you in our new lettuce and tomato McRoadkill Burger - and would you like fries with that?" speech.

And the food itself is another topic that could only be thoroughly addressed with the help of top Health and EPA officials who would use the term "half-life" in their report more often than McDonalds runs advertisements.

The choice is now yours - whether you want to risk your health by eating at one of these Diners of Ill Repute or play it safe by eating more conventional food.

Me, I think I'll seek refuge in a box of Ho-Ho's.

Camping Vacations: Not For Weak At Heart

by K. M. Cleary

The question burning in the hearts of millions of people across the country this time of year is how to take the best possible trip with only a few days of vacation time. Last summer my boyfriend and I were faced with that very question.

We developed a plan. We had three days of vacation and wanted to see a total of six New England states. Obviously we needed to save time somewhere. Part of the answer was to waste no valuable time with preparation.

We swiftly and efficiently picked out all the trial sized necessities, bought a tent with only seconds to spare before the store closed and took two loaves of pepperoni bread as our only food. We figured that we could munch on it during the drive and save time and money by not stopping for dinner. Later it would become apparent that in order to see everything we wanted to see in the few hours we had to see them we would have had to skip eating all together.

As all good tourists know, soon after the decision to go on a trip has been made, they must go. We did. After driving half-way to our destination of Maine, we stopped to camp in Herkimer, New York - a place where only people on their way to some place else ever stay. We made a campfire - well actually Match-

Light charcoal made a campfire - and the hot dogs that we tortured over that fire would turn out to be the only break from our stale pepperoni bread diet.

Once the fire died down (it never actually burned out, I think we went a little overboard with the wood) we went to sleep in our luxurious three-man tent. Apparently the three men to which that description applied were all very small and flexible. The tent was so small that I should think the three men in question would have to be very good friends.

Since it is difficult to sleep any longer than is absolutely necessary when only a few layers of nylon separating your body from the cruel, hard earth, sleeping in a tent proved to be yet another great way to save time. My boyfriend and I woke up a few hours before dawn to continue our state-hopping journey.

In our ongoing attempt to save time and money, we gladly ate stale chunks of pepperoni bread for breakfast as we drove through the splendor of up-state New York. Our drive took us slowly into the quaint greenness of Vermont via the Lake Champlain ferryboat. The toll for the boat, we found out, was actually more than we spent on food for the entire trip.

At one point, as we viewed the cozy state we were sure we saw

Dick Loudon of "The Newhart Show" reading a how-to book; the suede elbows on his sport jacket gave him away.

We have no idea at what point we finally passed from Vermont into New Hampshire. There were no signs on the twisting mountain road we traveled. After much discussion we decided that the two were actually only one state. The split was apparently only a political ploy to gain an extra seat in the Senate.

Finally we arrived in Maine, perhaps, we are told, the most beautiful place in the world. We drove for fourteen hours straight to get there and the only thing we could actually see was the heat rising from the aging eight cylinder engine that had pulled

us. With a mournful whimper in his voice, my boyfriend read the temperature gauge every two minutes.

We were anxious to find a place to camp, but there were none. Until then I hadn't realized campgrounds even had "No Vacancy" signs. Deciding that we would break down and pay for a motel room, we found the only vacant ones started at seventy-dollars and had a two night minimum stay. I'm sure that the complimentary mints were good, but... We were only staying one night anyway.

After a long search we settled for a not-so-expensive motel that graciously allowed us to leave after only one night. It was a nice

change from our tent. The next morning we did what we went to do; we saw the Atlantic Ocean. Incredibly foggy and ice-cold, the water rushed chilling breezes across the shore.

After seeing the ocean, we headed straight home. During the fourteen-hour drive we saw Massachusetts, one of the six states we visited. We are still not sure if the Massachusetts highway system counts as a visit to that state.

During a truly efficient vacation there is no time for such frivolity as clean-up. We still find crumbs from the now-famous pepperoni bread in the car. This leads to our final discovery for a successful vacation. Rent a car.

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