

Hooked On Recovery

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Stupid Man Commercials

I can be pretty dumb sometimes. And pretty funny, too. Like the time Sandy and I were sitting along the sidelines of one of Joshua's soccer games. All the soccer parents were there, a row of us sitting and most of the men, including me, standing behind all the bag chairs. The second half was about to start, when Sandy extricated herself from her bag chair and removed a piece of paper off the field. "That paper would have bugged me the entire second half", she explained. And I said a little too loudly, "If that was our house, it would have stayed there for two weeks." Sandy grabbed her water bottle and chased me around the field amidst a chorus of "oooohhh's". Luckily, she didn't catch me. Chalk another one up in the "Things Not to Say" category.

Yes, I can be dumb. But if I ever get to be as stupid as the men portrayed in most television commercials then you might as well shoot me, cremate me and scatter my ashes on Race Point. My usefulness as a human being will have vanished. Here are some examples:

- A dad waking his kid up and telling him he's wasting time sleeping when he could be text messaging. The Verizon commercial ends with the dad sliding the phone under the bathroom door to his son.
- A husband and father taking pictures of the food on the table and text messaging them to his kids who are sitting with him at the table.
- A young man runs out of ink in his printer, a co-worker tells him to shake it, so he picks up the printer and begins shaking it.
- A McDonald's ad where a woman passes out McDonald's food and the men do her chores.
- A male "boss" who doesn't know what a Biz-Hub does or how it works.
- A young husband feeding a baby (presumably his) while Mom is out shopping and keeps asking "Where *is* your mother?"
- A man secretly uses lottery winnings to buy "man toys" – big-screen TV, pool table, etc. – without talking to his significant other who is dreaming of a romantic vacation.
- Charles Barkley making Dwayne Wade watch highlights of his career so Dwayne can get on his "top five" phone list.
- A crowd of men singing in unison about the new Burger King burger.
- The man who loses his mind in an electronics store (ok, so I relate to that one)
- The men who compete over who has the stronger weed killer or the better lawn mower.

Beer commercials are the worst. Men can get really stupid in these. Then again, I've seen many men get pretty stupid while drinking beer, myself included. Even when the commercial is cool, it can be idiotic. How do two rugged cowboys look cool watching horses play football? Think about the guy who installed rubber floors so he could bounce beers to his friend. Instead the dog bounces out the window. Or the guy who installed the revolving refrigerator so his roommates wouldn't take his beer. And the guys on the other side of the wall bowed in worship of the magic beer refrigerator; powerful stuff in a paradoxical sorta way. Or the guy who gave a six-pack of beer as a Christmas present, but removed one for himself. Gee, I'd like to receive that present. So thoughtful. Did you ever wonder about a beer branded with the name "Silver Bullet"?

Have you seen the beer commercial with the temperature indicator on the beer bottle? The wife is looking at a pregnancy test and the guy has the refrigerator open. He's watching the temperature indicator on the bottle. They both yell at the same time "It's blue!" The guy thinks more of his beer being cold than having a child. Besides, if he can't tell when his beer is cold he's a flaming idiot. Will anyone really buy a brand of beer because of a temperature indicator? How stupid is that?

I don't even know how to comment on this next set of beer ads except to say, "Man Laws". Actually, I do have a comment. In one commercial, they want to write a Man Law about sticking your finger in the opening of the bottle, like this is an acceptable and common way of carrying a bottled beverage. But the catch line is much more insidious and degrading to women, and men alike. "If you poke it, you own it." I won't say any more.

Which leads me to all the E.D. medication commercials. Isn't this where you and your significant other sit in separate bathtubs, outside near the water, watching the sun set? What respecting man would serve as a spokesman for Viagra? Or Cialis? As you are aware, E.D. does not stand for Executive Director. Staff here at CCAR call me "The E.D." with a wry smile and some affection. I thought this was a term of endearment but now I'm wondering. I guess being the father of five kids should dispel any of those rumors. Picture this; you're watching a Yankee game, and they're staging another comeback against the Red Sox, and while the Red Sox are making yet another pitching change you get up to get a soda. You return to the room and your five-year old son asks "Daddy, what's an erection and why do you have to call a doctor if it lasts for more than four hours?" Your twelve-year old son old hides his face behind a pillow and laughs. You wonder if HE knows what it means. Then you think that you can't really comprehend the concept either, so you say something brilliant like, "Matty I don't know right now, I'll explain it when you're older. Would you like some ice cream?"

The ones that really irritate me are the ones that portray a man, usually a husband, as a lazy, overweight, crotch scratching, dolt of a man who sits around the house in his underwear and watches sports all day and all night. The wife is portrayed as a smart, witty and somewhat of a ... shrew. I think in one commercial, maybe for VISA, that the woman sucked up the man into her vacuum. On a side note: a lot of "family" comedies portray men the same way.

I'm not sure why this bothers me so much. Could it be that if my life had stayed on the same path, that it would have been reduced to living on a couch in my underwear? That could be part of it. I think (and I am thinking out loud here), that recovery and the concept of recovery, offers so much more. It offers involvement in life. It promises that life can be happy, joyous and free. It promises right relationship with those close to you. Recovery gives life purpose.

These ads are selling product, but what they're really doing is selling us all short.

Hooked on Recovery is a biweekly message from CCAR Executive Director Phillip Valentine, person in recovery since 12/28/87, devoted husband, a father of five and just another surf fisherman. These thoughts, views and opinions reflect on his personal recovery and are not meant in any way to speak for the entire recovery community. He welcomes all your comments and suggestions on this column, email him at phillip@ccar.us. Visit the website at www.ccar.us to read the entire series.