

# VILLAGE VIEW

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Are you influenced by advertising? Does advertising affect practically every single thing you do every single day of your life? Do advertisements often annoy or irritate you? Would you be better off, emotionally and financially, if you could isolate yourself from all forms of advertising?

That's a tall order, isn't it? Think about it for a minute. To wipe your life free from advertising, even for one week, you must read no newspaper or magazine. No, you mustn't even look at the pictures. And if the book you're reading is wearing a dust jacket, you must remove or cover it.

Television and radio must stand silent, their knobs at OFF. No visits to any shops or stores are permitted. In fact, you'd better avoid all travel entirely because you might be exposed to a show window, a billboard, or a business sign hanging from a post, painted on the side of a barn, or announcing the location of a service or commercial enterprise.

Avoid all contact with other people because someone you meet could be wearing designer jeans with a name on the rear pocket, or a shirt with a symbolic animal stitched on the upper left front. Almost any female person might be carrying a purse with stylized initials woven into its fabric. Don't glance at footwear, not even your own. Shoes often carry a maker's name on the heel or tongue.

Play no games stored in boxes for they surely bear the producer's logo and might list other games offered by that company. Leave the telephone book strictly alone, and handle no sheets, towels, or table linen unless they're so old and worn, the labels have frayed away.

Be especially careful about using equipment or tools of any kind; even pens and pencils are marked with identification. And whatever else you do, turn all calendars to the wall! Put your watch in a bureau drawer for the duration and cover the faces of your clocks.

Use only scraps of soap, or you'll surely find the manufacturer's name molded into the bar. Prepare your own personal supply of dentifrice, too; a satisfactory substitute for toothpaste is salt and baking soda wet with hydrogen peroxide, but be sure to mix it in a plain jar with no printing on the lid (if you can find one). Apply this mixture to your teeth with a clean rag because toothbrushes bear names.

To be on the safe side, dress yourself in clothing you've made yourself; otherwise you'll catch sight of a label inside a

shirt collar, on a waistband of a skirt or pair of slacks, or sewn firmly on your underwear and nightclothes. Most socks are okay; after they've been worn and washed a couple of times, the printing they bear when new disappears entirely.

Don't go peeking into bureau drawers or under chair and sofa cushions, or you may encounter labels telling you who made the furniture. Items like the kitchen step stool, sink faucets, and all electrical appliances carry the names of their manufacturers, so stay out of the kitchen. Porcelain bathroom fixtures are usually similarly and indelibly marked.

Automobiles are, perhaps, the worst offenders of all. Horn buttons, hub caps, dashboards, fenders, grills, hood ornaments, and trunk lids of most vehicles expose us to emblems and symbols advertising has taught us to associate with particular makes, models, and years of cars.

And you must not smoke, nor imbibe any alcoholic or soft drinks, unless the tobacco or beverage is offered in a plain container. You may roll your own cigarettes, of course, using scrap paper to hold the tobacco you take from your personal humidor. You may accept a tonic or a highball in a clear tumbler as long as you have no idea what sort of beverage goes into the glass.

That's the easy part. The hard part comes when you must eat. Finding some canned and packaged foods which aren't wrapped in eye-catching advertising messages is possible only in those sections of certain supermarkets offering generic merchandise.

If you've stocked up adequately, perhaps you can get through a week with fruit and vegetable varieties available in those cans with the plain white wrappers bearing stark black letters to identify the contents. Alongside canned fruits and vegetables you may also find tinned fish, dog biscuits, paper products, mayonnaise, salad oil, pasta in a limited number of shapes, and certain cereals. So far, however, no market I know about offers generic meats or fresh produce . . . unless meats and fresh produce are, by definition, generic.

These basics carry their own subtle advertising. You can't escape it unless you go on a hunger strike. Look at that pile of red and golden Delicious apples. See how crispy and fresh the greens are. The nicely yellowed and unblemished bananas, ends tinged with green, are their own best advertisement!

At the meat counter, the steaks, chops, and roasts compete with frying chicken and hams for your purchasing dollars. The butcher's advertising points up best buys rather than specific qualities of cuts on display. Yet, even here, packages of chicken parts frequently carry the farmer's name, and hams the name of the meat packer. All dairy products come in brand-name packages or cartons.

Escape from advertising of food means planning all meals and shopping in advance, re-packaging perishables, and storing them in either the freezer or the refrigerator for use during this week you've set aside to eliminate all influence from advertising.

Could you do it? Certainly. You might find it a restful experience. You might also find yourself bored, at loose ends, and feeling isolated from the rest of the human race. You might fail to hear a news report that would affect your personal well-being, your financial status, or your health. You could lose track of your favorite team's current standing; you could miss an important episode in the lives of the characters in a soap opera you enjoy; a sale you've been waiting for could come and go without your knowing of it.

Advertising may sometimes seem an unnecessary interruption of our TV programs, an annoying distraction during a radio broadcast, and a business expense that is passed along to all of us as consumers. An expense, we often think, we could live very well without.

On the other hand, advertising is the machinery that brings us news and entertainment from every media source. We depend on the media to keep well-informed. We do pay advertising costs in hidden ways, but by paying product advertising expenses, we finance newspaper and magazine publishing and radio and television programming and transmission. The advertising dollar that ultimately comes from the pockets of the consumers is the catalyst that energizes the mechanics of communication.

Merchants recognize that running a business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you're doing, but she doesn't. Or, put it another way:

"The codfish lays 10,000 eggs. The homely hen lays one. The codfish never cackles to tell you what she's done. And so we scorn the codfish while the humble hen, we prize. That only goes to show you that it pays to advertise."