

Maddog Unleashed

It's No Longer Necessary To Shoot the Messenger (Text Messenger, That Is)

"It's too bad that stupidity isn't painful." —Anton LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan



BY PATRICK O'GRADY

It's a damned shame Anton LaVey didn't live long enough to see the advent of text messaging. In Hell, it would be a blessing to have something to look back upon and LOL at.

For those of us still walking the earth, LaVey's wish has come to pass. Stupidity is at last becoming painful—so much so that the American College of Emergency Physicians has issued an alert about the perils of text messaging, a plea I hope is roundly ignored, because we could all do with a good chuckle in these trying times.

It seems emergency rooms nationwide are beginning to see injuries—and the occasional fatality—involving texting pedestrians, bicyclists, rollerbladers, boaters, equestrians, cooks and motorists. "Most involve scrapes, cuts and sprains from texters who walked into lampposts or walls or tripped over curbs," reports *The Associated Press*.

Can You Hear Me Now? Stupidity is not limited to the text-messengers, of course. Cell-phone users were among the earliest techno-feebs, and it is no rare thing to see a motorist all scrunched up like the Hunchback of Notre Dame—phone on shoulder, head clamped to phone—trying to execute a left turn as yellow turns to red while ordering a pizza that will be inedible with his soon-to-be-wired jaw.

I spotted a low-tech specimen of Homo oblivious just the other day. This one was a cyclist cheerfully gabbing away as he pedaled a very crooked line indeed through moderate traffic toward a major intersection and straight through a red light.

No one nailed him. But I feel certain he will provide another target of opportunity for some lucky driver down the road. And on that dire day some equally unenlightened sort will be left shouting ironically into his own phone, "You're breaking up!"

Pod'n Me, Please. The third step on our podium of the pinheads belongs to the iPod People. This crowd is fond of shambling about in public with one of its five senses rerouted, often with hilarious consequences.

There are so many self-deafened nitwits clogging my favorite bike path that the wife and I have begun calling it the Trail of 'Tards. Every blind corner is an adventure in obstacle avoidance, every passing attempt an exercise in anger management.

Speaking to these bipedal speed bumps before charting a course around them is a waste of breath. And the only way a bell will command their attention is if it is clamped to a frame pump and applied with vigor to the point where it will have the maximum educational effect—right between the earbuds. DING!

Make the World Go Away. Come to think of it, these gadget addicts are not so much stupid as willfully ignorant; wired in tight and yet completely unplugged. They never learned how to share in kindergarten. Their phone call is more important than your life, their music more valuable than your safety. Each is a citizen of his own little world, one in which you and I do not exist.

Happily, that self-absorbed universe is rushing toward entropy, one curb, one wall, one lamppost at a time. But these space cadets will take a few of us with them when they go.

One accident still waiting to happen is a 25-year-old motorist pulled over Aug. 3 in Cass County, Minnesota. According to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, he was thought to have been drinking, driving at speeds approaching 80 mph, drifting into the wrong lane, and—you guessed it—text messaging.

Somewhere in Hell, Anton LaVey is laughing. "CUL8R," he shrieks.