

COUNTER CULTURE

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05/07/14

We must look like a strange group to some people. I confess I am part of it.

If you go out for Sunday breakfast, you see our group of regulars sitting at the counter lined-up like pigeons on a utility wire. We may look like loners, but we share certain courtesies.

For example, when it comes to the house's Sunday newspaper, of which there is only one issue, we share and share alike. We take the one or two sections we want and leave the rest of the paper next to the cash register for other people to read.

Lately, however, we have been joined by new counterparts who seem to be off in a world of their own. I like to classify these counter insurgents by their behaviors as they relate to the community newspaper.

Counter Coupon Clipper

First, there's the Coupon Clipper. This person grabs the entire Sunday newspaper for himself and takes a seat. The Clipper then pulls out all the Sunday advertising inserts, devours the discount coupons, rips out advertising insert pages and nattily arranges them in piles for his future usage.

As the Coupon Clipper chows down breakfast and continues to feed on the vast array of discount coupons, he continues to be unaware that he is depriving others from reading the paper's other sections which he has buried under the piles of ad supplements. Paying no notice to our needs, the Coupon Clipper finally leaves with a fistful of discount coupons plus a further savings in not having to buy the Sunday paper.

Counter Terrorist

Next, there's the Counter Terrorist. This person captures and monopolizes the restaurant's available media choices. Upon entering, he grabs the entire Sunday paper and takes it to the counter's far corner near the TV and its remote control.

The Terrorist sets the paper down on the counter by his side. Then, he takes a smart phone out of his pocket and begins to read it, instead of the paper. Once the Terrorist puts down his 'smart phone' he grabs the remote control and begins surfing through Sunday morning's TV wasteland.

Others sitting at the counter, deprived of the newspaper, now resting under his elbow, hope to watch a TV program. We wished we could watch the local news station. No way. ESPN Sports. Not a chance. The Terrorist surfs through obscure channels stopping at each one for excruciating lengths of time: the local Church hour, bass fishing, or infomercial after infomercial.

At long last, when he exits, the Counter Terrorist leaves the unread newspaper at the far corner of the restaurant so no one can find it.

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Counter Cleaner

Lastly, there is the Counter's Cleaner. This person settles onto the stool next to the cash register taking ownership of the stack of Sunday, Saturday and Weekly Shopper newspapers which are immediately in front of him.

Instead of reading these papers, he has a completely different fixation. He re-arranges them. Section by section, advertising insert by insert, he puts them in newsstand order.

Next, he piles up all the periodicals in a stack in reverse chronological order. He puts the oldest paper on top with the most recent Sunday paper on the bottom, making it impossible to find the current day's paper without messing up the entire pile.

Week in and week out, I have observed these self-absorbed people. Each week, it seems harder and harder to find a way to counteract them. Maybe, my counterattack should be to eschew the community paper and buy my own Sunday paper.

But, in a way, that would be counterintuitive.