



## Fueling Your Imagination, One Burger At A Time

By Doug Hecox, *Writer of Wrongs*

Fast food gets a bad rap for being unhealthy. While I am a fan of fast food, I am more a fan of *old-time* fast food. You know – “classic” fast food advertised by “classic” celebrities like a clown, a king or Rodney Allen Rippy?

McDonald’s was, and remains, the true burger king. Remember the Big Mac with potato rolls for buns? The *fried* apple pies they offered instead of these new health-conscious baked ones? The French fries fried in coconut oil (or whatever the bad one was)? Now they use some sort of environmentally sensitive French fry oil that I’ve seen some people use in their hybrids. No wonder Ronald McDonald’s hair is starting to straighten. He’s starting to look less like a clown and more like Marilyn Manson in yellow pants.

So sensitive about the obesifying effect on today’s kids, McDonald’s has gotten rid of Grimace – you know, the big purple blob that walked around waving his hands and laughing at everything Ronald said? In the years since they took him out of McDonald’s ads, I think they turned him into Barney the dinosaur. Better to hug a kid than wander around, short stumpy arms flailing, epitomizing the long-term effects of fast food diets.

Fattening foods notwithstanding, classic fast food offered kids something extra – namely, imagination. Old-time fast food fueled the imagination of an entire generation. NASA sent a man to the Moon only once in the 1960s, but nearly a dozen times in the 1970s – which may be partly attributed to the presence of fast food imagination fuel. Even before McDonald’s turned fast food restaurants into a toy store with gimmick-laden Happy Meals and multicolored ball-pits, they and their fast food brethren were encouraging kids to exercise their imaginations.

With orders of selected burgers, kids were given free hand puppets made out of the same material they used to create trash bags that hung from your parents’ radio knob. Who but America’s fast food industry could convince children that a garbage bag was a play-toy? To wit:



*Burger King*

*Big Boy*

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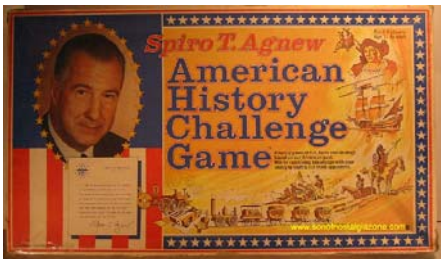
*McDonald's*

*Mr. Steak*

*Pizza Hut*

The similarities are astounding, suggesting that the brains of America's children were indeed clogged with some sort of mind-altering substances that made us think the products we were ordering were different from the others. Kudos to the Madison Avenue boardroom who sold these ideas to America's fast food executives whose minds also must have been clogged. You'd think these CEOs would complain about their competition having basically the same novelty item – a litter bag printed with their mascot and given to kids as a plaything. If the dry cleaning industry did this today with dry-cleaning bags or airlines with vomit bags, imagine the lawsuits.

But not back in the 1970s. It was a different time – a golden age, if you will – and the abundance of unhealthy foods clogging our brains probably explains why none of us remembers such memorable items as:



*The Spiro Agnew history boardgame?*



*A Mary Hartman/Mary Hartman boardgame?*



*A Fonzie costume-in-a-box?*

With Christmas around the corner, make a point to give a gift to your inner child. Buy him/her a Big Mac or a Whopper, and ask the cashier for a hand-puppet. When he or she stares emptily back at you as if to say "Such toys are no longer available," ask to borrow a garbage bag. You'll just have to use your imagination.

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