A Dim Bulb Shines The Brightest

By Jeff Reinke

Before getting down to the inspiration of this column, I feel compelled to place a hand over my politically conservative heart and admit a couple of things:

- I've cut down more trees than I've hugged.
- While I admire the technological and economical benefits electric cars represent, my preferences say that they still can't compete with the adrenaline and performance an oversized gas engine inspires.
- The only real contributions that I've made to environmental causes have been in helping to control the populations of deer, pheasant and grouse, as well as several fish species.
- Although I believe in land preservation and urban sprawl prevention, if it comes down to an owl vs. a lumber company, I'd pour the unleaded gas in the chainsaw.
- Even though my vehicle can use flex fuel, I don't buy it because it lowers my miles per gallon. Since I have to fill up more often, the lower price ends up being a wash.
- I'm not a member of the Sierra Club, the Green Party or any other environmentally responsible organization, although after this series of admissions, my mug may very well be placed on one or more of their bulletin (dart) boards.

I wouldn't say that I'm proud of all these things, but nonetheless, they're true. I make these admissions not to be some beacon of light for the environmentally insensitive, but to establish a track record that has neither made a Native American shed a tear or helped a California Condor build its nest. However, a recent post [1] from before this past Saturday's Earth Hour event provoked even someone as ecologically uninspired as me to get pretty fired up.

You see, although I may not seek out environmentally conscious activities and causes, or strive like many of you to improve the energy efficiency of your processes and infrastructure, I'm not opposed to these practices. While I may question the extent of global-warming impact, I'm not going to root against the polar bear trying to swim between ice chunks.

That's because at the end of the day I can recognize that doing things to conserve energy, reduce pollution and improve the integration of easily renewable resources has very little to do with supporting causes or yielding to scientific theories. They simply make our world better. So why deliberately work in the opposite direction?

Yet that's exactly what Bob Gerenser of New Hope, PA, decided to do last Saturday.

While my daughters and I watched the Disney Channel in somewhat darker conditions than normal, Gerenser went the extra mile to protest his disbelief in the principles of global warming by actually purchasing extra lighting for his business to be run during Earth Hour. He additionally encouraged others to waste as much electricity as possible for this hour block.

Good call, Gerenser! Way to stick it to all those who jumped on the sinking ship of global unity. You are a lighthouse in the storm when it comes to ignoring problems and refusing to recognize past mistakes. The only flaw in your behavior is that by putting the spotlight on your actions, you actually helped bring greater attention to your opposition. Maybe on the eve of Earth Day, you can organize a Clark Griswold-like Christmas-light display on the moon with a big ol' middle finger pointing down at the entire global population.

Attitudes like those of Gerenser help to illustrate the need for wider spread education and integration of energy-conserving initiatives. You face it every day in the operations that you oversee and improve. The work that's been done in the areas of biofuels, lithium-ion batteries and more efficient lighting options have shown that the answers are out there, and should be eagerly anticipated as they are embedded into our next generation of green processing technologies.

While the light bulb may not have gone on for many who still refuse to acknowledge the challenges inherent in updating the national energy grid and developing new power sources, naysayers like Gerenser help show how important it is to address them. These issues revolve less around what it takes to survive in our world today, and more around ensuring that my daughters can play in the dark with their kids — because they want to, not because they lack the option.

But I should show some appreciation to Gerenser for at least one thing: I think that I will hit the E85 pump tonight. Thanks for shining some light on the matter, Bob.

What's your take? Feel free to sound off by e-mailing me at jeff.reinke@advantagemedia.com [2].

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