



Is Nothing Too Trivial For the Busybodies?

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The motto at the popular Heart Attack Grill in Tempe, Ariz., is: "Taste ... worth dying for!" That's because it serves only artery-clogging food like big hamburgers (the biggest is called the "Quadruple Bypass") and "Flatliner Fries," which are boiled in lard.

(LINK: <http://www.heartattackgrill.com/>)

The restaurant's website says: "Insane political correctness stands as a barrier between the average man and his pursuit of happiness."

I guess that's why they refuse to sell diet soda or "diet" anything.

And, oh, yes, the waitresses wear sexy costumes.

But this is not what earned the Heart Attack Grill a threatening letter from Arizona's attorney general.

What upset the government was that the Heart Attack Grill waitresses call themselves "nurses." The waitresses dress like nurses -- although in some cases like nurses you'd see only in an X-rated movie. After customers eat the fatty food, they can ask their "nurse" to wheel them out to their car in a wheelchair -- just like at the hospital.

The customers like the gimmick, and the nurse-waitresses like working there, but the Arizona Board of Nursing says the restaurant violates state law. According to an intimidating letter from the office of the attorney general, only a person who holds a valid license to practice nursing may use the title "nurse."

[Give me a break.](#)

It seems ridiculous, but it got restaurant owner Jon Basso's attention. "When somebody with the title of attorney general calls you up and you're a small businessman like me, with three kids to support, that's scary," Basso told ABC.

The Board of Nursing would not talk to me about this, but Sandy Summers of the Center for Nursing Advocacy was eager to explain what bothers many nurses. "It's not only the Heart Attack Grill. It's the whole 'naughty nurse' image," she said. Her group says that stereotype kills thousands of people, because it creates a nursing shortage by discouraging women from becoming nurses.

"It's a constant association of sex and nursing that we object to. And it creates an environment where people actually think that nurses are people you can have anonymous sex with, these, these brainless sluts."

People at the restaurant told us that the state nursing board's complaint was ridiculous. "I really think they need to grow a sense of humor," one waitress said. A male customer added, "It's pretty plain they're not nurses."

Sandy Summers, the nurse's advocate, was undeterred. "So yeah, it may just all be a big joke. But, year after year, decade after decade, of, oh, nurses, brainless sluts. Nurses, brainless sluts. I mean, it's not really a joke anymore."

I asked her: Can't people tell the difference between fiction and reality? Should doctors be upset about Dr. Pepper?

"I don't know," she said. "I'd guess you'd have to ask them."

Instead I talked to Clark Neily, who works for the Institute for Justice, a law firm that defends small businesses from governments that bully them. I explained: The nurses say the Heart Attack Grill sexualizes their profession and makes people not want to become nurses.

"They have a point," Neily said, "They're professionals, and they should be treated with respect. But it is absolutely the wrong way to go about that, having the government come in and try to censor people who are saying things that offend you."

Exactly. Why do people immediately call for the use of force rather than persuasion when they don't like something? That's what a free society is supposed to be about: peaceful persuasion.

Even the nurses' advocate, who's organized a letter-writing campaign against the restaurant, called the attorney general's action an assault on free speech.

At the moment, reason has prevailed. After "20/20" and other camera crews showed up to film the waitresses and try to talk to the state nursing board, Arizona officials decided not to take any action against

the Heart Attack Grill.

That's good news for the "nurses," and their customers. But the busybodies seldom rest for long. How long will it be before some other government officials threaten to

shut down the Heart Attack Grill because of its name? Or because it sells fatty food?

Next week: how some busybodies stopped churches from serving food to the poor.

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