

Voices: A road trip and a 50-billboard treasure

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Summer is a great time to pile the family and far too much luggage into the car and head out to discover a new world.



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But road trips today are different than they were a few years ago.

- Rather than maps, now we have GPS.
- Rather than being free to move all around the car at any time, now we have seatbelt and car-seat laws.
- Rather than counting on highway games, cards and sing-a-longs to pass the time, now we have gaming apps, movies downloaded from Netflix and even laptop computers to stay connected to our work.

Oh, those billboards

**Texas
Baptist
Voices**

Recently, my family and I hopped in the car and headed west. And even though our trip included all of the above comforts of the modern-day road trip, I noticed one thing hasn't changed in road trips of the past few decades—billboards!

And when driving in east-central New Mexico on Interstate 40, one store wins the prize for billboards.

About 30 miles away from this particular store, we caught a glimpse of the first billboard for the Flying C Ranch. But then not a few minutes later, another billboard appeared, then another, and another. When we were within miles of the store, the side of the interstate was littered with Flying C Ranch billboards.

Apparently, the Flying C sells food, moccasins, fireworks, jewelry, ice, serapes, guy stuff, girl stuff and so much more. Each item was advertised on its own billboard of which there were at least 50.

Great expectations

By the time we reached the exit to take for the Flying C Ranch, you could imagine our expectations were pretty high. I just knew this place was going to put Buc-ee's to shame.

Unfortunately, though, we were sorely disappointed. The Flying C Ranch was just a regular truck stop—a metal building with a small restaurant and a handful of gas pumps. Maybe it was a little bigger than most, but it was nothing special. It definitely was not worth 50 billboards! I even laughed at the absurdity of the amount of advertising dollars invested in this quaint roadside stop.

Later, it occurred to me, though, that maybe I underestimated the Flying C Ranch. We didn't stop there and investigate, so maybe we missed something. After all, the Flying C Ranch must have been worth 50

billboards to someone. This establishment stocked with trinkets, gifts and food was someone's everything. It was someone's 50-billboard treasure trove, and I was just too calloused and surface-focused to see its value.

Another perspective

My experience with the Flying C Ranch changed my perspective on the rest of the road trip. Each time we passed an establishment that looked like it had been around since maps were sold, I tried to take off my surface-focused glasses and see the heart of the place.

I thought about the family who had invested and worked hard for many years so they could make a living. I thought about the legacy each store left on the memories of travelers. I attempted to look past the façade and see the value.

In our Netflix/apps/GPS-dominated world, we often miss the chance to see value. Our minds move as fast as the information we constantly parade in front of our eyes. But if we take the time to look, we might be able to see more than the surface. We might be able to find worth and value in the things, tasks, activities and people who are common to our everyday lives.

If we slow down long enough, we just might be able to find a 50-billboard treasure trove.

And perhaps the new world we discover on our next road trip just might be our own.

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