

Monday

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35 cents

READING EAGLE

Reading, Pa.

Forecast:
Rain likely tonight
Windy, rain Tuesday

Magnetic water treatment attracts gullible

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We have been receiving numerous calls regarding magnetic water treatment due to your article Dec. 18 "Magnetizers may attract a following," by Gregory Kreitz.

We live in an age of great scientific advances. Things considered to be impossible 100 years ago are as commonplace as a blade of grass.

Medical advances make possible the treatment and detection of disease which would once have caused death, but with all the changes that have taken place in the world, there is one thing that is still the same: we still have those individuals who would take advantage of people's lack of knowledge and gullibility for their own gain. We see this in drug trafficking, theft, and even in some businesses.

One hundred years ago, patent medicine men roamed the countryside selling all kinds of concoctions that were supposed to cure nearly any ailment. The claims made were fantastic and the sales pitch excellent; so, naturally, people bought the concoctions.

The medicine man was careful to tell

Public platform

people that the effect was not immediate so as not to arouse suspicion while he was still in town.

The interesting thing was many people actually felt better after they took the medicine, some even claimed it cured their diseases.

This kind of medicine today is known as a placebo.

Many doubted the effectiveness but bought it anyway because they thought it might work, and besides it was so much cheaper than going to the doctor. Only the patent medicine man knew it was a fake.

Government agencies put the patent medicine men out of business, but the tendency for people to pull the same kind of dishonest scheme is still there.

So we find those same kind of individuals searching for some kind of product that they can sell at extreme profit to that gullible section of the population that still exists.

What they need is something slightly mysterious, yet readily available.

What comes to mind immediately is magnets and magnetism.

Couple this with a pseudo-scientific explanation that sounds plausible and convincing. Then mass produce the product for \$2 and sell it for \$200.

It is a known statistical fact that only 40 percent of the people who are sold a defective or non-functioning product will ever complain and far fewer would ever demand a refund.

So with a profit margin of thousands of percent, you can still be way ahead of the game.

An even more clever maneuver is to make it your policy that the product cannot be returned for a refund until after you use it for 90 days.

The patent medicine man used that technique in order to get out of town. Ninety days is just long enough to forget that someone ripped you off for \$200.

If simple magnets have such amazing ability so as to soften and neutralize water and super charge fuel in an engine, why not take it a step further?

Why not magnetic belts that reduce the size of the fat molecules around your waistline for those of us who need to trim a few pounds? Or magnetic shirts that

unclog the arteries which surround the heart? Why wouldn't it remove calcium and cholesterol deposits from our bodies (70 percent water), if it removes them from our plumbing in our homes?

Perhaps we should come up with magnetic headbands that supercharge our brains and increase our IQ; or perhaps magnetic eyeglasses that let you see around corners.

I learned a long time ago, "If it sounds too good to be true, it is."

We all look for bargains but as the old saying goes, "There are no free rides or lunches."

Magnetic water treatment isn't new. It dates back to the '50s, shortly after real water conditioners were invented.

Purdue University studies have shown them to be totally ineffective in chemically changing the water or reducing scale. Tests on water going in and coming out have shown them totally ineffective.

The only good thing they do is to get people to think about the quality of water they use in their homes.

If magnetic water treatment is so great, why did the Superior Court of Ari-

zona issue a restraining order banning the sale of magnetic water softeners in 1978?

Why did the Division of Consumer Protection of South Dakota send out a news release urging residents not to purchase the prevailing magnetic water softeners at the time?

Why did the Minnesota Better Business News, April 19, 1979, alert consumers to "beware of questionable claims for magnetic water treatment devices"?

Why did Purdue University state that none of the magnetic water treatment devices tested shows a beneficial change in the water?

Finally, why is it that continued laboratory tests of such devices show them to be ineffective?

Perhaps the best motto would be, "Let the buyer beware when buying bargain priced parachutes or water conditioners."

(Editor's note: Stump is laboratory director at Suburban Water Testing Laboratories in Temple.)