

The man who invented spam, and how we can get our own back.

Billy “The Dog” McGraw was educated at Woffle-on-the-Edge School in the Cotswolds where he met the future Viscount Southcliffe (heir to the Daily Prod).

Over drinks in the school saloon bar this unlikely couple regularly debated novel ways of annoying people, their favourite being the selling of products that either didn't exist or which neither of them actually owned. Or both. Although the idea progressed little during their school days neither boy forgot it, and they later revived it to become their greatest triumph. .

Faced with a somewhat restricted life after 3 years at the University of Certain Things, Billy set about defining himself as an economic and physical misfit while working for ITV. He toured the dance halls of the UK proclaiming to all who might listen that he was a jellyfish that had been washed ashore at Henley during the Regatta. As a result he was recruited into MI5, and for his cover story became Basalt Norwegian Progressive candidate for Slightly Cheaper, which he won with a landside majority in 1986.

Most of his work during this period involved writing obituaries about famous people who had not died, which were regularly published in the Telegraph. Barred from the bars of Wapping Swamp and the hotels of Hampshire and Dorset he diversified into taking photos of journalists seated beside dustbins with their heads in their hands – a customary pose.

When his father's estate was taken over by his half cousin Sir Hubert Percy-Herby-Percy he invented email as a way of persecuting his family, selling much of their estate at knock-down prices along with the left wrist of Ronnie Kray and Windsor Castle.

In 2002 he was granted the Lenin Humanitarian Prize for his work on helping oil widows in Nigeria export their late husbands' funds, and was awarded the Inverted English Award for grammatically incorrect fake pharmaceutical advertisements.

The size and scope of his work can be seen by the fact that over 98% of all emails last year followed his style and approach. He is survived by two sons and a goat called Grigs.

Today many firms find direct mail response rates are rising simply because most emails are junk. Only a handful prosper.



Tony Attwood

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