



## It's Reader Participation Day Here at TOD...

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on June 22, 2005 - 2:47pm

We have some of the best commenters, but we also get some pretty cool emails. So first, I post J's comments and now I post a simple but ingenious letter from Kurt B. (you can use this to explain peak oil to just about anyone...imho...and as Ianqui pointed out the comments, HO is going to LOVE this one...).

To the Oil Drum:

I have only been reading about the issue of Peak Oil for the last two months, but the concept seems entirely plausible and disconcerting. I have become a true believer, and want to spread the news. I have met with some skepticism from co-workers and friends over the fact that even if we have "only" used up half the world's oil, we should still be able to easily go on and extract the last half. From what I've read, this just isn't so.

I have thought about how to demonstrate the declining production paradigm, and came up with this simple demonstration. Take an average alcoholic. Take a 20 ounce tumbler, and stuff a new clean sponge in the bottom. Pour a fresh pint of dark beer in the tumbler and top it off with a little more, so the alky knows at least there is a full 16 ounces in the tumbler.

So there is known quantity (proven reserves) of dark beer (oil) in the tumbler (world), plus a little more (undiscovered reserves). Have him drink to his hearts content. The first few sips of the fresh sweet beer (light crude) goes down easy, and soon he is drinking away (increased consumption). After about half the beer is consumed, he suddenly realizes the beer has stopped flowing freely out of the cup (mature fields). He knows by the weight and looking in the cup (geological surveys), that there should still be about half a beer left in the cup (Hubbert's Peak). He tilts the cup further up, but the slower trickle just isn't as satisfying (demand not being met).

So you offer him a spoon (advanced extraction techniques), to squeeze the remaining beer out of the sponge (rock formations), but it will cost him a dollar (increased costs). He gladly accepts, and soon more beer is swishing into his mouth. However, it has a spongy taste, and he likes it much less (sour crude), but drinks it anyway since he wants the alcohol (inelastic demand). Soon this is not enough, and he digs the sponge out, and squeezes the last drops out (tar sands and the like). He wants more and will take any alcohol (alternate sources of energy).

You say sorry, but the liquor store closed 15 minutes ago, and won't reopen till the morning (lack of development of alternates till it was too late).

For what it's worth,  
Kurt B.

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