

the reactor

By Paul Azavedo



My son Marty wears shoes and watches TV. Neither is remarkable, you'll agree. (He's also embarrassed when his name gets in the paper. Sorry about that, Marty.)

I bought a TV set last summer, mainly because ours had just given up and because we happened to be in one of San Mateo County's major shopping centers.

We saw a set that was priced right and seemed suitable, so we bought it — on the spur of the moment.

THERE FOLLOWED a series of delays, loaners, time-wasting shuntings from one queue to another: "customer convenience" to "customer service" to "customer pickup."

The set didn't work when I got it home. Back to the center, upstairs, downstairs, wait, delays, etc.

I'm not naming the store because through all this, each person was reasonably polite. Each followed procedure, and after a couple of more problems, the set was delivered to my house and the loaner picked up, which was not really part of the deal.

MY MISTAKE was getting a defective piece of merchandise in a fairly distant center, from a store which follows the bureaucratic procedures any large organization must. When the set blew after we had had it for 75 days of its 90-day warranty, we went through the entire foofaraw again.

There were more complications, but you get the idea. (Incidentally, when I returned the set for service, only my name and driver's license, engraved on the set, kept it from disappearing permanently into the maze.)

The store probably has lost money on the deal, through no fault of mine. I have lost patience with several store clerks, through no fault of theirs. The experience has been time-wasting and unpleasant, as well as frustrating.

And this from a store which has made a real effort to satisfy me. That's why no name.

BACK to Marty, who watches TV and wears shoes. Not long after the TV merry-go-round started, the family stopped in at Laber's Shoes, which has been in Pacific Manor 19 or 20 years and is now the only shoe store in town. We bought Marty a nice looking pair of shoes from owner Bob Ellis.

A few days later, ka-plooeey. The shoes literally came unglued. I put the shoes into the car, took them by Laber's. No problem. Thirty seconds later I had a replacement pair. The shoes went in the waste barrel. Bob stands behind his shoes, but the manufacturer does not, unfortunately.

Marty really liked the style, so the replacement was another pair of the same kind — unfortunately, too much like the first pair. Three days later, they also came unglued.

I'M EMBARRASSED. I think that I can only go so far in returning shoes. But Bob said, "bring 'em in." We changed styles, Marty likes 'em, and everybody's happy.

Less than five minutes were needed to solve my problems with both pairs, because Bob doesn't need to send people to "customer convenience," "customer service," "customer pickup," the credit office, etc.

He's all of those, and

sell. Even when the big store is ethical and backs up its merchandise, shop at home. You betta' off.

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