

THE IDLE AMERICAN

5 O'clock Friday at the Factory...

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

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A Texas doctor, closing out a hectic week, hoped it to be his final medical appointment.

He stared at a Q-tip that was devoid of cotton at both ends.

"This Q-tip must have gotten right up against 5 o'clock Friday at the factory," he muttered....

In the span of one week recently, I felt that my photograph might be placed alongside a "customer is always wrong" essay, thinking my value about the same as a "cottonless" Q-tip.

On three occasions, I was "done wrong."

In each case, I felt as if I'd been hit full in the face with a blivit, a rural term coined by a farm boy whose job it was to feed the hogs. He said a blivit describes a five-gallon bucket filled with 10 gallons of hog slop....

Okay, maybe my beefs didn't rise to that degree of disappointment, but surely the requisites for a "frankfurter foul-up" have been met.

Maybe you've had a similar week or plowed through a "clinker" recently.

Whatever, I have chosen to smile about my misadventures, now making headway toward a "smiley-face" expression from one deeply frowned. I have opted, though, to "rattle some chains" at Best Buy, the Carnation Company and Sam's Club...

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Let me offer details in order of chagrin. At Best Buy, attempts to buy a new computer went awry. I used my credit card for the purchase, understanding there'd be an additional charge for data transfer and extended warranty.

When it became evident the data transfer to the new computer would be delayed, I decided to forego the purchase. I returned to the sales clerk--the computer box unopened--about a half-hour later, requesting that the transaction be voided. I got the obligatory "no problem" response.

But there was. He had voided the charge for the computer only, and when I questioned him, he said that I would need to void the remaining \$180 online....

That didn't sit well with me, but I decided to "play it out." Back home, I was never able to explain my problem to TWO Best Buy "online" responders. After an hour, I gave up.

I sent two emails to Best Buy's media relations email address, but the only responses were two emails indicating that my emails had been received.

Two days later, I received an apologetic phone call from a local Best Buy manager. He promised to void the charge, adding that the sales guy should have given me the option of handling the matter by phone. The clerk didn't, though, perhaps leaning "right up against 5 o'clock Friday at the factory."....

Second is an ongoing issue with plastic cap removals from Carnation Instant Breakfast cartons. Neither my wife nor I can do so without pliers.

I sent emails to the media relation office.

Again, I received emails that mine had arrived, but nothing more. Is this not a legitimate beef, or at least chopped liver?...

Now, on to Sam's, where I purchased new eyeglass lenses in January. The technician indicated that there'd likely be a bill later for charges not covered by insurance. I understood, I really did!

In March, I received the expected bill, responding with a check for \$125, expecting a "paid in full" acknowledgement.

Three months later, however, I received a second "statement balance" due for the same amount. With but a vague recollection of the earlier notice, I almost wrote another check. Instead, I called customer service, learning that the bill had been paid, so I could "tear up the second notice."....

I'm in the slack-cutting mode in all three instances.

Many customers, I'm thinking, would simply have written a check for the second eyeglass billing, since there were no "past due" reminders. (I'm just sayin'....)

Let's be eternally vigilant. "Corner-cutting" seems to be prevalent in our world, so we should be vigilant at every turn. Too many, it seems, are "right up against five o'clock Friday at the factory" somewhere, perhaps everywhere.....

Dr. Newbury, a longtime public speaker and former university president, is Texas' longest-running syndicated columnist, writing weekly since 2003.