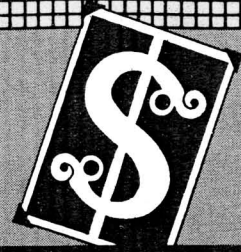


# MERCHANDISING



One day, a few years ago, a South Missouri registered Angus breeder—we'll call him Joe—received a telephone call from one of his customers.

"Joe," the cowman said, "You know that last bull I bought from you? Well . . . he's sterile."

Quickly Joe thumbed through his customer card file that always sat by the desk telephone. The caller had indeed bought a bull, but three years ago.

Joe took a deep breath and answered as calmly as he could, "Well, I suppose it's sure possible that the bull was sterile when you bought him, but that was three years ago. Why'd you wait so long to call?"

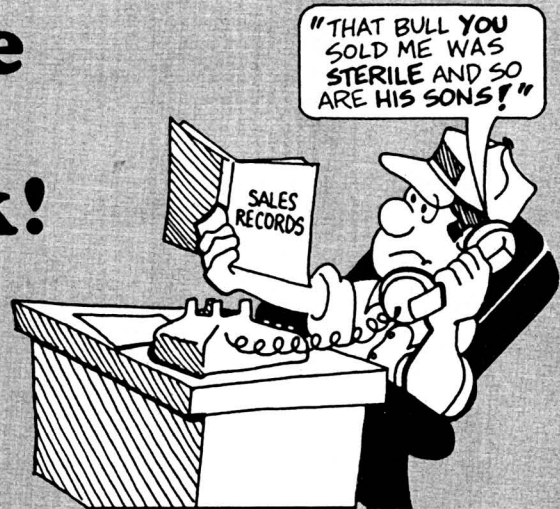
"It don't make any difference," the customer shot back as his voice rose in anger and embarrassment. "That bull's sterile, and so are all his sons."

This is a true story, with some minor modifications. And it is a credit to the Angus breeder who told me the story that he remained cool and backed up his guarantee with a refund check. The bull had put on several pounds and brought nearly as much at the stockyards as the man had paid for him as a yearling three years earlier.

But, most importantly, there was no dissatisfied cattleman running around in Joe's trade area claiming Joe had sold him a sterile bull and then wouldn't make it good. A situation like that could have cost him hundreds of dollars in sales.

If you've been in the registered Angus business for long, you probably have had calls similar to Joe's. And every time it happens, if you're like most of us, the temptation is to stand up for your rights. It is painful to know that someone is putting something over on us, or getting to us. If it is an obviously false and costly claim, you may have to put up some resistance. But for the more routine problems, when all you have to do is exchange a bull or refund a modest purchase price, it's almost always best

## Take it back!



to give in and then forget it. Because it's true that a vocal, dissatisfied customer can undo a lot of valuable advertising and promotion. By the same token a customer, whom you have made happy, even at some small expense, can be one of your best salesmen.

Sears and Roebuck has done a great job over the years with their unconditional guarantee on Craftsman tools. I've been a Craftsman devotee ever since I was a kid and my dad marveled that Sears had replaced free, a broken socket from his Craftsman tool set. I still have that set of tools, minus a few that my kids lost during their teenage years. And Sears will replace any wrench from this 40-year-old set that I or they break. I was in the St. Joseph Sears store the other day when a man walked in with a Craftsman shovel with a broken wooden handle. And he walked out with a new shovel much to the amazement of a new clerk who had first waited on him. The department supervisor explained to her, while I stood there listening, that if it's a Craftsman tool and it's broken, then Sears replaces it—free.

Zippo, before throw-away lighters came into vogue, built a booming business on the slogan, "Always

works or we fix it free." Their advertisements were based upon testimonials of owners whose Zippo lighters were replaced after they were run over by Army tanks, or buried in the ground for five years, or had just plain worn out. Only a very small percentage of the lighters Zippo made were ever replaced, but people knew that they could get replacement if they needed it, and as a result they paid from \$3.50 to \$15 for a Zippo when Japanese imitations went for 98 cents.

So if you guarantee your cattle, then make it known to everyone who could possibly be interested. "Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back, no questions asked," is a powerful selling message. If you haven't thought much about how you will handle complaints and refunds, then maybe you should. Because one of these days a customer may tell you that the bull you sold is sterile, and so are all his sons.

And then, what will you do? **AJ**

Director of Communications  
and Public Relations