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# The Sanfard Turalid 




# AN AUTOMOBILE DEALER TALKS BACK! 

## ANONYMOUS

This article is reprinted from the Octover 1947 issue of CORONET Magazine, with the permission of the editors of Esquire, Inc: The author of this article is a successful automobile dealer in a large Eastern a succestul automobile dealer in a large Eastern
city where the agency has been in the hands of his city shere the agency has been in the hands of his
family for more than 20 years. For obvious reaasons, family for more than 20 years. For obvious reasons,
he prefers to remain anonymous. With refreshing he prefers to remain anonymous. With refreshing
candor, he presents the dealer's side of the question: candor, he presents the d
"Why can't I get a car?"

## Holler Motor Sales

"BILL, I'LL GIVE YOU $\$ 3,000$ for a 1947 four-door sedan. I have a customer who needs the car badly, and he has the cash waiting."

These words had a fmiliar ring. Another used-car dealer was trying to buy a new car. at $\$ 500$ to $\$ 1,000$ over list price:

Let's examine this "deal." The car for which I was offered $\$ 3,000$ is listed at $\$ 2,200$ on a wall chart in my showroom. This chart is a hangover frum OPA days and is still there for all to see. Thus my extra profit would be $\$ 800$.

But the used-car dealer must reap a fat profit too, probably $\$ 400$. So the additional cost to the customer who needed that car "right away" would be $\$ 1,200$. In other words, $\$ 3,400$ is offered for an automobile which sold for about $\$ 1,300$ before the' war.

The publicis well aware that this prodigious profit exists potentially for the new-car dealer. They feel these dealers are taking advantage of the situation these dealers are taking advantage of the situation and, as proof, point to the number of new cars a vailable on used-car lots for ridiculously high figures. They
say that the legitimate dealer in new cars no longer say that the legitimate dealer in new cars no longer
exists; instead, he is taking advantage of a lush appor-tunity- to pyramid profits.

I assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. I will not attempt to make excuses for the imscrupulous dealers who are lining their pockets, but they are.actually a small minority. They consist largely of newcomers who managed to obtain a dealership, who will "milk" it to death and then unload it when the going gets difficult.

THE LEGITIMATE DEALER long established in his community is selling all his new cars at the manufacturer's suggested list price. Why'? Because he is prevented from accepting bonuses by the basic fundamentals of good business.

In the first place, the cannot destroy the good will of customers, Many of these have been dealing with him for a long time and their business is essential to carry the dealer over the difficult, competitive years ahead.
in the second place, most dealers, in selling the few cars they receive, are making more money than ever before. If fot no other reason than tax saving, it is better for the dealer to spread his income over the years. He can see little advantage in cramming profit into one year at the expense of probable lower tax rates in the future.

In the third place, most dealers conduct their business in small communities where they are known personally. Their reputation and integrity must be main-
tained for thelr own personal good, which means no shady transactions

Lastly, the new car dealer will not risk losing hisnmanufacturer's franchise. With five years of tremenidous profit possibilities ahead in legitimate business, Why should he risk his entire future for shady profits that he does not need now?

Therefore, when \& 1947 automobile appears on a used-car lot, place the blame where it belongs. Place it on the greedy Individuals to whom the dealer sold cars in good faith, and who resold these cars at big profits.

Take the case of Mrs. T, a respected housewife in my community. During the war, Mra, T, could get only an A gas-ration book. Disappointed because she could enjoy liftle usse of her car, she sold it, But at the time, she had foresight enough to order a new car.
A week after she received delivery, she was offer-
a $\$ 700$ over the purchase price. The more she thought ed $\$ 700$ over the purchiase price. The more she thought
about it, the bigger that $\$ 700$ looked. She felt she could about it, the bigger that $\$ 700$ looked. She felt she could
do without a car a little longet for that Aind of mones. So here was another quick victory for the used-car. deatlet, - and another black, eye for thie legtimate mer-

MOST PEOPLE, BRLILVE that it is the easiest Thith th the world for the dealer to accept $\$ 500$ under
the table when he makes a delivery to Jolin Dóugh. But
no legitimate dealer who gives a hang for his reputaiion is doing this either.

It is natural for people to brag about their ability to spend muney to get what tioy want. It takes John Dough about one day to boasl around the conmunit): that he got his car quick .- and paid through the nose. When his neighhor, wo has been suffering silently for 13 months waiting for a car, learns that Dough got his par in a week throukl a bonus, he is finished as a fufure customur. What is more, he tells the world that the dealer is dishonest.

Annther common complaint is that a trade is reunfrue. Recard's of the mainrits of donlars will show that on less than half the new cars did they take in a used car.

1 have obtianed trade-ins in only 34 per cent of my new car sales. Here again there are a few dealers who, out for the last dollar, ignore purchasers who do not have a used car, But this near-sighted policy is not ohserved by the long estahlished dealer who intends to stay in business for years to comic.

Dealers are also accused of trying to trade the used car at a sery low figure. The price is low, howeser, only when compared to the probable offer the customer has had from a usedecar lot.

The used-car dealer will take a car, make minor adjustments, polish it, and sell it for substantially the same price that the new-car dealer can secure. But the same price hat the new-car deater case he must guarantec the used car, must latter, because he must guarantee the used car, must
often spend $\$ 2010$ or so to put the machine into geod often spend $\$ 2010$ or so to put the machine into gond
condition. Hence, if the new-car deater gives you withcondition. Hence, if the new-car dealer gives you with-
in $\$ 100$ of the figure quoted ly a lised-car dealer, he is in $\$ 100$ of the figiure quoted by at 1 .

TO SHOW WHY THE long-established dealer is doing business legitimately, let me use my own company as an example. My lest business repeat business, year after year, built on customers who will purchase in the future and come to me regularly for service.

I cannot afford to sell new cars to a neighborhood used-car bot betause my custofners would see the machines and accuse me of shady transictions. To my
mind, I cannot think of a worse example of poor busimind. I camot thent.

I can well remember the day when, with 20 or 30 new cars on hand, I had to hire a warchouse to store. them. A sill,000 newecar inventory can le a real hendache, and $I$ expect this situation to return in the notdistant future.

So today, I want to sell every new car that I can lay hands on to the neighbor around the corner. And I must make a lasting friend of him at the sme time. Isn't flias just sound businesss':

Another thing, I am making more money now than ever ibefure. I have fewer salesi over which to distribute. overhead, hut my expenses are comparalively small. I need no claborate showrom or warehouse space because 1 never have a car more than the day or an it takes to ready it for delfery. I necd no salesmen because I have orders for more than a year's estimated busineiss.

In normal times, I lose $\$ 00$ to $\$ 100$ on every used car traded in. Now my used-ciar department shows a substandial profit. And my parts and service. departments are booming because people are spending big sums to keep their old cars on the road.

With this excellent profit picture being enjoyed by virtually all dealers, why should they risk their future for the sake of a few extria dollars now?

Most manufacturers maintain control over the dealer through a short-terfi contract. Thus if the dealThey merely wait for the cuntract to expire and then refuse to renew. The dealer will get no more new cars and he may no longer advertise authorized service or parts.

The factory's policy today is to have the dealer gell at list price so that the customer's good will is not lost for tomorrow's competitive market. Under the circumstances, what dealer can afford to antagonize the manufacturer upon whom he is dependent for existence?

Aside from the grave risk of losing my franchise, there is also my personal reputation to consider. I must live.with my customers. My children will grow. up and hecome members of the community. If I am going to sell merchandise to my neighbors, I certainly must retain fheir reapect.

Yef pven while तoing business legitimately, life todav is difficult for the dealer. I have one customer who
drops by almost every day. I patiently explain over and over axain that his car has not come in yet. This usually takes an hour, and yet he is still unconvinced.

First the tries persuasion, then he gets olmoxions. He shouts in the showrom, office and shop. He has He shouts in the showrom, office and shop. He has
written to the factory; and they fold him that his car written to the factory, and they fold him that his car was at least a month from
was just a rum-around.

Ifervently pray for the day when this pest will get his car and stay away from my office.

Good friends give the nupst frouble, for it is haved to refuse them. Pressure has hecome se greal that I hate to go to my golf club, When I do, I get a new tale of

Ruger C. has been a good friend and gond customer for years, but last time I saw him. he said: "Bill, Pve heen waiting 14 months for a car. You prictically promised that I would have it this month; and the wion and kids have their vacition plamned. Fue buop an:ts
for over a year, and I do think it's time I got that car

Latst week, the minister ol our chureh whthed it. my offite. I satid a silent privyer that he mignt want donation rather thann a car. At lirst he dalked abo: Sunday. Sehool and ny eharmbig family, It wasin't lomp. lowever, yntil I heard: "Bill, my old car is getline had it won't even take me on my rounds, Can't you hel me out?":

Purhaps I handed him unvisely, but when I sat it would be more than al year before he could ged at ap car, he took it as a persomataliromt. Ministers and thor-
tors usually are good customers, bul l'm atraid one


Even my home life affords me little peace . By wife has a friend who gas been on our order list for only a few months. He is in the Nary and stationed 210 miles from hîs family. Train conucetions are almost impossible, and they cannot find living yuarters near camp. Most of his week ends are spent in traveling on trains and busses. His unhappy wife hais put the pressure on my wife. If passics, multiplied tentuld, to me.

Perhaps those of you who are now pestering your dealer will remember the strain he is mader, and have compassion for him.

THERE IS NO DOLIT that the apmentane of new cars on- used-car lots is lourting the deales. Therenities the leritimate dealers, through, their assinetiations, are doing just that.

The New York Stald association has printed con tracts to be used in the sale of a new car. l'ait at the contract reads:
$\qquad$


 therwise illspose of salid mutur whicle whithin . . days of the dathe hereW. without first vivitu to the sprer hae right. priviluge and uption of purchnalng the sante fir the sumn if $\$$.

The number of diys to be inserted in the blank spaces is left to the judgment of the individual dealer. To me, 90 or 180 days would seem fair.

The surgested price at which the deater would $r$ purchase the car is list price, less $\$ 100$ for depreciation in the first 90 days of use. It is even suggested that a separate receipt be signed for the dollar paid as consideration. If many other states adopt such a plan, it should go far toward stopping greedy practices.

Those of you who are waiting unxiously for a new car should check on the dealer with whom you placed your order. Find out what his attitude is toward a usedcar trade. Offer him a bonus, and see if he refuses it. If he is a long-established dealer with an eye to the future, he will tell you that neither a trade nor a bonus is ture, he w

Once satisfied that you are dealing with a legitimate dealer, give the fellow a break. Call him once in a while to see how matters stand, but don't park in his office and keep him from doing a day's work. And if you don't get your car as soon as expected, remember that your dealer cannot deliver machines that are not , shipped to him.

No matter how much pressure you put on your dealer, that shipment of four cars that he just recelved be patient-and you'll soon be rolling down the highway in a brand-new car for which you paid the list price Way in a brand-new car for which you paid the list price



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