

Today's Auto Repair

with Chip Stewart

- Bad Repair; Now What? -

Suppose you've had your car at a garage to be repaired. You pay your bill and pick up your car and on the way home you discover something's wrong. Now what do you do? Well, of course, the first thing to do is to return the car to the repair facility. After all, we all make mistakes and, more than likely, that's all it is. The people at the facility will generally apologize and go out of their way to correct the problem. Sometimes *new* problems show up after others have been corrected and, in that case, there's no one at fault. Any student of Murphy's Law would admit that "stuff" happens. However, if your grievance is genuine and the facility won't back up their work even after you've been back several times (three returns should be sufficient), then what?

Sometimes a call to the local Chamber of Commerce can do some good -especially if the facility is a member. At this point a couple of phone calls may wake someone up but after this, I recommend all grievances be documented in writing. OK - no luck yet. The next step is your regional Better Business Bureau. Their phone number is in your phone book's business listings. In Knoxville, TN, the number is 692-1600. The BBB is often successful at arbitrating consumer complaints.

Your best bet is to ask for a complaint form which they will mail to you. Fill it out, send it back and they will assist you after that. Actually, the best time to call the Better Business Bureau is *before* you purchase goods or services. They have a 24 hour voice response system that will let you know if a business has any unresolved complaints against them. Call them up, follow the prompts and punch in the ten digit phone number of the company you wish to check up on. Try it - it's fun - and, it could save you a lot of frustration and money. (By the way, the BBB offers much more as you will find out when you call.)

Filing a complaint with the BBB may or may not result in your ultimate satisfaction, but it may save another consumer from a similar fate. It's not difficult and it helps everyone.

If you wish, you may also contact the your state's Consumer Affairs Division - you can find them in your phone book under the government listings. In Tennessee their phone number is 800-342-8385. They offer services similar to the BBB but in cases of deception and outright fraud they can get you in contact with the Attorney General's Office.

If all else fails, there's always small claims court. There is a fee for filing but if you win your case, the defendant pays. A lawyer is usually not necessary but good documentation is. If the complaint is legitimate, judges tend to favor the consumer.

A few things I'd like to point out - be reasonable ... put yourself in the other guy's place (that goes for both parties) - you'll accomplish more with discussion rather than threats - and, to the **repair facility**; treat your customers well - as if your life depended on their satisfaction - after all, it *does*.

