

Today's Auto Repair

with Chip Stewart

- Getting Your Money's Worth -

Time to invest some money in the family wagon. What will you get for that investment? Better yet, what *should* you get? Well, you should certainly get what you pay for. One of the best ways to be sure that you do is by communicating with your technician or service advisor. Make sure he or she understands what you want and make sure he or she explains what they are going to do to solve your problem. Go for a road test together - point out problems - ask for explanations. In addition, make sure that a proper diagnosis will be performed before the actual repair is attempted - guessing can get expensive.

Make sure that when you get explanations they make sense. Any repair professional should take the time to explain their procedures and make you feel at ease. After all, they should want to make you a repeat customer. If you ever feel like you're getting the run-around get a second opinion.

You should also get a good warranty that covers anything you buy including parts and labor. The parts warranties will vary depending on the quality of the item (i.e. good used, rebuilt, or new) and that should be explained to you before the work is done.

Sometimes a shop may install a part that a customer furnishes. In this case the facility would be responsible for defective labor only. Furthermore, if that part should fail, this customer would be liable for the labor to have another installed. It's because of problems like this that I recommend that the shop should supply any and all parts. Since the shop manager is experienced in the quality controls and reliability of the various suppliers and manufacturers and he wants to make sure the job won't have to be redone for free, you have a much better chance of getting a quality repair performed correctly the first time. If a problem does arise, the responsibility for rework now lies solely with the shop - parts and labor included. Repair facilities with the best reputations may take their guarantees a step further and insure that you'll get fair and reasonable service from the repair even after the standard warranty expires. Although exactly what they could do for you would depend on all of the conditions of the situation, their commitment to customer satisfaction would prevail.

You should get an itemized statement listing the parts installed as well as a detailed explanation of the work performed. This is a valuable record as it can increase the value of a car when its time to sell or trade or even when there's an insurance settlement involved. Make sure you save it. Any other problems found with your vehicle should be noted on your statement so you'll have a record of what needs attention.

Last, but not least, you should have access to your original parts for inspection and you should be shown how they failed. They are yours to keep unless they have to be returned in lieu of a core charge.

An investment in auto repair can be substantial. Make sure you get your money's worth. A reputable repair facility will insure you do by treating you and your car in a caring and professional manner. Remember - *good communication* is the key.

