



I think we know each other well enough by now so I feel pretty comfortable asking a favor. I really would appreciate it if, when we chance to see or chat with each other, that you refrain from using that four letter F word that has been known to creep into motorsportchat now and then. It would also be very helpful if you would restrain yourself when tempted to hum that catch tune that asks the lyrical question, "Have you driven a (insert four letter F word here) lately?"

Now, just to make sure we understand each other and are talking about the same four letter F word, repeat after me:

FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD  
FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD  
FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD  
FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD  
FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD  
FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD  
FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD  
FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD FORD

To save you the burden of counting, you have just read that four letter F word fortyate times which is one for every day the four letter F word Motor Company had my car to repair the transmission. By the way, that's fortyate days IN A ROW!

"But Suzie," you protest, "it doesn't take fortyate days to repair a transmission. A week, maybe two if you have to wait for parts, but fortyate days, impossible!"

Believe me when I tell you that from November 29 until the 16th of January, The Bull may have been flying but it sure wasn't moving. In case you are still trying to catch your breath over the fortyate days, "The Bull" was my pet name for the Taurus when I got it a year ago. I won't burden you with its new name but will tell you that it has been known to act as a suffix to the word "bull" and the phrase is used in barroom brawls as comfortably as in friendly disagreements.

In addition to this new name I have added a few new words to my vocabulary and expect to use them frequently over the next few months. Remember during the late days of the presidential campaign when the donkey party candidate finally admitted to subscribing to the "L" word? Well, I'm hoping to fair a bit better with my new L words - LEMON LAW LITIGATION. You see, after 32 days of being Lied to, Leered at, Laughed at and on the verge of Lunacy, I decided to get myself a Lawyer and file a Lawsuit for a Little bit of Local justice.

Leaping head first into the jungle known as American jurisprudence is a scary proposition, especially for one who has never ever been called for jury duty let alone traffic court. The Law, I find, while often based on precedent, can be and is an intricate web of opinion. A lawyer's opinion, an arbiter's opinion, a judge's opinion and somewhere, way down the line, the litigant's opinion, based solely on facts peppered with emotion. To describe me as "well seasoned" these days is tantamount to committing understatement interruptus.

The four letter F word Motor Company has this interesting policy that, in brief, states that they "repair" broken warranted parts, they don't "replace" them. Since the part in question was the transmission, which is little more than thousands of mini parts allegedly designed to work together, this policy dons a complex wardrobe of possibilities. Literally translated, and I am here to tell you that the four letter F word Motor Company translates very literally, the repair in lieu of replace policy meant that fixing the transmission was a crap shoot from the moment they got the car. The irony is that after all that time and all those snake eyes, they finally gave up and replaced the entire transmission anyway and that was only after they had convinced some grit infested engineer at AXOD-Atlanta that every part he suggested changing had been changed. TWICE! The kicker? They won't warrant the new transmission for the normal 60,000 miles but insist that because the rest of the car has 15,000 mile on it, the brand new tranny will only be covered for 45,000 miles.

While the resolution of this problem is a burning issue in my life these days, the larger, albeit exoteric, question is how a major domestic automobile manufacturer can endorse such self serving behavior in an age when competing choices are almost limitless? It was very clear to all of us in the late 70's and early 80's that imports had earned their firm grip on the American market by producing a quality ride AND by standing by their product. The American automotive effort may have kicked up some dust on the track and the ovals but the average consumer will never see that technology or those innovations. We will continue to be bombarded with Madison Avenue hype that conceals the real nitty gritty.

In the final analysis, the car may look good, have a high tech interior and may even have some new safety apparatus but all of that doesn't amount to beans if it's in the shop and it's owner is trying to arrange alternative transportation so he can continue to make the payments on a product that isn't in his possession.

At the four letter F word Motor Company, customer service is an oxymoron and Pass the Buck is JOB #1. See you in court!