

When the new-car mystique turns down-right mysterious.

JEAN SHEPHERD

• VALPARAISO, Ind. (AP)—A Valparaíso man who waited more than three months for delivery of his new automobile had driven only 69 miles when the car started to fall apart. Douglas Pierce, an architect, took his 1974 car to a garage when mechanics told him a tie rod had fallen off, that bolts inside and outside the transmission, in the bell housing and in the tie rod system were loose and that the clutch linkage was dangling. When Mr. Pierce complained, an on-looker quipped, "What do you expect for four thousand dollars?"

Poor Pierce. At least from now until he is an aged gentleman, gray and bent, he'll have a great story to tell his friends when the drinks start flowing. When I read this news item, I was sitting in a diner fighting a cup of rancid Route 3 coffee as the crockery and slabs of cardboard pumpkin pie jiggled and bounced from the thunder of the passing tractor trailers bound for the Heartland. Poor Pierce, I thought, he sounds like the archetypal Everyman of our time. I glanced up at the menu on the wall, figured I'd better not risk the breaded veal cutlet and decided instead on a bowl of Manhattan clam chowder. True, that could be dangerous, too, but at least it had style.

"Clam chowder!" I barked at the tall, thin hawk-faced waitress. My mind drifted off and I began to see the scene played out in front of me along the lines of *The Waltons*. The scene as the episode opens is Fred Smedley—a bright-faced, eager young man in crisp, clean sport shirt—sitting in the breakfast nook of his home in Valparaíso, a friendly little community in Northern Indiana. SMEDLEY [stirring coffee]: Well, today's the day, Emily. The big day.

EMILY: Oh no, Fred. Don't tell me it's come! SMEDLEY [beaming]: Yep. The dealer called yesterday. Said she was all set and we could pick her up this afternoon.

EMILY [clutching a towel to her breast]: Oh Fred, I just can't believe it. After all this time.

SMEDLEY: Yeah, it's been over three months now, Em, but let me tell you, baby, anything good is worth waiting for. We could have taken one off the floor, but...

EMILY: Yes, Fred, I know. You ordered this special upholstery just for me.

SMEDLEY: Don't forget, we ordered that special paint job too. It's not every guy in town that's going to be driving around in a Picasso Pink hardtop.

EMILY: Fred, we've dreamed for so long,

done without, planned—but just once I wanted you to have something that was reckless and wild and...

SMEDLEY [kissing her tenderly]: Enough, Emily. Finish your Sara Lee cinnamon roll. I've taken the day off. We're going to drive in the sun and just, well, just live this moment to the full.

He smoothes her with kisses as the scene faded from my mind. "You want crackers or Ry-Krisp with yer chowder?" Rosie the waitress asked as she swabbed the counter.

"Uh... what was that?" She had caught me unawares, and my mind was still back with the Smedleys in their moment of glory.

"Here are yer crackers," she snapped.

"Uh... yeah, that'll be fine." I swirled the spoon in the turbid chowder. For an instant I thought I had spotted a sad blue eye peering up at me from its depths, but it disappeared and I couldn't find it again.

As I sipped the barely warm coffee, my private TV series came back into focus. My friends, the Smedleys, were standing bathed in the sunlight streaming through the automobile dealer's window. Potted plastic palms dotted the parquet floor here and there. Giant posters festooned the walls. Streamers and balloons bobbed from the ceiling. A tall, elegantly dressed salesman in his middle fifties with graying sideburns, military mustache and muted tasteful cravat speaks as the scene opens.

SALESMAN: Congratulations, Mr. Smedley, you've made a wise choice. You and the little woman will never regret this. If you have any little difficulties whatsoever—which, of course, is highly unlikely with our new Whoopeemobile—just get in touch with me and I'll carry the ball from there.

EMILY: We'll be the envy of all our friends and neighbors. Wait'll they see that Picasso Pink paint job. Naturally, we aren't interested in impressing our friends and neighbors, but I can't help thinking...

SALESMAN [interrupting with a casual David Niven chuckle and a languid wave of his manicured hand]: We're all human, Mrs. Smedley, let's face it. When we buy something really fine, we want the world to know it.

SMEDLEY: I can hardly wait to get behind the wheel. I'm going to take care of this baby like it was my own child. Never leave it out of the garage at night, change the oil every 100 miles or so, get one of those cloth covers and...

SALESMAN: You're a wise man, Smedley.

When you've got something good, take care of it, I always say. And now the moment I always enjoy the most. Here are the keys to your brand new dreamboat, Mr. Smedley. May you drive it in good health and live happily ever after.

At that instant I was jerked back into reality by a man's voice three inches from my right ear. "Excuse me, bud, but will you get yer elbow out of my scrambled eggs and onions? I mean, a guy can't even sidown and have a decent meal without some slob shovin' him off the stool." The man was right. My elbow was in his scrambled eggs and onions. In fact, my new cashmere sweater was liberally bathed in catsup.

"I'm sorry. I wasn't thinking of what I was doing," I said.

"Some nerve," my fellow diner muttered and went back to shoveling in the food with manic intensity. I nibbled at a cracker and tried to look unconcerned.

The Smedleys suddenly reappeared in my mind. It was a beautiful scene: The sun rippled through the Indiana trees; Smedley was seated behind the wheel of his sparkling new automobile; Emily sat in her bucket seat, radiating excitement and joy as she fiddled with the radio knob.

SMEDLEY: Good grief, Emily, if I'd known she was going to be this great I'd have waited six months, a year! [He breathes in deeply.] Nothing like the smell of a new car. Just two hours ago we drove out of the salesroom and have been in pure heaven ever since.

EMILY: Watch out for that guy in the chicken truck. You get behind him and this paint job...

SMEDLEY: Forget it, hon. No '47 Dodge pickup full of chickens can stay ahead of me. [With a smile of satisfaction he pulls out and quickly passes the chicken truck, the Whoopeemobile moving like a live, lithe thing, glistening in the sun.]

SMEDLEY: How 'bout that? Hey, how 'bout getting another station?"

EMILY: Oh Fred, wait'll Merle Haggard finishes *Today I Started Loving You Again*. It's our song, and honey, I've never been more in love with you since we got the new...

SMEDLEY: What the hell's that noise?

EMILY: What noise?

SMEDLEY: Shhh! Will you shut up! [He listens intently, lowering his head so that his right ear is pointing down toward the floor.]

EMILY: You mean that clanking? I thought it was the chicken truck.

SMEDLEY: So did I. But dammit, it's coming from under the floorboards! [He drives in silence for a few moments, clutching the wheel his knuckles white with anger.]

SMEDLEY: Now what! Jesus! Do you hear that grinding sound?

EMILY: Yes, Fred. I hear it. [The chicken truck roars by them, spraying the hood of the Whoopeemobile with chicken feathers and a fine white, fragrant liquid.]

SMEDLEY: Holy Cow, this thing is wandering all over the road! I better stop! [The

AN EXPERT ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT MUSCLES

Our files show that thousands of readers like yourself want to build bulging muscles and achieve real physical power like their favorite athletic champions. How to go about it? We decided to ask an expert, Dave Prowse, 3-times British Weightlifting champion and leading fitness expert. Here are his answers.

Q. What does it take to build muscles?

A. Basically, it takes exercise. Almost any exercise will help to develop at least some of your muscles if you keep at it long enough and hard enough.

Q. Isn't there an easier way?

A. Yes. There is one outstanding, effective training method that is also fast and easy—the one I use and recommend—the new Bullworker system.

Q. What's that?

A. The Bullworker is a revolutionary new muscle-building exerciser based on Isometrics, the science that increases strength up to four times faster than conventional methods. In my opinion, it's the most advanced training system in the world today. Many leading athletes use it: World-famous Heavyweight Boxer Muhammad Ali, World Heavyweight Judo Champion Wim Ruska, and Cycling Champion Eddy Merckx, to name only a few.

Q. How long does Bullworker training take?

A. Bullworker provides absolutely the fastest kind of exercise possible. In fact, an introduction training program takes only 70 seconds a day. No other system—weightlifting, pulleys, or strenuous calisthenics—can give you results so quickly and easily. On the contrary, many old-fashioned methods take hours of sweaty, boring work each day... and it's often months before you begin to see improvements. Busy professional athletes and champions don't have time for that. Nobody does.

Q. How long does it take before you begin getting results?

A. With the Bullworker, you can actually begin to see and measure the positive results right from the very first day! Thanks to a built-in measuring device called the Powermeter. After every exercise



Dave Prowse, 3-time British Weightlifting champion, demonstrates a super-effective 7-second exercise for building powerful biceps... using the new Bullworker with built-in powermeter.

you just check the reading to see exactly how much your strength has increased from the day before. There's no guesswork involved. Isometric Bullworker training can increase your power at the amazing rate of up to 4% per week! That means a 50% increase in strength in the first three months alone. And I've known many young men who have gone on to double and even triple their strength.

Q. What do those figures mean in visual terms?

A. They mean that in as little as 14 days you can actually begin to see muscle growth in a mirror and verify it with a tape measure. Every week thereafter brings ever faster growth.



Q. But to get such impressive results, don't you have to work very hard?

A. Absolutely not. That's the outstanding advantage of Isometric training... it's so amazingly easy! Each "Static-power" Isometric exercise takes only 7 seconds, and you barely have to move. It's not even necessary to disrobe. The Bullworker is so light and compact, it can be used at home, in the office, anywhere... even while watching TV! It's a great improvement over bulky, expensive weights, bicycle machines, pulleys, etc.

Q. Can Bullworker training even develop bodies which are weak and skinny, or fat and flabby?

A. Definitely! It's been proven by thousands of men of every shape, size and age all over the world. Bullworker training helps transform weak, thin arms into rippling muscular pillars of strength, build broad powerful shoulders, turn flat, shallow chests into deep manly ones, forge loose stomach flab into steel-hard, well-defined muscle... build that "V" shape of a real athlete, develop sturdy, contoured thighs and calves... And all this in record time!

What's more, I've known skinny, shy fellows who, after just a few short weeks with Bullworker, turned into real go-getters... every inch a man... bowling girls over with their dynamism, confidence, and new found power! You really have to see the remarkable effects of Bullworker for yourself to believe them!

Q. How can our readers find out more about the Bullworker, perhaps actually try it for themselves?

A. I understand that the Bullworker distributor in the USA is now making it available—free—on a two week home-trial basis in order to introduce it to the general public. If your readers are interested in developing their bodies, in building muscles and strength faster than ever before possible, I suggest that they contact the US distributor for full details.

Jack Barclay, junior Mr. Europe shows the kind of results he achieved with Isometric Bullworker training.



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JEAN SHEPHERD (CONTINUED)

Whoopemobile staggers to a halt in the weeds alongside the road. Smedley glares angrily for a brief moment at the departing chicken truck and snarls to his wife. [Emily, I'm going back to the dealer's right now.] [Emily says nothing. Long experience has taught her when to remain silent. Smedley drives slowly back over the route amid a loud clattering, rasping, clanking and assorted bangings from under the car. The entire trip is made in silence, except for one brief outburst.]

SMEDLEY: Turn that goddamn radio off! If I never hear that redneck hillbilly singing again it'll be too soon. Turn it off! [He pulls into the driveway. A large electric-blue sign reads: *SERVICE DEPARTMENT. ENTER HERE. THROUGH THESE DOORS ENTER THE FINEST CARS IN THE WORLD.* A white-coated attendant springs to attention.]

ATTENDANT: Well, Mr. Smedley, back for your 600-mile checkup so soon? Why, you just drove....

SMEDLEY: What the hell's wrong with this thing? It's making banging sounds, it won't steer and I heard something fall off and....

MECHANIC: Oh, that again. Well, I'll have Joe and the boys look her over. You can wait in the showroom. [Grimly Emily and Smedley sit next to the water cooler, a potted palm between them. The mechanic reappears.]

MECHANIC: I told you not to worry. It's not much.

SMEDLEY: What is it?

MECHANIC: Well, you lost a tie rod....

SMEDLEY [clutching his head]: Lost a tie rod!

MECHANIC: Yeah, and a few bolts inside and outside the transmission were loose. And in the bell housing.

SMEDLEY [Tears streaming down his cheeks]: Oh no!

MECHANIC: Yeah, then there's that clutch linkage. Something busted and the linkage is hanging down there. That might be what you heard hittin' the road. We'll have her good as new in maybe three weeks.

SMEDLEY: But it is new! It's only got 31 miles on it!

MECHANIC: I can't figure out customers. Always griping. Nothing pleases them. It could have been a lot worse, buddy. Had one the other day had a burnt-out valve at 12 miles. After all, what the hell do you expect for \$4000? You get what you pay for, buddy. [Emily and her husband rise as one. His fists are clenched. The salesman, his face blanched with fear, slams and locks his office door as Smedley, a low growl rumbling in his throat, approaches. Fade out.]

"That'll be a dollar eighty-five," Rosie rasped.

"A dollar eighty-five? For just coffee and a bowl of canned clam chowder?"

"Don't forget the crackers, buddy, 40 cents extra."

I paid, reluctantly but with no anger. After all, there are others worse off than me. ●