

The check IS in the mail

When I was a little boy my father put me on a chair and said, "Jump and I'll catch you." I did and he didn't. As I gathered myself up off the floor he said in a stern voice, "Let that be a lesson to you. Don't ever trust anybody."

While that might be good advice for preparing someone to go into politics, believe me, it's no way to go through life, and I have spent my life trying to totally disregard that lesson. My experience has taught me that you can trust people.

For 25 years I've sold books I've written and quite often a person has called up wanting to place an order over the phone. Until recently I never took credit cards and the people were always taken aback when I said, "I'll just send you the books and when you get them you can just send me a check." Keep in mind these were complete strangers.

You may find the following fact hard to believe but I swear it's 100 percent true. In all that time I've NEVER, EVER, been stiffed. Not once. Everyone of those people paid me just like they said they would.

People deserve more credit than they receive, at least the folks I tend to hang around with. I think the record is untarnished because of the kind of people who purchase my books; mostly country folks, farmers and ranchers and those who would like to be. People, who by their nature are simply just honest folks.

Like everyone else, I like to be paid money that is owed me. I'm a "cash and carry" kind of guy and my preferred terms for selling anything are 100 percent down with no payments. While I am a trusting soul by nature I still take precautions when big money is involved.

For example, I never sold my calves directly off the ranch, preferring instead to sell them at auction because after watching them sell I could go eat a piece of pie and by the time I was

finished the gals in the office would always have a check ready for me.

I cannot fathom that some people will sell their year's worth of work and let them go out the front gate without being paid for them, or at least having a check that they called the bank on to make sure it was good. While I'm sure 99.999 percent of the time everything will be all right I was always afraid that with my luck I'd be the one getting stiffed. It happened to us once when my wife and I sold a house.

Escrow was supposed to close on a Friday but was delayed so we went ahead and let the buyers move in while we loaded a U-Haul and moved to New Mexico. On Monday morning we learned the owner of the escrow company had absconded with all the funds. It took us three years and \$8,000 in lawyer fees to get our house back! As a result I'm careful when I deal with any big company with the word "Trust" in its name.

An auctioneer friend tried to reteach my father's lesson to me one time when we worked a sale for an owner who was a tad bit suspect. He was a rich guy from the city who'd left behind a string of unpaid bills, so to make sure he got paid for his day's work the auctioneer bought a bull during the sale. Sure enough, the auctioneer never got paid but by selling the bull he made up for the loss.

I recalled this lesson when I was asked to take bids at a bankruptcy sale years ago. I too wasn't sure if I'd get paid the \$250 we agreed on as my fee. The whole thing just didn't feel right on the day of the auction so I looked around for something to buy as insurance in case I didn't get paid.

My eyes settled on the most gaudy, ugly mirror ever made. It was huge and the cherubs and vines adorning it dripped with fake gold. I swear, it would make Martha Stewart have a coronary. I bid \$350 for it and after struggling to load the huge, ugly thing in my car I took it home. My wife took one look at the grotesque object and shrieked in disgust, "That thing is not going in my house!"

But it did. And to my surprise the check for my day's work got home almost before I did. So, I belatedly paid for the mirror and ended up losing a hundred bucks for my labors. And every day when I look into the ugliest mirror ever made I am reminded that you really can trust people most of the time.

It's the Pitts

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