

Becoming the Master's Negotiator

I had no idea a boat would go that fast. I guess you could say it was quite an eye opener. In fact, my eyelids were pinned back until I was wearing them like a skull cap! I could hardly muster up a good squeal of delight without the slobber blowing clean out of my mouth. The guy selling this rocket had that 150HP Mercury screaming, taking full advantage of his chance to make a first impression. He finally sat her down and crowed, "Not bad huh?"

My brother Heath and I must've looked like 'dumb and dumber' sitting there with those frozen grins. Personally, I was thinking, "Unless this thing sinks before we get back to the dock, it's mine." Nevertheless, I knew better than to let this cocky little boat fellow know how excited I was before we settled on a price. So I wiped the tears from my cheeks and casually admitted, "Yeah, I reckon it's alright."

Meanwhile, nosey ole' Heath jumped up and started poking around on all the fancy gadgets. Soon he was besieging the poor fellow with a litany of ignorant questions. I shot Heath a glare that all but branded the word "IDIOT" on his forehead. Of course, I didn't stop him. I wanted to know too. Heath had always been good at playing the dufus. So I just let him go. Besides, I was the one who'd be forking out the dough and it was important I keep an aloof appearance before the start of the dickering process. To my credit, this all happened before I had learned the Bible says, (*Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive. Proverbs 17:28 NKJV*)

I was just about to throw out my ridiculous low-ball offer when Heath flipped a switch that caused a huge gush of water to start shooting out of the boat.

"Whoa," I said, "What's that?"

The seller kind of lost his swagger, and sheepishly commenced biting his nails before muttering, "Oh that? That's what you call a bilge pump."

"What does it do?" Heath inquired.

"It uh... It pumps out all the water out of the boat."

"Hmmm," I said, suddenly in deep thought. There was a long moment of awkward silence. I had to think over this new development. I finally spoke. "You mean you don't have to dip it out by hand?" The guy just kind of stared at me.

"That's awesome," Heath yelled, "Look at that thing go!"

We jumped up and gave each other a big high five. I whipped out my checkbook. "How much you say you want for it?"

It wasn't until the second or third trip in my new boat I began wondering why there was always so much water to bilge. That just happened to be the same day it almost sank.

There were times in my history I'd actually come out on the good end of a deal, though they were few and far between. I'd grown up with little money and big taste, and that left a lot of play in the middle. I began to think it a necessity to out-slicker somebody. I guess I kind of went overboard from there, because soon it didn't matter whether they had anything I needed or not. (I'd have probably been the only guy in Mississippi with a snow mobile if there'd have ever been one listed in the classifieds cheap.) I'd become addicted to the thrill of the deal, and the rush of the kill. Surely I ought to hold some sort of copyright on the phrase, "Deal, or no deal".

Thankfully, since Jesus has come into my life, I've lost interest in always getting one over on somebody. Nowadays I seem to find more pleasure in finding those win/win situations; the ones equally fair for the guy across the table. God likes it that way too. (*Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight. Proverbs 11:1 KJV*)

The Lord's peace is much too nice to be muddling it up with things that cause my conscience to always be raking on me. Ironically, do you know what I've found? Most people are happy to bless me with much more than I'd have ever been able to snooker out of them anyhow! Go figure. It's just God's way.

But anyway- Don't get me wrong. Not everything has changed. I still like letting Heath play the dufus.

-Guy Sheffield 10-12-06