

GET YOUR ORDER IN QUICKLY, OR THIS MAY BE YOUR LAST CATALOG 11/30/99

Been getting many catalogs in the mail lately?

If your answer is “yes”, ever wonder how they can possibly afford to print so many when you busy so little form them? Well, I do and I have come to one conclusion: they have to have one whale of a markup on the few times they mark a score!

I have no idea how much it costs to print the average catalog, but from the quality of the printing, paper and photos, it must be significant. Add to that the postage and handling and it’s got to be one big industry just printing the catalogs.

As I write this, we have 59 assorted catalogs gracing every possible storage space from table, counter, shelf, mantle, rack and floor. Our household is pretty well evenly divided as to which are to be hoarded and perused until their periodic replacements arrive. And arrive they do, in spite of the warnings, “Don’t Let This Be Your Last Catalog.” The purveyors of such items believe in the old adage, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

They know their business. Even if you have not the slightest intention of succumbing to their wiles, you are intrigued enough to allow them to linger around to test your resolve over and over. Guess what? If you toy with the possibilities of some new, innovative product or other, you may weaken in spite of yourself.

From the moment they arrive in your hand they are designed to that end. Many are new and unfamiliar and resort to many ploys to arrest your attention and focus on their value. So you resist the impulse to toss them in the scrap bin with the others tossed there by those who do not share your inquisitive nature.

They hope to capture your interest with eye-catching covers or absorbing titles. Many like “Wireless” and “Signals” capture your imagination quickly and lose it just as fast when you learn their hypothesis make little sense. “Wireless” purports to be for fans and friends of public radio and “Signals” is the same for television.

One enterprising entrepreneur has come up with a catalog featuring “Best from America’s Finest Catalogs,” titled “Encore.” “America’s most innovative products” are featured in “Lifestyles.”

“Coldwater Creek,” “Mountain Naturals” and “Willow Ridge” immediately invoke thoughts of wilderness and the outdoors, sure to capture the attention of the sporting and environmental advocates. I personally question a title such as “Willow Ridge,” since I have never seen one. Any willows I have ever seen grow in low areas with plenty of available moisture.

“Russell’s For Men” uses classic industry trademarks in the headings above their illustrations to assure the knowledgeable patron they present only quality products. They back up their presentations with prices to match the high quality – a message well received by those who believe you “get what you pay for.”

Many of the catalogs I receive have obviously missed the market niche they should be aiming for. They feature quality products most of us would appreciate but cannot afford. I do not need or want, for instance, a bird feeder inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright at \$60. Brother Bruin would treat it the same as he does any homemade model made from wood scraps and an empty plastic jug. I get along nicely without the several shave-in-the-shower razors and mirrors. With a teenage granddaughter in the house, I need no more incentives to run our hot water bill up any higher!

Last and least is Sunday Football Get-Away Chair listing for \$2,995 plus \$100 for home delivery. I might be interested if I liked football. Right. Almost forgot the Beechwood Utensils (your soups, pastas and sauces deserve) at \$35 with available stainless steel holder for \$60. Ought to be a set in every hunting camp.

To make a long story short, catalogs do serve many purposes. In my case, to keep me informed of the many new products both useful and useless, otherwise known by a serious old curmudgeon who shuns stores and malls like the plague. In the meantime, if I cannot get the Better Half to buy it for me or find it in Old Forge, I’ll send for it in the catalog.