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This horror story is intended to stimulate more of the same from members of the mailing list Horology and of course for pure enjoyment.

I remember once I encountered a customer that brought in a wall clock. The thing that stands out about her at that time was that she was in a foul mood and when I asked her why she said that "we" were all alike by taking advantage of her ignorance about clocks. I tried to settle her down but she wanted no part of it so I "threw" her out of the Clinic. It wasn't until then that she calmed down and I reluctantly proceeded to explain that she needed a disassembled cleaning which carried a one (1) year warranty on this delft 2-weight wall clock.

She agreed and I repaired it and she picked it up. When she got it home she called and said it wouldn't work. So I asked if she understood the instructions I gave her in the Clinic about keeping the clock in beat, how to wind properly and so forth and she stated yes but it still doesn't work.

I was in a particularly bad mood remembering how she verbally "abused" me so I said I would charge her something like \$25.00 to make the house call because she had not paid for a house call. She argued and said "I'll see you in court". Oh by the way she stated in our first meeting that she was a paralegal. I guess that should have told me something right then and there. Well about a week later the Marshall came to deliver the small claims papers so I decided to call her.

After she gloated by saying "I guess the Marshall was there", I said I would come over at no charge. I when over and sure enough the clock was out of beat. I then instructed her that since it was a two (2) weighted clock and it had to be wound each week that she should either mark the wall and/or listen to the beat. I restated this about two or three times and each time she assured me that she understood.

Well exactly eight (8) days later she called and said it stopped and "I'll see you in court". I asked her if it ran the entire week after I was there and she responded that it did. I then asked her if she had wound the clock before it stopped and again it was a yes. I tried to tell her that she again knocked it out of beat and she again stated that she had had enough and you guessed it "I'll see you in court".

Well the court date came and I showed up as did she but she had three (3) friends and her son as character witnesses. The judge asked me my side of the story and I told it honestly but I left out the fact that I wanted to charge her for the house call. He then asked her side and that's what made my day. Not only did she admit that she had wound the clock just

prior to the clock stopping she also admitted that her son had tried to get it going after it stopped.

The judge asked her if she had seen another clock person to get a comparison of price and/or expertise. She stated that she did not. Then the judge asked if any of the character witnesses had anything to say and the son said that he did.

The son complained that when the originally bought the clock they did not have to worry about balance and being in beat and just before he could go on then the judge said "yeah and that's when you broke it". And the son actually agreed.

Well I left the court room thinking that justice had been served and felt great. That feeling left when ten (10) days later I got the judgment in the mail and was informed that she won and I had to refund the amount she paid me plus her court costs.

What this all means is no matter what financial or emotional state you are in at the time of first contact with the customer always follow your instincts. Another lesson I learned is that marking the wall and talking to the customer will stop most but not all of our customer troubles concerning a wall clock. I even give out a hand book printed by AWI which points out the obvious do and don'ts for clocks and their set up.

Prior to the customer leaving the Clinic with the repaired clock I advise the customer how to place the clock in beat by listening for an even tick by moving the base of the clock right or left to achieve such.

What I also learned is that I now insist that if there is a problem with the clock then there is an additional charge to come out to the house and "install" the wall clock. This of course assumes that the clock was brought in and picked up by the customer and that I did in fact repair the clock properly. When I do install I drive 1/2" penny nails into the wall at either side of the base of the wall clock then place it in beat manually.

Once I instituted this policy I never had to return to an out of beat wall clock again. Oh and one (1) more thing. I will never go to court again in order to defend myself concerning my business. I honestly don't think that small businesses has any chance what-so-ever. What I will do is swallow my pride and make the house call for free and do whatever it takes to right the clock. I would also refund the money (which I have done since) if I feel that it is just not worth my time to pursue the repair or the customer (you know the one's I mean by that).

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