

Dishwasher fails, again and again

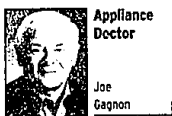
I've said - and written - it many times. You get what you pay for when you purchase a major home appliance. This consumer's complaint is one too many. Mr. Rafanelli wrote me about a dishwasher he purchased for \$800. His story reflects the case of too many who suffer this experience even with an expensive product. (I will substitute the product name by calling it X Brand for the obvious reason.)

DISHWASHER TROUBLES

He writes: "I currently own the X Brand dishwasher which I purchased in October 1998. We have had some difficulties with this unit, but ever since a few months ago, we have been living a nightmare."

"When the dishwasher was installed, it didn't work, so the pump was replaced. It worked fine for a while, then we slowly lost use of some of the five cycles. Eventually, only the rinse cycle was functioning and we had the serviceman replace the extremely poorly engineered pushbutton device. That part was replaced in February 2002 for \$100. "It worked until just before Thanksgiving when the washer did not complete its cycles, and a noticeable humming noise was present. (We've had a serviceman in now four times and the problem is still not corrected.)

"On his second visit he identified the pump as the problem and replaced it during the third visit for \$250.



Appliance Doctor
Joe Gagnon

"This repair still did not solve the problem, so he then brought with him a local regional service representative. They both determined that the new pump was defective and ordered another pump.

NEW PUMP, WRONG PART

"After a few weeks, another pump arrived but it was the wrong part for my model number. After waiting four more weeks for the new pump assembly, I was informed that the part had a makeover and is now doubled in price. I am totally frustrated and I refused to have the new pump installed.

"My dishwasher is now in the garage. I tried contacting the manufacturer, but company officials were not helpful since they claim that my dishwasher was never registered and they have no record of any problems. (Odd, since I mentioned earlier I had warranty work done when was it first installed.) While it worked, we were very happy with the dishwasher and its low water usage and energy efficiency, but now I am wondering what I should do next. I replace this one or start the search again for a new

dishwasher? I am a little gunshy at this point to spend \$800 again for a dishwasher. Any recommendations on what I should do and if I do buy a new dishwasher, is there a reliable brand you would recommend? We had a KitchenAid brand before and it lasted over 20 years with minimal problems except for the rusted racks. We look forward to your reply." A lot of faith is put upon me by consumers who read this column or listen on radio. You constantly hear my words which rip on quality and the overall lack of it in products built today. Sadly, it happens even on the high end products, but not as often as the low end grade. This customer has already laid out \$900 for a product and expects me to be looking at another \$500 to get the thing going.

WRITE THE COMPANY

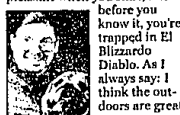
I would find out who is the head of the customer relations department and the general sales manager of Brand X and send both of them a copy of this letter you sent me, by registered mail. I would ask that the new pump be supplied at no charge and that you are willing to pay the labor and service call.

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WWJ-950 and WKYI-1270. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His telephone number is (248) 455-7281.

'Bird' is the word for these hobbyists

Everybody should have a hobby. Birding's good. It's one of the special opportunities this world gives us to wear shoes that aren't too worn.

Hiking's nice. The problem with hiking would be the weather. Sure, things might be pleasant when you start, but



About Animals
Dr. Brad Davis

before you know it, you're trapped in El Blizzardo Diablo. As I always say: I think the outdoors are great - everyone should drive through them. Sometimes hobbies can grow beyond just moseying through the big woods or rolling a ball at some small woods. These hobbies can become obsessions. Sports fans often become obsessed. I love sports, but I guarantee you I've never painted my body team colors to attend a game.

A group that can become obsessive about their hobby would be birders. I can speak about them as much like Jane Goodall with her chimps. I have lived among them.

My wife, Dr. Sharon Sheehy (also a vet), loves birds. We have six birds at the house now. These aren't enough, so we trek all over the country to see more birds.

The point is, that's not unusual. On a bird watching tour in Anchorage, Alaska, a man in our group who happened to be an emergency room physician from upstate New York spoke about his last few trips to bird watch.

He had been to the barren and freezing Pribilof Islands, which extend from Alaska to near Siberia. He had also been to Costa Rica, which, if the odds and odds from the other birders are any indication, is basically bird watcher Valhalla.

WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE

Birders congregate where birds can be found, staring through their spotting scopes, snapping pictures, and discussing the subtle differences between a red-throated whatever and a scarlet-throated whatever.

To me there are two types of birds: a bird, and another bird. To birders, the list is incredibly important. This is the list of birds you have seen in your life. I'm the type of person who has to complete everything he starts, so this would be a nightmare, as there are just too many types of birds. In the Everglades, another birding heaven, two British birders were scanning the glade from a platform with my wife when one excitedly called her over to see a blue jay. These are rare in London, so they were excited beyond belief. I even looked, on the off chance a Toronto baseball player might have been standing there.

Of course I'm just teasing birders, as the hobby couldn't be more harmless, and certainly can be a wonderful educational experience for youngsters and for interested adults alike.

Areas with birding potential have learned about ecotourism. The state of Texas has a birding trail, a series of locations on or near main roads where birders might achieve avian nirvana. Specialty maps show locations and describe the areas, and clearly marked signs designate spots on the trail. Although not as elaborate as Texas, Florida has also put this together over the last few years. You don't have to drive to Florida or fly to Central America or wear a 10-gallon hat to look at birds. There are very nice ways to watch birds close to home.

CLOSE TO HOME

First would be Point Pelee,

Ontario, our nearest birding haven.

People come from all over the world to this spot on Lake Erie where multiple types of birds can be seen, especially during migration (last resting spot before, and first resting spot after, flying over the lake).

Nice facilities and a short drive from Detroit help make this a great location for local birders.

Local Metroparks can be good places for spotting a few birds, but a great spot would be Crosswinds Marsh, south of the airport, on Haggerty, just west of the Will-Carleton Road exit from I-275. This marshy area features loads of the feathered critters, and certainly has great trails for nice walks all year round.

Don't forget about your yard. There are ways to get birds to come to you instead of you going to them.

"Remember that birds need the basics: food, water and shelter," Sharon informed me. "If you build it, they will come!"

Also, remember to move slowly and quietly.

Birds are more receptive to guests if they don't know they're there, or at least if the guest doesn't look like something who might eat them.

"Birding is a great hobby," Sharon said.

"It's a chance to get close to nature, and to really see and learn about the birds. They're usually beautiful and always interesting."

Yeah, but bowlers never get rained on.

Dr. Brad Davis is the medical director for the VCA of Garden City, 2005 Inkster Road, Garden City, MI 48135. Feel free to write him there with questions and comments. He is also one of the hosts of the nationally syndicated radio show Animal Talk. Visit the Web site at www.AnimalTalkRadio.com. You can send e-mail questions or comments to Questions@animaltalkradio.com.

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