

TALKING GROCERY CARTS

My sage 87 year young Sicilian tsunami mommy, (I'm under strict orders to call her that), has an urgent message. The seasoned and savvy shopper with post doctoral degrees in discount diving tells me the beast of talking grocery carts has raised its ugly head in New England and it is looking west.

Mommy fiercest is right. Addictive technocracy, a growing gnawing trend of man whereby he increasingly depends on technology to define his humanity rather than the opposite is "taking us all to the crapper in a handbag".

She writes, "Dear son, I sent a husband to WW II and endured the Cuban missile crisis and two snot nosed kids, but when it comes to my wallet and waistline, don't mess with mommy. A shopping cart can assist me in simple ways, but a yapping, snooping, sniping wheeled digital beast knowing me only as your Father did is nuts"

"There's more. Listen kid, I do my own walking and talking in those aisles and I don't need geeks snooping if I squeeze a melon or two. And the map feature they tout? This is your mother. I find items in aisles these Yahoos don't even know they have. What mother needs a map getting groceries? What am I your father now? It's like Big Brother is watching you. Once I swipe a store card, I'm screwed."

"And how about this Veggie Vision thing? A digital camera with a library of hundreds of pictures of produce matches color, texture and shape and determines what my item is, weighs and prices the purchase. I put my hat and a plush toy on the damn thing just to piss em off. I caused a stink but that manager was sort of cute."

"Scan my items, well maybe. Pop up a hot new coupon on my cart screen, okay. Sub total and nutritional information, good idea. But a yapping cart? With God and all creation listening, I do not want to hear 'Hello Gina, I missed you; it's been four weeks since you last bought deodorant. And how's that hemorrhoid?'

I love how the Butcher remembers what cuts of meat I like or that the smiling produce people know the inside scoop on cantaloupes. I need the chit chat with bakers while warm scents of freshly baked goods waft my way. I want, 'Can I help you out', not 'I know what you bought and now I know you'. And will these carts scream and report me if I do not return them exactly right? What if these cart robots get a mind of their own and coerce me into eating fat expensive foods or threaten to snitch me out about alcohol or hygiene? What if they act like some other son's mother, telling me what to buy? What if they argue with me and refuse to give information or play favorites and tell all the other carts about me? So what then, customer-cart support groups? What next, a husband going postal when he learns that his wife has a thing for some more understanding cart who feels her dietary pain and really likes to shop?"

"What language would they speak; do we need minority carts, gay, lesbian and alternative lifestyle carts? What about smart ass cart ventriloquists in aisle three? What if my cart revolts, gets hostile and

pins me against the condom counter. What if they play some hideous music video of a scantily clad budding Britney Spears wannabee luring some husband into the pasta section for God knows what? What of hackers and cartspiracy?"

"I do not go grocery shopping to be exposed, insulted, probed and unsafe. So listen to your mother and write this in your fancy schmancy column and look out next time you are in a grocery store. Or maybe Mr. Big shot columnist is too lazy to shop anyways and orders out, eh? I can send Lasagna. Is that pretty new wife of yours cooking for you? Are you eating enough? Love, Mom"

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