

**Cliff  
Hicks**

## Retail madness

*Clerks deserve more consumer courtesy*

Next time you decide to go out shopping, think before you open your mouth.

You think I'm joking? If you haven't seen the movie "Clerks," you should. If you have and you haven't worked retail, you still don't really understand. If you've worked behind a counter or in a retail store, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

I work at an anonymous toy store that's incredibly well known. I admit it. I confess. I pay my bills by working in a retail store (journalism doesn't pay squat at the moment). Of course, I'm not doing much at the moment, but that's not the point I'm making.

What was the point I was making? Oh, yeah! Retail!

A while ago, I received a call. "Hello thank you for calling [insert toy store name here] my name is Cliff; can I help you?" This is the standard greeting, with no pauses because people try and think like you're expecting them to say something, which you aren't... you're only catching your breath.

"Yes, I'd like to speak to someone in the toy department, please."

"..."

There is a long period of silence on my end of the phone before I say "I'm sure I can help you, ma'am. What do you need?"

It seems like people would be smarter than this, yes? No. This is a prime example of the kind of idiocy I see every day. I wear a dark blue shirt with the store's mascot on my back, and the store insignia over my lapel. People ask me if I work in the store.

"Do you carry toys?" they ask.

"I'd like to complain. I can't find a toy that was made 45 years ago on your shelves! Why not?" they bicker.

Once, back when I was working at a different branch of this same toy store in Omaha, I heard a woman arguing with one of our managers. Our manager kindly explained to the woman that we were out of stock of the item she was looking for (if memory serves me right, I believe it was the Green Power Ranger - yeah, I've worked in and out of the store a lot over the years).

The woman yelled at her, saying "I know you're keeping them all in the back and I want one!"

"Why, ma'am, would we keep them in the back when we could be selling them out here?"

"You're going to buy them yourselves and sell them at a higher price on the street!"

At this point, the conversation degenerated into the customer yelling obscenities at my manager,

and the manager asking her to leave the building. This was during the Christmas rush, of course, when things get a little crazier than normal, but still....

Is it any wonder why the motto for the movie "Clerks" was "Just because they serve you, doesn't mean they like you..."

I used to think people were generally good at heart, just trying to get what they thought was rightfully theirs. Then, one night as I was working someone tried to pick my pocket. I couldn't prove it, but I threw the kid out of the store. A few weeks later, one of the other managers (this is all still back in Omaha, mind you) along with myself and another employee took off running after some kids who were trying to steal some of the electronic diaries the store carried. Since then, those have been kept under glass, quite wisely I might add.

See, not only are the parents awful, but so are the kids. It's so disillusioning. Kids shoplifting, parents leaving kids in the store while they spend the day somewhere else. I almost begin to lose faith in the whole thing.

Then something happened about a week ago.

I was walking through the bikes again, where I often give people advice on buying bikes. A little girl who was about 11 or 12 years old, ran up to me and started tugging on my shirt.

"Mister?"

It had been a long day and I tried to force a smile. "Can I help you?"

"I just wanted to say thank you. I bought a bike from you a few weeks ago and it's so cool. It doesn't make my butt hurt like that last one did, and Mom says I should say thank you to people who help me, so thank you, Mister," she said to me, then skipped back over to her mom, who smiled and waved at me.

I smiled and waved back as they walked off, pushing their shopping cart along the linoleum floor. It's things like that that keep my sanity from waning.

So I ask of you, think about the people who are serving you, wherever you go. Remember that they're working their butts off for a couple of bucks an hour, just to keep a roof over their heads and food on their tables.

A little courtesy won't kill you and you'll be surprised how well clerks remember the people who are nice to them.

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**Haney's  
View**



**Jessica  
Kennedy**

## Summertime blues

*Grown-up longs for days of ice cream, Miami Vice*

I remember the lazy, hazy days of summer. Vaguely.

The days when you played with the neighborhood gang until your parents dragged you off your banana seat dirt bike (I had one); days when the ringy-ding-ding of the ice cream truck made your night (back when there were ones); days when your parents bought the ice cream; days when after-dinner play seemed to last forever.

Summer was great as a kid — no responsibilities, few worries and lots of play time. It's hard to remember a muggy summer evening when we weren't building a club, riding our bikes, stealing fruit from neighbor's bushes and trees or playing hide-and-go-seek.

One of my favorite kiddy pastimes was cops and robbers. Actually, it was the '80s. We played Miami Vice. The game included wild chases through the alleys (hence the dirt bike), dodging through yards and stalking each other.

I'm not bitter. We all grow-up, despite Peter Pan's protests. It's just that, well, I miss the good ol' days of summer vacation.

If you're reading this, then I'm comforted to know I'm not alone. You're either taking classes or working or both. The lucky ones get paid vacations. I am not among the fortunate.

School still sucks in the summer, regardless. One remedial speech

class down, one hellacious broadcasting class in the process and two long history classes to go. Thirteen hours of staring at a professor instead of lounging in the sun, catching up on the soaps and being a bum. There is a higher goal, I suppose. Even though I'm risking a nervous breakdown, the 13 hours I'm taking this summer will allow me to graduate in December. Which translate into no more mac-'n'-cheese and bye-bye to student loans.

This summer, my vacation is a weekend getaway to Kansas City. A day of thrills and ills and a major league game. Of course, there are weekend retreats to my family's cabin, which is marvelous!

The time is relaxing and fun. With a plethora of children and a laid-back attitude, it's impossible to be stressed.

And this summer, I will learn how to water ski.

I even got a little taste of it this past weekend.

My cousin Ruth and I noticed that one of the neighbors had this cool little ride called a Ski Chariot. Being the brash and obnoxious souls that we are, we decided to ask for a ride.

In retrospect, I guess this was my pathetic attempt at being 12 again.

After hoisting myself into the contraption (which resembled two intertubes stacked on top of each other, with the back cut out... like a

chariot) and pulling Ruth in, we were off.

The straight-away of the lake offered only thrills. The sheer enjoyment of bouncing back and forth across the wake. The turn, however, offered a different experience.

Entering the turn, it became painfully apparent that the 12-year-old should've been on the outside, not the 21-year-old.

As the tiny raft began to roll to the side and my position shifted from good to bad, I knew my dry time was limited. Sure enough, after the turn, my legs went flying off the back of the chariot. It was at that instance that I noticed our driver didn't have a spotter, which meant that if I went down, no one was going to see.

So for about 20 frightening seconds, I held on for dear life. Finally Bill, the driver, turned around.

I let go and was brutally emerged into the deep, merky, green lake, water shooting up my nose at 20-miles-an-hour.

I guess I'd better get used to it. Last time I tried to water ski, I took about six consecutive nose-dives into the lake at mach speeds.

So my last collegiate summer will be spent in class and face first in the lake. It's not Miami Vice, but I'll take it.

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