

# *Local Church Ministry*

A 21<sup>st</sup> Century parable

By

Pastor Don Bartow

## **ANTHONY CLAUDE AUTO AGENCY**

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*A. Claude, Founder\CEO*

Dear Mr. Fieldman,

Your recent letter disturbed me a great deal. I can't understand why you are so concerned about us selling a lot of cars. I strongly FEEL that we are doing what we ought to be doing and to the best of our ability. I realize we don't sell a lot of cars, but those to whom we do sell them are very satisfied. Also, they have a good understanding of a car and I am sure will be able to take very good care of it.

In fact, in several of your recent letters you have indicated that you are not completely satisfied with what we're doing here in our agency. I'd like to take a few moments to explain some things that I feel you obviously don't quite understand. Or evidently have forgotten.

This may be a long letter, but I think we need to come to an understanding. This letter should help you to understand my position much better, and to get a feel of the direction the agency is taking. I really feel the details of this letter will help bring you to our point of view that we are really doing a good job even though our bottom line doesn't look too good from year to year and our sales keep declining every year. But numbers are not everything in life.

If you recall, a few years ago we borrowed over \$800,000.00 to put up the new building for the agency. We appreciate so much your backing us in this effort. I know that there have been times when we could only pay interest on the loan, but now we are to the point where we are able to make most of the complete payments. As you know, last year we only missed two payments and the way things are going, it may be that we won't miss any this year.

It certainly is one of the finest buildings in the area as far as car agencies are concerned. We have endeavored to keep it this way. We have tried to keep traffic down throughout the building as much as possible, and to help in every way that we can think of to keep it in tip-top shape.

We have a full-time custodian who keeps things neat all the time. I appreciate your mentioning in one of your letters that perhaps we could cut back on the custodial care and devote more money to paying off the debt. I referred your suggestion to the Building Maintenance Committee, and they gave a lot of thought to it. Now, I want you to know they weren't opposed to your idea, but they ended up feeling that the beauty of the building is very important. After all, a lot of love went into the building of it and we certainly don't want to let it just run down. I am sure you would agree with this.

You asked how it is that we're able to make payments on the agency when we are selling so few cars? Well, I think you will be interested in knowing that our rummage sale last month was one of the best that we have ever had. We took the one section that was designed for service and have turned it into a room where we can have rummage sales two or three times a year. It's amazing how many of the community come in and buy items at this sale. It gives them opportunity to see our wonderful agency and to see what we're trying to do. We've had many express the fact that they are astounded at how well kept our agency is, and that we must be wonderful people. Just makes me feel so good when they speak so affectionately of our professional staff. You know our staff is just like one big happy and contented family.

There is one thing I might as well get off of my chest right now. It has been bugging me for some time, and you know me, I tell it like it is. So here goes. I don't see how you can expect our professional staff to have sold many cars last week in that every one of them pitched in and helped with the rummage sale. Some went to different homes and picked up items that were given to us. Others helped sort them, and you should have seen the staff having the time of their life, pricing the items for the rummage sale. Here is a clever idea. You should be proud of us for this one. We let the wives of the staff members come in early and look things over. And this is the good part. A lot of them buy something right on the spot. We find this helps keep up morale of the staff to give their wives this pre-sale opportunity. It is surprising how many useful items they find here. Then we have discovered there is a double whammy blessing to letting them in early. If it turns out they buy something they don't really need, they bring it back for the next rummage sale and this enables us to sell it again. So really, it is obvious we never lose anything by treating our staff in this fashion. We feel it is a good move for public relations among them. And you can't deny a happy staff is a good thing, now can you?

I am sorry to say that Sales Personnel folk were unable to attend the sales meeting you held last week for our area. They were just too tied up with the rummage sale. You may have a hard time believing how much time a rummage sale consumes, that is, a good and successful rummage sale. And we wouldn't do any other kind. But it does take a lot of time, believe me. We hope to make up for the missed meeting on how to sell cars in the weeks that lie ahead.

Another thing that we've found very helpful is that we've been using part of the showcase area for bake sales. It's amazing how many people pass the agency each day, and on our bake sale days a number of them stop and chat and pie cookies, cakes, brownies, etc. Although a few of the wives of the staff have complained, most of them

are more than willing to continue to bake for our bake sales. Then we use the money, and it does build up very fast, to make payments toward our debt.

One of the things we have endeavored to do is to train our staff quite well. As you know, we have one of the best-trained professional staff personnel in the area. We have sought to send them to all the schools that we possibly can to keep them up to date on the finest of auto history and service.

One of the things that we are doing that a lot of the agencies selling a lot of cars aren't doing is that we're offering classes for the community as far as automobiles are concerned. We've had some wonderful classes about the history of automobiles. You'd be surprised how many people know so little about the history of automobiles. And further I think you'd be surprised how many people really get enthused about automobiles once they understand the history and the background of the auto industry. Now, a lot of them haven't bought cars at our agency, but they've told us they really appreciated the classes. I still can't figure out why they go to those other agencies to buy the cars and why they have purchased so many of them. I think probably those other agencies are principally just a bunch of hype without any real depth concerning cars. I really think they are just after the peoples' money, and this way of treating people really turns me off. I can't stomach it.

Some of the other classes we have offered have dealt with understanding how a carburetor works, and how they have evolved through the years. We've had classes on tire building as well as some really informative classes on the paint that goes on autos and how it is applied. One of the best-received classes was the one we had on the catalytic converters. You know that very few people understand how a catalytic converter works? I was amazed at this. How ignorant can people be? It just drives me almost nuts sometimes. And as to this class, although there weren't too many enrolled, maybe a half dozen or so, those who participated were really enthusiastic. I just know that they are going to be better people as they have come to understand why the standards on pollution and how the catalytic converter was developed and what it does for the modern car. You could just see the glow on their faces when these truths were revealed to them. Even though some of them were driving old cars that don't have catalytic converters on them, we know that if they ever buy a new one they are going to really understand what they are getting. Some of the staff has hinted at the fact that perhaps they ought to trade their old cars in on a new one, but I want you to know that we have made no overt effort to get them to do so. We certainly don't want to alienate them.

However, it's hard for me to understand how one of them the other day went down to another agency and would you believe, the salesman talked him into trading in his old car and getting a new one. I never dreamed that he was on the verge of doing that or we would have asked him while he was at our agency. However, he did stop by to show us his new car and we have remained friends. He feels that we have a wonderful agency and he said he wanted to feel free to drop by any time he could and also to participate in some of our courses we have planned for the future. We told him we'd love to have him and

are just glad that he has gotten a new car. We didn't want to offend him in case sometime in the future he might be buying another car and we might help him out.

You mentioned about our staff doing more as far as taking people for a test drive and trying to influence them to buy one. Do you realize what this could lead to? I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, but the rumor, well it's not even a rumor, everybody knows it, but one of the salesman in the neighboring agency took a woman for a test drive a few weeks ago. Before they returned, they had intimate, very intimate relations. Can you believe it? We have constantly stressed that we don't want any of our staff members lowering their morals at all. We would rather not sell cars at all than lower the standards of our professional staff. And I feel that it's just really a terrible shame that this salesman did such a thing. And worse yet, that one of their customers would permit him to do so. Believe me, the story is that he did not rape the woman, but that it was common agreement on their part.

So, one of the things that I have really striven to do is to make sure that every staff member, especially every sales person, be of the highest integrity. We want to have morals beyond reproach here. Also, we try to warn the staff and to help them to spot people who might be lewd individuals. In fact, if there's the slightest thought in the mind of any one of them that the buyer might be trying something funny during the test drive, we just tell them to shy away from even taking them out to test drive the car. After all, selling a car isn't so important that we have to lower our morals to do so. I'm sure you understand that in this age in which so much is being done which is lewd and immoral. I think you ought to be proud of an agency that has a moral reputation such as ours. We simply do not associate with low class people. Granted, our salesmen don't sell many cars, but at least they are upright and their integrity is beyond question. I know you can say it was "one" incident among thousands of test drives. True, but you never know when there might be another one. We just want to keep away from any such possibility, and I think you will agree we are wise in taking this position.

One of the things that we try to watch is to make sure someone does not just precipitously purchase a car. We try to take the soft-sell approach and lead them into it gently. One of the things that is really puzzling to us is how some of the agencies are selling two, three and sometimes four vehicles to one family. We never want to do that. You know, you can get a person just too excited about cars and they can get carried away with them. And if this permeates the whole family, we feel that there might be real problems. Can you imagine what it would do to the family if they get too many cars and get too enthused about them? We try to set limits as far as we are concerned and if not directly, at least indirectly, discourage people who might end up this way. We feel that there are some people who can, in time, be brought to the place where they will see the value of having a car and really be helped with it. Those are the kind we are looking for, not this mass selling frenzy business.

You asked about our weekly Old Jalopy Youth Club we were so excited about, and if we would be willing to help other agencies get one started. Well, we did away with that. It sounded real good to begin with and frankly got off to a good start. It wasn't long until

one problem after another developed. It finally got to the place we felt it just wasn't worth our time and effort.

We discovered some of the youth were really hot-rod ding with their cars. Also, they were leaving things in a mess after they got through working with their cars here. Our service manager told us that week after week the service area and other rooms were dirty and messed up like you wouldn't believe because of those kids. And of course, as you would expect, the custodian was getting more uptight all the time. Ordinarily he would only have to clean those areas about once a month, but with the rowdy youth around it was weekly. That was just too much.

The youth didn't seem to have any respect for the place, and yet they wanted to come here more and more all the time. We had to wax the floors every other week and the way we have it now, we only have to wax them about twice a year. This saves us a lot of money. Also, there were grease spots getting on the floor, tools left laying around, and people were beginning to talk a bit about our agency and how clean it used to be. So we felt that it just wasn't worth it to have the youth hanging around here. Sure they bought parts from us and a few new cars each year, but they were more trouble than they were worth. And we knew some of them didn't have enough money to buy a car if they wanted to.

I might as well get these other things off my chest regarding that Youth Club fiasco. A few months after the youth started to meet here they started to have some of their Black friends come. Now we are not opposed to Black people. I have some friends that I see occasionally and they are Black. In fact a few years ago we had a Black family buy a car from us. It still puzzles me that they were only back for service once. Would you believe they drove 12 miles to an agency in a nearby town to get service? Sounds nuts to me, and especially after we were so nice to them. I still wonder why they did that.

And the entangled soap opera goes on and on. In addition to the Blacks we then had some Hispanics start coming to the group. Now I am not putting them down, because you and I both know there are also white trash. And sure enough, some of that white trash drifted in here. I still don't know how all those kids were attracted to each other. Beats me! One evening I spotted three boys I had never seen before. I asked them their name and where they lived. When they told me in the South East end of town I thought I was going to lose it. That's where our white trash live, if you know what I mean. You know every city has a white trash part as well as the part where the Blacks live. And the two are usually not too far apart. In fact, I had to go into my office and take a couple of valium. My nerves had just about had it with this group anyhow, and this was the final straw that broke the camels back for me. And, frankly I did not feel any activity for youth that were never going to amount to much any way was worth ruining my health.

I want you to know that as these, shall we be kind and say less than desirable elements, began to drift in more and more we went the second mile to protect our building. I demanded extra locks on all the doors and tightened up security just in case. There was never anything taken while they were here, but you never know.

Well, I was not going to tell you this one, but I might as well since I have mentioned a number of other problems. You see, I want the other agencies to realize what they are in for if they get youth coming with their cars. Oh it sounds good, but they should look at all angles. Here is the crowning point for us. Oh good Lord help us. It is even hard for me to talk about it. I found out one of the boys was gay. Upon discovering this I got real close to a couple of the youth. You know I am pretty good with kids when I want to be. After I had gained their confidence I warned them never to go to the rest room alone with him. And also to warn the other boys not to be caught alone with him. I didn't come right out and call him a homo, but they knew what I was talking about. I'm sure if we would have let them continue here he would have half or more of them living the gay life in few months. You know how those people are.

Now, don't get the wrong idea. We love kids and we know there were some good kids among them, but looking at the whole picture we didn't need rift raft around here. And the rift raft out weighed the good, that's for sure.

So we just, in a nice, and you might say subtle way, let them know we wanted them to leave and to meet elsewhere. We sure wouldn't come right out and tell them the truth. This might offend them. We still want to be friends with them.

Now, we weren't mean or harsh with them, but we did let them know that we wanted them to do things a bit differently. And, you might say, they just decided on their own to leave. But we sure didn't try to talk them out of leaving once they had made the decision to do so. Of course, we haven't had many young people coming around to buy cars from us since, but then, that isn't the worst thing in the world, is it?

Before you start passing judgment on us, I think you ought to know that in our part of the country a lot of the young people are using cars for purposes that cars were never intended to be used for at any time. They tell us that some of the parties they've been holding, they just fill those cars with young people and take off to one of their homes. And we are sure there is truth to the reports of drinking at the homes and smoking of pot. And I don't know whether it's true or not, but they even tell us some of the young people commit immoral acts in the back seat of their cars. If you know what I mean? Just between us I can believe that this is probably true knowing some of those youth the way that I do. As you know, I love young people and know them pretty well. So I don't put this back seat stuff beyond them.

After all the effort we have put into making this a moral agency you would think they would have more respect for a car than to do something like that in it. Well, the bottom line is we feel that our agency doesn't want to be a part of such things. And if the young people are going to get immoral kicks out of life through the use of cars, we certainly don't want to be a part of it. I'm glad they are out of our hair. I'm sure you can understand our position here. Would you want an agency that had a reputation of some wild youth hanging around? My guess is you want respectable agencies. And I assure you that you can count on us to keep this one that way.

You asked about our service department, and I'd like to say that we would challenge anyone to find a cleaner, neater service department. In fact, a few weeks ago for some reason we sold a few cars. And the service manager told us later that by the time he got them in condition for the customer, then made the minor adjustments afterwards, that it just became almost impossible for him to keep his bins straight and neat and to get everything done as far as his paper work was concerned. He said that really, from his viewpoint, it would be better if we didn't have so many cars to service. He also said that the staff seemed to become a bit more disgruntled because there was more to do and more of a frustration in getting it done. Things just didn't go as smoothly. He likes to have time to really explain to customers concerning the parts and what they really do and that you should buy only the specially designated parts from the factory. You know there are a lot of people who run off to these cut-rate places to buy spark plugs, and other parts and equipment. If they only knew, what they were really getting for their money! We try to uphold the highest standards of material and workmanship. True, we can't take care of very many people, but those we do take care of, we can be proud of how well we do it. I've never seen our service manager more content than what he has been the last few weeks. He hasn't been swamped with work and every night before he goes home every thing is in the proper place and the place is in as neat as a pin condition. Several times I have commended him for a job well done, and this seems to inspire him to be even neater. I learned a long time ago that a few words of encouragement goes a long ways.

You asked whether or not we have any new people coming in as customers? I wouldn't necessarily call them customers, but we do have some new people who stop by from time to time. But frankly, there aren't too many of them who buy a car or who return. And I can't understand that either because I don't know how anyone could be nicer to them. We, in no way, try to make them feel that we are trying to pressure them. We don't even ask them to buy a car and certainly do not expect them to make an on the spot decision. We feel, after all, it's not our responsibility nor should we presume upon a visitor by trying to bring him to the point where he makes a hurried decision concerning a new car. Nothing upsets me more than to hear of some of these agencies that really come out and point-blank ask people to buy a car. In fact, I've heard of some who actually want the people to make the decision on their first visit. They take them right into the room and talk to them personally and try to talk them into buying a car. Now, can you believe that? This is just simply beyond what I fell is the highest level of sales.

If you think we are not aware of our visitors I want you to know that we are. In fact, we have each of them sign our register. Yes, we get all their names and phone numbers. Our lack of staff, and lack of time, makes it impossible for us to follow up on them, but we do have their names and addresses and phone numbers just in case we ever do want to check on any of them. By the way the registration pads we use are beautiful. I think this is one of the main reasons we never have any trouble getting our visitors to sign them.

Here's a neat little trick we keep to ourselves, but use to our advantage. They don't know it, but their signing the register expands our mailing list for our rummage sales and other activities. We don't tell them that, of course, when they sign in, but it is sure in the back of our minds. Clever, don't you think?

Granted there were 7,032 imported cars sold last year in our area, and we only sold 11 of them, but one thing we do know, those to whom we sold them are very satisfied and we feel they're going to continue to feel at home here at the agency.

You speak of our profit and loss statement. We will be getting it to you soon. We're still working on it. We haven't received the final payment from the T-shirts that were sold with our agency name on them. It's surprising to us, if you really go out and talk to your friends, how many of them need T-shirts. And, we've sold quite a few of them. We did order 500 because you get a break there as far as price is concerned. At the rate we're going we will soon have only 300 left. So, we'll soon break even as far as the cost and then the last 200 is pure profit for us. Some of the people have said that a few of the neighbors have reacted that some of our staff have come around trying to sell them T-shirts. But as you well know that happens. You can't please everybody all the time. It is just part of selling. I just try to keep the staff enthused and tell them to "hang in there" because we've got a mortgage payment coming up soon and somehow we've got to take care of it. We have got to keep pushing those T-Shirts. Selling cars can wait for the moment. We can always sell a car.

By the way, when are the new service manuals coming out because we're trying to enlist people now for the course dealing with the new transmission. I have heard that the new manual has some excellent material about it. I think that's probably going to be one of the most exciting courses that we've ever offered here in the agency.

I certainly reacted strongly to your statement that there is a possibility you might take the agency from us. Why, if you do, what are we going to do with this building? One sure thing, we're not going to give it up. We've come to love this building and we're going to stay here come hell or high water. And if you decide to take the agency, then we'll just have to work out something. I'm sure there's some good use we can put to the building. And one sure thing we are going to continue to meet here with our classes. And if you feel that just threatening us with taking away the agency is going to make us get out there and sell cars, you've got another think coming. Believe me!

I know that selling cars would enable us to earn enough profit to be able to get the debt paid off. Sure, if we would do what some of the agencies do elsewhere we could have the debt paid off probably in a few short years. But I would rather have the debt than to feel that I have coerced somebody into making a decision concerning a car. So as far as profit is concerned, net gain as far as sales are concerned, we don't live for that. In fact, we've gotten to the place we don't even watch numbers anymore. Let the greedy dealers be the number readers. In fact, if you want to know the truth about it, these number watchers are people I can't stand. It seems they are really more interested in counting how many new cars they are selling than they are actually helping people. I don't buy that philosophy and I am not ashamed to admit it.

I know you mentioned in your letter how cars help people a great deal. And that illustration you used of the lady being rushed to the hospital because the family had a car and was able to do it and it saved her life is a good one. It's a worthy illustration. But I

think that's sort of becoming a bit emotional, don't you? And after all, we don't live on emotions, and to use one of those sad illustrations is sort of an underhanded way to get at a person anyhow.

Well, I do hope you'll come down and see for yourself what we're trying to do. Please, just don't look at numbers, and at dollars, but look at the people and the fine, wonderful feeling we have among our professional staff here at the agency. And you mentioned about coming, perhaps in a week or two. May I suggest that if you possibly could, come a week Thursday. That's the night we're having the quarterly spaghetti supper for the agency and I think you'd really enjoy it. Already they have sold several tickets and it looks like it's going to be bigger than ever. So just come and enjoy it with us and perhaps afterwards, while we're doing dishes, we will have some time together.

Well, I hope these insights have been of help to you, and helps you to know what we're striving to do in the agency and how we really hope to help people.

You mentioned to me concerning all the advertising material that you've sent. True, we haven't used much of it, but there's been good reason for that. We didn't want to clutter up our workroom and other space with all those signs. Banners just turn me off and I feel that many people would be offended by seeing them pasted around. I admit that they are beautifully printed and everything, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we ought to be using them. And as far as newspaper advertisements are concerned, do you realize how expensive that is? I don't care if you did mention one agency that spent \$1,000 advertising a few months ago, but increased their sales over \$10,000. Keep in mind that they were in a city that has recently had a business boom. And you don't understand, in our city I really don't think this would work. Advertising just wouldn't do it for us. And, of course, I should not over look sharing the stark reality with you that by the time we –pay the professional staff, make our mortgage payments, and keep the building looking neat and in good repair, we have no money left for advertising or anything else. If ever we have any extra we might do some of those things you recommend, but frankly I feel there is slim chance of that happening.

And another thing, I didn't appreciate the fact of your pointing out that our sales people ought to get on the phone and call people and perspective customers. Do you realize how irritating that can be? People don't want to be called about doing something. So we just sort of play that cool and haven't called. Now if they happen to call in, that's a different matter. We're right on them. But as far as putting forth effort and trying to call them, to stir up business, I just don't feel we ought to be doing that. Sure doesn't sound professional to me.

And I think this is especially true of trying to go personally to enlist people to buy a car. I think that would be the lowest form of promotion and sales an agency could do. Why people would feel we were almost like the Jehovah Witness religious freaks. It makes me shutter just to think of doing such a thing. If people aren't interested enough to come in and ask us about a car, we certainly aren't going to go out and disturb them otherwise. We feel if they really want one, they're going to be around. And I know a

friend of mine who is a salesman that went personally and called on a family. They became so mad at him that they said they wouldn't ever buy a car from him. What for the life of me I will never understand is that about a week later they went down to his agency and bought a car. They bought it from a different sales person, but doesn't it blow your mind to think they went to the very place they said they would never go to?

I really feel that is just a freak event. I think that beyond a shadow of a doubt that personal contact really in the long run probably does more harm than good. We've just decided to cut it out altogether. To be honest with you, we never have done it. Really. In fact, the other day one of our salesman tossed out the thought that maybe we should do away with the visitor registration pads since we never use them. I think most of us felt this was going too far. After all, we have used those registration pads ever since we opened and I see no good reason to discontinue their use. They don't take up much storage space, so why quit doing it? So we nipped that idea in the bud, and I am glad we did. I personally feel if you are going to change something you better be mighty sure what you are doing. And I think he was just yakking to hear himself talk. After all, if it not broke, don't fix it. And the registration pad ritual has, in a sense, really become a part of our lifestyle around here and it sure won't hurt to continue using them. I'm confident he got the drift of our feelings about his uncalled for suggestion for change. The chances are it will be a long time before he blurts forth some other silly suggestion like this one.

You referred to that surge of sales that we had about 9 months ago. May I say that that happened principally because we had a couple of new salespeople on the force that we hadn't checked into closely. I should have discerned that they really were not professional, but in the rush of things I let them slip by and join our sales force. They were very enthusiastic and their enthusiasm gave us a sudden surge. And it took a good while to try to get across to them that we just don't sell that way. We're not a bunch of fanatics around here. And their enthusiasm was just getting to all of us. In fact, they weren't even willing to teach one of the classes. They said they were too busy selling and talking to people about buying cars. Granted, they sold a lot of them. But they didn't do anything else around the agency. They even wanted us to have the girls write up their orders because they said they could do more if the girls took care of the paper work and let them free to talk to the people. Now how ridiculous can you be?

All of our professional sales people have always done all the work themselves. After all, that sort of keeps them closer to the people that they sell to. We feel professional staff should be doing the paper work and every thing else. What do the women know about such stuff? After all selling cars is too important to just leave it to amateurs. And I know that it looked like these two new ones were doing a job, but frankly when you looked at all sides of the situation it was obvious they had a lot of short comings. Frankly, they became real problems for us. For one thing they were causing a lot of division and dissension with our professional staff. I could go on and on about them, but I don't want to hang out our dirty linen.

I will point out just one more very important thing about them. They knew very little about the history of cars and could care less. All they wanted to do, it seems to me, was to

make a fast buck. I should have asked more questions of them prior to letting them start to work for us. After they had been working for a few weeks I did ask them a few very rudimentary questions. They couldn't answer any of them and left the impression they weren't going to try to learn either. Would you believe neither one of them knew the reason Henry Ford gave for raising the wages of his workers to \$5.00 an hour. Nor did they know when the V-8 motor was first introduced on the market. And this one really surprised me. They didn't even know who invented the sunroof for cars and the year it was invented. As if their ignorance were not enough they told me it didn't make any difference to them and that they weren't at all interested in what they called this "stuff." I cut them off when they started to speak disparagingly of our classes. By that time I had had enough. Stupid people. I couldn't take them any longer. This was just too much. They had to go!

Yes, suffice to say they caused such a ruckus, and so much tension, that we finally had to get rid of them. You might say it was almost getting to the place where it was becoming obvious it was either, them, or us. If we would have kept them a while longer everything would have been changed around here. And what amazed me was that some in the community liked this flamboyant approach. So to preserve us, and the agency, we fired them.

Well, we didn't exactly fire them, but we did let them know where we stood. Finally and none too soon, one turned in his resignation and went down to another agency. They tell me he's selling a lot of cars, but he's so enthusiastic and so fanatical that I think in the long run the people are going to catch on to him. The other resigned about 10 days later. He too is still out bothering people. They tell me he is not selling cars any more, but that he is selling for some mutual fund company. Really doing good, I hear. But my guess is it will only be a flash in the pan. And then his true colors will show. We have steady plodders in our agency. They don't sell many cars, but believe me, you can always depend on them. If anyone walks through these doors they're right there to very courteously and professionally be of what assistance they can. They leave no stone unturned to enlist them in our classes to study the heritage of cars and other things to help people really come to appreciate cars.

You recall that we sent half of our sales force to the company sales convention last year. That was a mistake, if we have ever made one. And when they came back and reported we just decided right then and there we are never going to send anyone again. It seemed that all that was talked about was sales, sales, sales. Money, Money, Money. Now, when we attend the service convention, that's different. You don't hear all about sales and money and tricking customers. But they take time and calmly and coolly explain the intricacies of the car and how they work and how to take care of them and how to service them.

This is what our sales people like. And really they come back properly informed and not with hyped-up enthusiasm. They see the merit and benefits of continuing to teach the people who come in for the classes and to help them. So we have decided to put all of our extra effort, money, and time into attending the service clinics and to forego the sales

conventions. We've had more good salesmen ruined by these sales conventions than anything else. They always become an irritant in our organization once they've attended one of these conventions. Their enthusiasm is such that it just doesn't fit in with the rest of us, and just makes us feel uncomfortable. You know, they sort of come back leaving the impression they are better than the rest of us. Do you ever notice that among these enthusiastic salesmen? They sort of act like they are just better than other people. And nothing makes me more angry than somebody who feels he is better than everyone else and who is constantly striving to get ahead. It just galls me to the core.

I look forward to your next personal visit. I am sure you will see first hand that what I have reported to you in this letter is true. I think you will like what you see. And by the way, if you do have a complaint or shall we say, "drastic" suggestion, please do not mention it in the presence of any of the others here at the agency. Just tell it to me and I will relay it to them at the proper time and proper place. Do you get what I mean?

Oh, and this is also true of any literature you may want our agency to consider. Please don't directly give it to any one here. I prefer that you discreetly give it to me first. I feel that I should carefully review all literature before passing it on to any of our staff or other workers. I feel a tremendous burden to protect our staff, if you know what I mean, and don't want the wrong material to get into their hands. It must fit in with every thing else around here. Thanks for doing this for me. I must keep all things under my control, or we might have more problems around here than we bargained for. See you soon.

Oh, one more thing. We may not be selling many cars, but I want to put it straight to you. Regardless of your veiled threats, our agency is not going anywhere. You will not shut us down. And we are not changing, because we know what is best for us. We are here and we are staying here as we are. I will personally see to that.

Affectionately Yours,

*A. Claude*

PS: I can't believe I neglected to mention our Annual Agency Choir Concert. This is big. In fact, sometimes I get the feeling we are known for our music program, more than for our selling cars. You talk about time and energy. This consumes both in huge amounts. Practice, practice, practice, because if you are going to do something you should do it right and you must keep focused to pull off this Concert. However, we feel it is worth it. It involves a number of our staff, their family members, and friends. It is amazing to me how many are willing to give so much time and effort in the area of music. We hold the Concert right here at the Agency. We simply park the new and used cars elsewhere for the evening and use our large parking lot. We rent the chairs, and of course, the stage and other decorations we keep and use year after year. It would be worth your time to come some year and hear us. And by the way, I don't mean to brag but several in the community have told me that I have a beautiful voice. This is one of the nicest things I have heard and I am pleased to be able to share it with the community.

Now you are probably thinking, do you sell any cars through all of this expense and effort? I can't really say for sure. But look at it this way, even if we sold one car it would be worth it. By the way we don't put forth direct effort to sell cars that night. We feel it is, shall we say, a soft sell approach. Music brings people, and some of these people just might catch on about buying a car from us.

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