



True stories of throwing
good money after bad

My MONEY Pit

I don't know who came up with this topic, but it produced a good number of stories from you all about where you wasted your money. It's encouraging to see that as many women throw good money after bad as men do.

My money pit has cars in it. I always end up paying too much to buy and maintain a car, and after I sell it, I still owe money on it somehow. A friend of mine and I were having lunch locally one day and we saw the two mechanics who maintained a car of mine that I eventually traded in, and my friend asked them how they stayed in business after I moved to another shop.

Thanks to everyone who sent in stories. Next month we'll run your accounts of lessons you learned the hard way. [Deadline was June 15.] For the remaining topics in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 20.

— Michael E.C. Gery, editor

For more of your stories, visit our Web site at
www.carolinacountry.com



THE WOOD-BURNING HELICOPTER

My husband has always had "ideas," one of which was a wood-burning, self-propelled wooden helicopter. He is always reading articles about different ways to build and try new projects. The first I knew of this project was when he began bringing in large sheets of plywood. When I inquired what he was doing, he informed me of his intentions. Of course, I had a lot of questions, and he was very convinced this was a great idea. He worked diligently on this project for about a week or two. (I have blocked much of the cost from my memory.) The next thing I knew I was hearing all this hammering and tearing of wood. He had begun construction on this project only to find out this helicopter could not be removed through the basement doors.

Now I understand men will be men with their big boy toys. But when you are just starting out with two small children and only one income, all you can think about is that money going down the money pit.

We still have a good laugh about it just the same.

Lee Anna Hardin

Clyde

Haywood EMC

THE DOG RIDING THE SHORT BUS

Born the day before our anniversary, Banjo was destined to compete with my main man for attention and resources. He is what you call the "special occasion pup."

Waiving all financial expenditures for holidays and special occasions for 2001, I requested instead personal financial credits toward a male bull terrier. My husband agreed to pay "show price" for a "rescue" pup who won me over.



Emergency care after eating six cups of gravel, visits to the doggy psychologist for behavioral issues and an operation to build a knee, consumed all my special occasion credits for 2002.

I continued to justify our unexpected expenditures by utilizing this system in 2003 when Banjo needed another knee built as well as corrective surgery. My sister had him micro-chipped for Christmas to assure that I would not misplace my "special occasion pup" in 2004. It has worked. For Valentines Day, my birthday and Easter, I have requested credit consideration. The pup refuses to walk our hardwood floors throughout our home which is leading to further professional advice.

The dog that my husband says "rides the short bus" continues to be as sweet to me as a box of chocolates with his marshmallow head and jelly heart. However, when people say that you can't put a price on love, let's be honest. Oh, yes you can! To the tune of about \$6,000.

*Jill Couch Lambert
Lexington
EnergyUnited*

FRED'S CAFE

Built in 1971, Fred's Cafe went up for sale when the owner was diagnosed with cancer. My husband Dean, cousin Anne, her husband Frank and I bought it.

The health department grade posted the day of the sale read 93.5, so how bad could it be?

With no building codes in 1971, the builders cut corners. Only two lights in the front worked. The hood covering the grill and deep fryer was aluminum, and there were no fire-extinguishers. Both bathrooms were dark and tiny. Using the commode required feeling for the seat, and then sitting sidewise. There was a pond of sewage under the building. The wiring and gas hook-ups were scary.

We spent almost three months cleaning, removing, replacing, repairing, re-plumbing, redoing, repainting, repapering and refinancing.

Within six months after opening, we replaced the compressor for the walk-in freezer. And someone broke in and took groceries, money and our cash register.

For five years, we watched money go like sand through an hour-glass. We replaced the heat pump, re-plumbed the

septic system again, graveled the parking lot, rebuilt the walk-in freezer and replaced the compressor again. We sold it in February 2004. We said thank God and good riddance!

*Carol Caudill Winebarger
Traphill
Surry-Yadkin EMC*

THE CAR

"Don't look a gift horse in the mouth," or "don't be ungrateful when given something," comes from estimating a horse's age by how worn its teeth are. And now we know that we should have at least peeked under the "horse's" hood.

For only \$1,000, my parents sold us The Car, which had run 100,000 miles flawlessly. It was a loss to them and a favor to our young family.

When the engine went, we were sick, but we decided that putting in a rebuilt engine would make The Car like new.

Not long after, the transmission went. We had invested so much money in The Car, we couldn't afford to get rid of it then, could we?

The AC followed suit, an eight-week repair mess.

We have lost track of miscellaneous other repairs, but after sinking \$7,000 into The Car, the heater core went out, we admitted defeat. The heater core would have been \$700 because it was buried in the dash. We sold The Car for \$500.

Lesson learned: ALWAYS look a gift horse in the mouth, or at least check its track record in Consumer Reports. (And if this story is published, at least some profit will have come from The Car.)

*Debbie Ingalls
Stanley
EnergyUnited*

THE YARD SALE

A few years back, we had a yard sale. It was the first one we had had in a long while so we decided to make it worth it and make a profit.

In the past, not many people had stopped at our yard sales, and we ended up taking home half of what we wanted to sell. So we went to Home Depot and bought a few plastic tables to set up. We loaded up the truck and headed to my

grandparents' house, since they lived on the street. We had hundreds of dollars worth of stuff for sale and were really excited.

Well, two hours passed and we had had *two* customers. We looked around for what we had sold and added everything up and we ended up with \$7. Take away gas to get to my grandparents' house, price tags and those four tables we bought, and we ended up with \$121.34 in the hole.

*Audrey Gilmore
Hope Mills
South River EMC*

THE DECK OUT BACK

In 1995, we had a deck built on the back of our house. It cost us \$2,500. My husband loved to sit on that deck and drink his beer and watch sports. Sometimes we would even sleep on it at night.

One weekend my husband and my nephew were watching a basketball game on TV on the deck. They were whooping and hollering, having a good time. My daughter and I were in the kitchen making sandwiches when I heard a loud noise. Looking out the window, I saw the deck was crashing to the ground. I laughed so hard I wet my pants. The TV went flying in the air. My husband and nephew were holding on for life. My daughter and I had a good laugh that day.

The deck was destroyed. Boy, was that a waste of money. The deck lasted for two weeks.

*Alice Moore
Bunnlevel
South River EMC*

THE BOOK OF KNOWLEDGE

Bill and I were married in June 1948. We were very frugal, especially Bill. The first year we were married, Bill wouldn't let me spend any money except for our bare necessities. We didn't even have a refrigerator. We used my parents' next door. We both worked at MCAS



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Cherry Point Marine Base and made a pretty good salary, but Bill kept saying we were in for a big depression.

Then one evening, an encyclopedia salesman knocked on our door selling encyclopedias and volumes of literature books. We fell lock, stock and barrel for his gift of gab and bought the whole set.

When they were delivered, it took one-fourth of our little living room to store them. This was many years before we had children, and by the time we did have children the encyclopedias were obsolete.

We did learn a lesson from this because since that time we have never bought anything from a door-to-door salesperson (except from school kids).

Betty Ward Motes

Newport

Harkers Island EMC

THE HIGHCHAIR

I was seven months pregnant when I first attended a baby safety class. The

leader began by showing newspaper articles and statistics of children injured or killed by falling out of highchairs. I was sitting next to my rich friend. She wrote out a check, no problem. I knew we didn't have the money but my baby was not going to suffer; I put ours on the Visa.

My husband nearly had a baby of his own when I told him the news. I explained that the feeding table was also a bathtub, swing and chalkboard. I rationalized, "We will have it forever. We'll pass it on to our grandchildren."

The Babe Tenda served us well for our first child. We never did use the swing. By the time our second child came along, the bathtub was torn and no amount of scrubbing could sanitize the table. We still use it as a toddler table but I don't think our grandchildren will see it. Still, they will probably hear about the \$400 highchair.

Catherine Busan

Youngsville

Wake EMC



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Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures about these themes. If yours is chosen for publication, we'll send you \$50. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

SEPTEMBER 2004

"My Favorite Photo"

North Carolina people and places. Digital ones must be 300 dpi and printable size.

Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER 2004

"If I Were Governor of North Carolina"

What would you do?

Deadline: August 15

NOVEMBER 2004

"Mama's Cooking Was Always the Best"

Send a recipe, if you have one, and photos.

Deadline: Sept. 15

DECEMBER 2004

"Meeting Your Grandparents"

Something you never knew about a grandparent.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less. We retain reprint rights.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
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