

Amusing things to do while 'shopping' (09, 11, 13)

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Whenever I “go shopping” with Miriam, like many other men, I’m simply thrilled to be there at a wonderful social event, pleased to while away a few hours that I would otherwise waste watching sports at home on TV. Yes, I know that pools of men ritualistically collect around the “electronics section” of most big stores, but often it’s hard to watch the action, so I have learned to bring along a good book to read instead.



Will people read much in the future? We are becoming so passive, that audio books might become our prime source of “reading.” Newspapers are shrinking in size, and the articles are never lengthy because we are now in the age of the “sound bite,” which is on a rather rigorous diet, diminishing radically each year. Some people, I’m sure, read only the headlines. And now that I have entered the realm of hi-tech, I bring along my electronic book reader, which allows me, like Miriam to sample several books just as she tries myriad stores in the mall.

Unfortunately, the people who design malls do not want shoppers to sit for extended periods. You can accomplish only so much reading when sitting on uncomfortable benches purposely installed in malls to push one into the stores. Inevitably, even when I am uncomfortably set up and reading, another gentleman, no doubt “socially shopping” with his wife, comes along, sits beside me and asks what I am reading, then tries to tell me about his favorite book which happens to be a formulaic Harlequin or some weird Science Fiction offering, both of which I hate, so even the simple precaution of bringing a book does not alleviate undue waiting for my spouse.

Consequently, one needs to develop plan B, creative strategies for a retired husband when his wife is shopping and taking her sweet time, innocent behaviors to help pass the time. You are retired but you can still have fun. Here are a few techniques that work for me. Try them out.

If they dispense free food samples, remain in front of the queue and say: “I’m really hungry; that’s not enough. More please. More! I’m retired. Super size me! Super size me!” Make a big fuss when they run out. If in an American mall, tell them you are on food stamps. Tell them you voted for Obama. Be careful with that one.

After the food sortie, load up on boxes of condoms and when others aren't looking, place several boxes in older people's carts. Randomly “meet” these people later in aisles, and make a big deal out of their purchase. Tell them that you are impressed. Ask them how they do it. Are they on special supplements? Are they the ones that you saw in the Cialis commercial? Ask them for advice. Flash them the thumb’s up sign.

In the “sporting goods” department at American malls, ask to see their sharpest knives and biggest guns. Advise the clerk that your favourite movie is Taxi Driver, and then ask him or her where the anti-depressants are shelved.

A large, three-dimensional sign with the words "BIG SALE" in bold, red, block letters. The letters are slightly shadowed, giving them a 3D appearance as if they are sitting on a surface.

When an eager clerk probably on commission asks if they can help, demand to know their qualifications. Tell them that you have had issues with trust since your wedding. Ask: "Why can't people just leave me alone?" Then, smile and say, “I’m going over to sporting goods.”

Walk into the “house wares department.” Set every alarm clock to go off at 1 minute intervals. When each clock starts to ring, begin shouting, “I’m late. I’m late for a very important date!”

If you get tired of these antics, simply return to an uncomfortable bench and read a little more. The idea when shopping is to exercise one's mind or as the Nike folks say at the mall, "Just do it" which is a shorter version of "Use it or lose it."