

## Green Acres Promotion

*Topic:* Advertising Sales/Promotion

*Characters:* Cathy and Dave, a well-to-do professional couple  
Al, a real estate salesman

Cathy and Dave are young, upwardly mobile. They hold good professional jobs in downtown Chicago. One day Cathy received an invitation in-the mail, from a resort called Green Acres (GA), which was located near the mountains, about eight hour driving time from Chicago. The mailer invited the young couple to spend two nights free of cost and receive \$50 for expenses. All they had to do in return was to listen to a presentation, see a video, and take a tour of the resort for about two hours. Additional conditions included 24 hour advance booking of the room with 24 hour notice for cancellations, and a valid credit card. Green Acres would charge \$50 for a no show.

Although the letter made no mention of it, Cathy and Dave knew the invitation was a real estate promotion and guessed that the two hours with the GA staff meant a hard sell for a condo or a timeshare near a lake or a golf course, something they did not want. They decided to take the offer anyway in order to get a free vacation and arranged to visit GA the following weekend.

Cathy and Dave had a good time at GA. The only sour point of the trip was the last exchange they had with Al the salesman. At the end of the two hour presentation when Cathy and Dave had refused to buy any GA properties, Al looked at Dave in frustration and said, "If you knew you weren't going to buy any property here, why did you come? Our company spent \$300 to get you down here, and you have taken food off my family's table. What you did is immoral. Please don't do it again." At this Dave retorted, "Your letter was clear, there was nothing in it that said a purchase of real estate was involved, and we had no obligation to buy anything from you. Your invitation was unconditional, I don't owe you or your family anything and I resent what you just said." At the end of this uncomfortable exchange, Cathy and Dave left the room with an unpleasant feeling. But the unpleasant feelings did not last long because the drive back through the mountains was truly spectacular.

After a few days Cathy said to Dave, "You know, I'm still mad about what Al said to us at Green Acres. Should we write to his boss, or to the real estate board or to some government agency? You know, if we don't do something, some poor unsuspecting people might fall for their gimmicks!" Dave replied, "No, I don't think we should waste any time on this. Most people know, or should know what they are getting into-there are no free lunches! Besides if we complain, Al may lose his job and when we'll be really taking the food from his family's table!"

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