

Buzz Worthy

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Find Your Andy and Caitlyn

Ellen C. Wells



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I'm not a fan of painting. I don't mean the artistic stuff, putting paint to canvas and using art theory to create an exact replica of Mt. Fuji. What I mean is I'm not a fan of putting paint to plaster and simply covering a wall with a fresh color.

It makes me nervous. I get caught up in the perfection of it—the perfect brush strokes, absolutely no drips or runs, and heaven forbid if any pet hair sticks (with two cats and two dogs, I have a 100% chance of pet hair casually floating through the air). And the worst is at the very end when I peel the painter's tape off the wall. I can't take the stress.

So when I decided to paint one interior porch wall with an accent color, I approached the project with a) some lessons learned from past experiences (such as keep the pets locked in another room) and b) a promise to be kind to myself.

My first act of kindness was to get some advice. Rather than heading to my big box store (even though I have a 5% back loyalty card), I headed to my local Ace hardware store, the manager of which is a guy named Andy. He's what you expect a manager of a hardware store to be; i.e. Andy knows the solutions to all of life's problems, especially if life's current problems are screws for door knobs made in 1885, and anxiety brought up by the prospect of painting.

Alas, Andy wasn't on the store floor when I went in on Saturday morning. Young Caitlyn was staffing the paint department. She was an adequate substitute, for sure, advising me about how to choose a color: Pick three, paint the wall with the samples and see which one speaks to you. So I did. It turns out the color that spoke to me the most was one called Nantucket Blue.

I told her as much the following morning when I went back to Ace to purchase a gallon of Nantucket Blue. "You mean Old Blue Jeans," Andy chimed in as he was walking from one department to another and checking in on Young Caitlyn. He went on to explain that this brand of paint was required to call it by another name but it was indeed the same formulation. (That's why I love that guy; he's as into the trivia behind a thing as much as I am.)

Young Caitlyn punches in the numbers of the formulation into the magic paint machine and lots of Star Trek-type noises are emitted during the process. After the squirting of colors into the paint base, she puts the container onto the shaking machine and, once it's done, she pops the lid off.

Definitely not Old Blue Jeans. In fact, it was more the color of a faded pair of purple khakis I had in junior high. She

consulted Andy and between the two of them they blamed it on something a third person had done the day before. They made an adjustment or two to the magic paint machine and whirled up another batch. Still a color that no one on Nantucket would be caught dead wearing. Andy pushes up his sleeves, spends 10 minutes clearing out tubes and lines and filling up a bucket scrawled with the words “purge paint.” He attempts another batch of Nantucket Blue. Third time’s the charm.

What would have happened had I preferenced my big box 5% back over the customer service I knew I would receive at Ace? Would the mass merchandiser have checked the paint and reformulated? Or would I be told it would dry to the correct color? To me, the information about Old Blue Jeans alone is worth that 5% back. And Andy and Caitlyn caring that I receive the color I chose—well, that’s just invaluable. And it put me on the right path to painting.

The wall looks really good, by the way. Then again, I haven’t had the courage to peel away the painter’s tape yet. Maybe Andy makes house calls. **GP**