

The McNuggets 9-1-1 call

The story out of Ft. Pierce, Florida was a lot more salacious when the media reported a woman made repeated calls to 9-1-1 to complain that McDonald's ran out of McNuggets.

The story, perhaps fed and encouraged by McDonald's, made it appear that a customer, deprived of the chicken parts known as McNuggets, was so upset by not being able to buy the 10-piece, called 9-1-1 to register her complaint.

That would have been quite a testament to the popularity of the pieces/parts breast/skin chicken nuggets.

The problem is, the story wasn't true.

At least it wasn't totally true.

What happened was that the woman went to the McDonald's counter and placed her order for the 10-pc Chicken McNuggets. After paying for her order, she was told the store was out of McNuggets and she offered to accept some kind of burger as a substitute.

When told she couldn't, in effect, "trade down" and would have to choose something else, she asked for a full refund.

The clerk said "all sales are final" and wouldn't refund the customer's money. So, the customer called 9-1-1 (the transcript of her first call is in the box at the upper right). The 9-1-1 operator was obviously confused and perplexed by this non-emergency call coming to 9-1-1.

The stance of refusing a refund when money had just been accepted for an order that can't be filled is ludicrous and unsupportable - both as a public relations matter and legally.

Imagine ordering a pizza from a website, providing a credit card number to pay for it, and anxiously waiting delivery of the double pepperoni with extra cheese only to open the front door to a guy delivering an anchovies and tuna-topped pizza. When you tell the driver that you wouldn't eat that fish pizza with a gun held to your head, he says, "we're out of pepperoni. Enjoy!" and walks back to his rusted Gremlin. No refunds. All sales are final.

Obviously they can't do that. And it's not McDonald's policy to try to. The following statement was made by a regional manager for McDonald's. They didn't get to be as large and successful as they are by unreasonably trying to hold onto \$6.00 of a customer's money.

"Satisfying each and every customer that visits our restaurants is very important to us.

"Regarding this isolated incident, we apologize for the inconvenience caused.

"In the event that we are unable to fill an order, a customer should be offered the choice of a full refund or alternative menu items. We regret that in this instance, that wasn't the case.

"We want to correct our mistake. We will be sending the customer her refund, along with an Arch card for a complimentary meal on us.

"We never want to disappoint a McNuggets fan or any McDonald's customer.

"Customer satisfaction is our top priority."

That customer might not want a free meal from McDonald's after the unnecessary ruckus, the fault of McDonald's.

Certainly, the customer might have chosen another way to call for assistance. But, what's the first number you think of when you need help from the police? Of course, 9-1-1. Hell, here in Cheyenne, the T.I.P.S. line number is prominently displayed on billboards around town for people to call to report just seeing graffiti. If the police department itself could make a mistake like that, why not give a woman who couldn't get her money back from McDonald's a little slack?

The truth wasn't as interesting or funny as distorting the story. The woman was not calling 9-1-1 because there were no McNuggets. She called 9-1-1 because McDonald's wouldn't give her a full refund of her money when they couldn't fill her order. The tone of the customer's voice was courteous, as was the 9-1-1 operator, and at no time did the 9-1-1 operator tell her to hang up and try something else. Such as call the non-emergency number of the police department. In fact, the conversation ended with the 9-1-1 operator telling the customer that she'd send an officer. There were very long pauses in the conversation - on the operator's end. She just didn't know how to handle the odd call. But, neither party got agitated, angry or loud.

That's not as amusing a story but that's what happened. Frankly, I think a large percentage of Americans would have handled the disagreement exactly the same. What had happened amounted to theft by the McDonald's counter clerk. The customer could have charged that.

911 Operator: 9-1-1. Do you need police, fire or an ambulance?

McDonald's customer: Police.

911: Where?

Customer: The McDonald's on Delaware.

911: What's going on there?

Customer: I ordered a 10-piece chicken nuggets with a small fries and they said they didn't have any chicken nuggets and so I told her I wanted a McDoube with small fries and she told me I had to pick anything else off the menu because she can't refund me the difference out of the Meal. I told her to just give me all of my money back. And she told me she can't give me my money back either. I have to pick something ...

911: There's no manager there?

Customer: Ma'am?

911: You already spoke with the manager?

Customer: She says she is the manager. She said something about she just can't refund me my money or something. But she don't have the meal that I want. I wanted chicken nuggets. That's what she said - they didn't have that so I said give me a McDoube and refund me the difference and she said she can't do that so I told her to just give me all my money back and I don't want anything. Then she tells me she can't refund my money. But she don't have what I want and she can't force me to eat something if I don't want it.

911: (Note: After a 5 second pause.) What's your name?

(Note: Customer provides her name and the 9-1-1 operator, after some difficulty understand it, repeats it back to her. There was then a 12 second pause.)

911: Okay, your phone no. is 882-xxxx?

Customer: Yes.

911: All right. I'll send an officer.

Customer: Okay. Thank you.

(Note: The total duration of this call from pick-up by the 9-1-1 operator until both parties disconnected was approximately one minute and thirty-five seconds.)

The Jamie Kamai unsolved murder

A few weeks back, I was contacted by a relative of Jamie Kamai, telling me that a syndicated television show out of Chicago was interested in pursuing a story about the unsolved murder and asked if I would agree to speak with the producer.

That murder, as a reminder to readers, was committed in broad daylight, on College Avenue, just west of So. Greeley Highway, at a little past 8:00 am on June 21, 2001 - almost eight years ago.

The Cheyenne Herald has written extensively about the unsolved murder, a crime we cannot tolerate remaining unsolved when it was so blatant, so callous and so arrogant, not to mention so heartless. Jamie Kamai had two children in the car with him when he was gunned down, one an infant.

Our appeal for tips to help solve the murder brought contacts but still no solution. No one has been charged with that murder and that is unacceptable. Cheyenne and Laramie County cannot allow this murder to go to the cold case file forever. This murder was outside the city limits and the Laramie County Sheriff's Department has handled the investigation.

And, while they have been most cooperative in following every lead - and some of them are odd - the murder remains unsolved. Without providing all details, the LCSD has been willing to use

unconventional means to try to solve this case. It is a black eye for them to have an unsolved murder case of this magnitude still on the books. They have tried and are continuing to try to solve it.

My response when I was contacted was that I would want to be very careful about not stepping on the Sheriff Department's toes or disclosing any information given me in confidence - by them or anyone else. I offered to call the LCSD and seek their cooperation, which I did.

Bureaucracy moves slow - this person has to get permission from that person and that person has to clear it with an attorney, who may have to clear it with someone else. Looking back, I regret not offering my complete and unrestricted cooperation then. I do now.

If that offer is still open from Chicago - the TV program is seen in Cheyenne - I will do everything asked except appear on the show. I don't need the exposure and I wouldn't want people thinking that's why I would help. The hope I expressed to the Kamai family member was that the show would be seen where the killer is now living and that he may have told - even boasted to - another person about being involved in such a crime but they didn't believe him. Now they would

Maybe that would happen and a single call could crack this case. I will help.



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