

SHELL SHOCKED

The Absence of Mallomars

By Art Stevens

It all started at a Publix store in Fort Myers. I had drawn up a shopping list and was looking forward to satisfying all my taste buds. High on my list were Smucker's Cherry Preserves, Vita Herring, Amy's Macaroni and Cheese, and Mallomars.

I wheeled my cart through the aisles and plucked out all my favorites and was almost finished when I realized I hadn't been through the cookies aisle. I made a sharp left turn and almost knocked over an elderly lady who was deliberating on what tea bags to choose.

I looked for my Mallomars which were usually next to the fig newtons and vanilla wafers. They weren't on the top shelf as they usually are and thought they must have been relocated to another shelf. I looked far and wide, covering the same ground three or four times. I began to panic. Where were they?

Just then a Publix employee walked by and I asked her where the Mallomars are. She said that they are usually on the top shelf where I had previously searched. She couldn't find them either. She asked me to wait a moment so that she could check the inventory in the back of the store. She indicated that a fresh shipment in Mallomars had most likely arrived and needed to be stocked.

My confidence was returning. It must have been an oversight on the part of the Publix inventory managers. After all, Mallomars are among this country's finest assets and can be found in most households. The Publix employee returned after a few minutes with a clipboard in her hand. She was still reviewing some sheets of paper on it and then looked up.

She said "It appears that Publix doesn't stock Mallomars anymore. But I can help find you a substitute."

I didn't know what to say. "No Mallomars? You've got to be kidding. Mallomars is a national brand. I've always found them in Publix. How could you not carry them?"

She frowned and said: “I really don’t know why. Must be some policy from up above. The inventory sheet says we don’t carry them anymore.”

I began to whimper. “But I love Mallomars. What am I to do? I can’t go home without a supply of Mallomars. Are you sure this isn’t some mistake? Maybe they’re in a different aisle? Maybe they’re next to the pretzels?”

“There’s no mistake,” she said. “We simply don’t carry them anymore. I don’t know the reason but it appears to be a company wide decision.” I began to whimper. “But I need my Mallomars. Don’t you understand? I can’t live without Mallomars. This is a medical emergency.”

The Publix lady began to feel uncomfortable. “Sir, we can call for an ambulance if you’re feeling ill.”

I shouted: “I want my Mallomars and I’m not leaving until I get them. You have no right to treat me this way.”

I began to jump up and down, turn blue and foam at the mouth. And then I started screaming at the top of my lungs: “I want my Mallomars. I want my

Mallomars.” A number of shoppers panicked and ran from the store.

Several Publix employees ran to the scene to try to calm me down. I wasn't buying it. I started throwing cans of Campbell's Vegetable Soup at them and continued my belligerence.

The rest of what followed appears hazy to me now. The employees surrounded me. There was a strait jacket, the police arrived, I was tasered and taken to Lee Memorial. I woke up and to my astonishment I found a mallomar on the table beside me.

A friendly nurse popped in and said: “Your trauma is over. We found Mallomars in another super market and once the sedatives wear off you can go home and enjoy them.

Tears of joy flowed from my eyes. I made the decision then and there to stock up with five years worth of Mallomars regardless of where I had to hunt for them. I would no longer be humiliated like this again.

#####