



## Consumer Reports Puts Products to the Test

### Objective information for everyone

Would you like to know which automobiles protect their passengers best or which appliances are the most reliable or energy efficient? Would you also like to know how to understand investments, evaluate insurance policies, and protect yourself and your money? Every year millions of people rely on *Consumer Reports* to help answer such questions.

### Consumers Union sets the standard

I'm often asked about where to find objective information about various products and services. Among the sources I have no hesitation in recommending is *Consumer Reports*. This monthly magazine is published by Consumers Union, whose sole mission since 1936 has been to test products, inform the public, and protect consumers. Consumers Union has set the standard for objective and reliable consumer information. True to its role as an independent, nonprofit testing and information organization serving consumers, CU accepts no advertising and does not allow use of its ratings for commercial purposes.

### Product quality difficult to judge

If you are not familiar with *Consumer Reports*, you may want to check it out. Most consumers find themselves at a serious disadvantage when it comes to evaluating the tremendous variety and complexity of today's products and services. From the outside, one "black box" representing a VCR, camcorder, television, telephone, or computer may look very much like another. Importance of various features, quality of performance, safety, and reliability are difficult to judge without reference to test data, expert analysis and qualified interpretation. What I particularly appreciate about *Consumer Reports* articles is the clarity and thoroughness of the explanations accompanying the product descriptions, comparisons, and ratings.



### Financial products also examined

Although CR's traditional focus has been on consumer products, I believe their research reports and ratings of financial products have become an excellent source of objective and reliable consumer information. Of special interest to many consumers may be such recent topics as these: stock funds (May 1997), bond funds (September 1997)

long-term care insurance (October 1997), and mutual funds (March 1998). These articles provide excellent insights and understandings concerning the issues involved and detailed descriptions regarding what the average consumer needs to know to contend successfully in the marketplace where such items are marketed and sold.

### Ratings mixed with sound advice

As an example, the article on long-term care policies contains sections on common sales ploys and the use of misinformation and distortion to persuade unwary customers. CR's antidote for such tactics is to arm the consumer with solid information about what considerations a consumer should use in determining whether to buy any policy or not and, if so, what policy features are essential, which policies rated highly, what companies sell these policies, and what premium costs one should expect now and in the future.

### Consumer Reports a best buy

Every issue of *Consumer Reports* includes a variety of interesting and informative topics—anything from rating low-priced wines to dealing with bladder problems and incontinence products. The index at the back of each issue locates articles on topics covered in previous issues. Issues of *Consumer Reports* can be found at local public libraries, bookstores, and other places where magazines are sold.

*Ron Wall*

*Extension Specialist in Family Economics and Management*

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