

Out!

Snappy pets unwanted

By DARLENE STINSON

George and Chubb are not what you'd call your ordinary cuddly household pets. But their owners — Bill and Sharon Kane of Canton Township — are willing to go to court to keep the four-foot caiman in their townhouse basement where the alligator-type reptiles have lived for the past eight years.

The board of directors of the Canterbury Mews apartment complex has threatened to file eviction proceedings against the Kanes unless George and Chubb take up residence somewhere else. The first home — an aquarium — with a small swimming pool. Two years ago, he enlisted the help of builder Frank Shephard to install miniature models of above-ground swimming pools in his basement.

The pet owner claims that the fenced-in, filtered pools meet all township building ordinances and can easily be removed — a requirement of the apartment by-laws.

The occupancy agreement prohibits tenants from harboring fur-bearing animals but does not mention reptiles, Kane said.

The caiman owner claims that he told the former apartment pet director about George and Chubb when they were first purchased eight years ago. He said his neighbors who live in the immediate vicinity of his home have never objected to the pets.

According to Canton ordinance officer Lloyd Young, no township ordinance or state law prohibits the keeping of caiman as pets.

KATHERINE LATINEN, assistant curator of the Detroit Zoo reptile house, backed up Kane's statement that caiman are relatively harmless.

"People just don't understand them because they're so different from themselves," she said. "But they're not



Chubb's favorite dinner is rainbow trout. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

aggressive animals. If they did get out, they'd probably just hide."

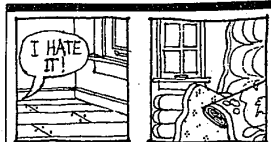
She heaped praise on Kane for keeping the reptiles alive and healthy.

Most people who purchased caiman when they were common occupants of department stores some years ago could not keep the reptiles alive for more than a year, Ms. Latinen said.

Baby caiman, which eat insects and later fish in the wild, need specific nutritional requirements. Inadequate lighting often results in severe physical deformities.

According to Ms. Latinen, caiman can no longer be sold or transported from their native habitat in South America under international or U.S. law. Although caiman are not endangered, they are listed as an endangered species because they resemble other reptiles that are threatened with extinction.

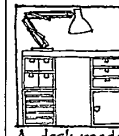
This Want Ad appeared in the St. Helens (OR) Sentinel-Mist Chronicle: To the person or persons who stole my duck and goose decoys last weekend: "They were yours to use any time you asked. You thought it took courage to steal them. If you would like to know what real courage is, bring them back. Be assured you will be the first person I will loan them to." The ad was signed by Bill Nelson of Deer Island.



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