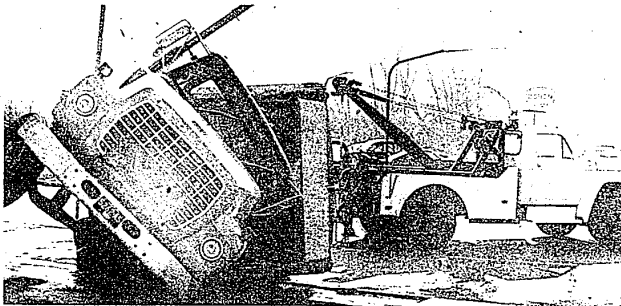


## Roll over, Beethoven

A tow-truck gets a garbage truck back on its wheels after it made a too-quick turn at Twelve Mile and Middlebelt in Farmington Hills Monday morning. (Photo by Ron Segall)



## It could be the season to be swindled

With the Christmas season once again in gear, shoppers should keep an eye peeled for holiday con artists.

Get rich quick schemes as well as deals that seem too good to be true ought to be avoided by the wary holiday shopper. Here's a list of some of the more common scams run on the unwary:

Each year, according to Federal Trade Commission estimates more than \$50 million is swindled from Americans who fall for get rich quick schemes. One of these schemes which makes its appearance around gift giving time involves raising chinchillas or investing in a fur farm. A person approaches the victim and begins to give a glowing report of the profits which can be had by raising chinchillas at home.

The con man fails to mention that chinchillas may be stinky animals in their South American homeland but they don't thrive in damp basements, hot attics or unheated garages. In less than ideal circumstances involving temperatures above 80 degrees or below freezing, the furry little rodents die. They also eat their own fur and the females sometimes kill the males.

Some cities ban raising chinchillas. Even if the chinchillas are legal to raise and do thrive, females average about two offspring per year.

IF THE chinchillas survive to raise a great coat owners rarely get rich. The average price for pelts is about \$15. Few isolated sales involve prices in the neighborhood of \$80-\$100 for a pelt.

Potential chinchilla breeders should do a little homework and learn to tell the difference between the male and female of the species. Con artists have been known to sell chinchillas of the same sex to the potential breeder.

Besides fur coats, jewels make nice presents, too. And con artists are looking to snare a shopper with great ambitions but little money.

The victim is approached by the con artist who acts as if the jewel heist occurred just moments before. Looking over his shoulder, talking in whispered tones and acting slightly anxious, the con artist convinces the victim that this is a deal he shouldn't decline. After money changes hands, the victim gets his well-wrapped jewel. Later it's discovered the valuable jewel is really a piece of glass.

Expensive perfume makes a nice gift, too. Once again, an effort to buy the best at bargain basement prices results in a rip-off under this scam.

Usually the con artist is in a shopping center parking lot or a mall. He

convinces the potential buyer that the perfume he is selling is a famous name brand and offers a whiff of the real thing to prove its authenticity.

**BUT THE BOTTLE** the customer buys bears a misspelling of the name brand. Inside will be either water or a watered down version of the famous

perfume.

Another scath preys on good feelings between neighbors. A person dressed as a delivery man approaches a victim's home and tells him that his neighbor is unavailable to answer the door and pay the COD for the package. The delivery person explains the package is a goose and if it's returned to the post office the

bird will spoil and the neighbor will be forced to wait in a long line.

If the victim does pay the COD charge on the package and gives it to his neighbor when he returns, both discover an empty package.

If a neighbor expects a package and won't be home to receive it, he ought to notify the person next door of its arrival.

## Keep an eye on kids' vision

Vision care begins at home when children are still in their cribs, according to the Michigan Optometric Association.

And the care continues as the child grows and progresses through school. While still laying in the cradle, children's vision can be helped by homemade toys and games which help the infant develop vision skills.

Parents are advised by the optometric association to talk to the baby from different places in the room so he or she will have a familiar moving target to watch and follow.

Play patty-cake with the baby to learn the direction of movement which hands and eyes can take.

Give baby some time on the floor and find opportunities for him or her to watch older children play.

Hang a colorful homemade mobile made from plastic measuring spoons outside a small infant's crib at eye level.

Change your baby's position in the crib or move the crib in the room so the baby has different views and gets to use both eyes.

Keep a dim light on in the baby's room at night so he or she will have something to look on upon awakening.

**ENCOURAGE** your baby to crawl before walking because crawling helps a child learn to use both eyes together.

Infants should begin to use their two eyes together at about two months. Oc-

asionally a baby may turn off one eye at some strange angle for brief periods while it concentrates on using and developing the other eye.

If an infant older than two months doesn't show signs of using two eyes together or if the eyes appear to be continually crossed a vision examination should be made.

When the child grows up and enters school, the weeks between the first day of school and the first report card are a good time for parents to look for symptoms of vision problems in their children.

These symptoms include frequent clumsiness, difficulty in reading or doing close work, a short attention span for the child's age, frequent blinking, complaints of nausea, dizziness or headaches after reading of doing other close work, a tense position when looking at objects far away or close up, tilting the head noticeably to one side when reading, holding books close to the eyes, frowning or scowling and continued avoidance of reading and close work in favor of outside activities.

**ALL CHILDREN** probably show these symptoms at one time or another but the child who exhibits them continually should be tested.

Parents shouldn't wait for a child to complain about his sight since most children don't realize they have a vi-

sion problem. They assume everyone else sees the way they do.

While school vision tests aren't fool proof in finding all the children with vision problems, they are helpful. But a thorough vision examination is advised by the Michigan Optometric Association.

The exam involves a review of the child's health and developmental history including facts of the child's birth and such details as when the child first sat up alone, crawled and exhibited other behavior milestones.

An exterior and interior eye health examination should be conducted. Tests of the ability to see sharply and clearly both near and far should be included. There should be tests for nearsightedness, farsightedness and astigmatism.

Eye coordination and muscle function and the ability to focus near and far are checked in a good test. There should be some examination to make sure there are no indications of crossed eyes or that the child is using only one eye. Depth perception and color vision as well as motor tests for eye-hand-foot coordination should be included in the check-up.

**REGULAR** care should help prevent vision problems from reaching a serious stage, according to optometrists.

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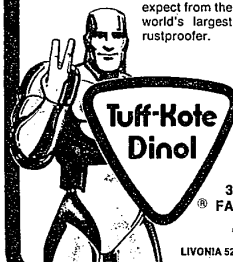
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