

You design it — he'll make it

By SUZIE ROLLINS

Dan Meissner gambled a lot to become a successful cabinet maker who now brings European elegance into Detroit area homes.

About three years ago, Meissner, then a truck driver, decided he wanted a custom-built home. He subcontracted the job and watched his designs transformed into reality.

"I was so impressed and so thrilled that I wanted to build," the 38-year-old said. "So I quit driving a truck and went to work for a cabinet company at \$2 an hour. At 34-year-old with a wife and three kids working for \$2 an hour, you know I had to be dedicated."

It was uphill from then on in for Meissner, who joined another cabinet company for four months before branching out on his own.

Today, thanks to encouragement and referrals he initially received from a local builder, Meissner operates a large cabinet business called Cabinet Tree in Bloomfield Hills.

He specializes in Formica beds, tables, cabinets, dressers, kitchens and bar units. Some units are spiced up with chrome or brass, while others are colorfully mixed.

"He really does a terrific job," a West Bloomfield customer said. "He built two bedroom units, a bar unit and a clever table which he built around a Lucite floor lamp."

Like other customers, the West Bloomfield woman opted for built in

furniture for its sleek contemporary design. In her case, several family members suffer from allergies and can't tolerate dust.

"With the built-in bed and dressers no dust can get under it. It's also a lot easier to care for," she added.

Meissner said Formica-built cabinetry has been in style in Austria and Switzerland for the past 12 years. Only during the last few years has the vogue idea drifted across the Atlantic.

"People go overseas and see it and want it here," he said.

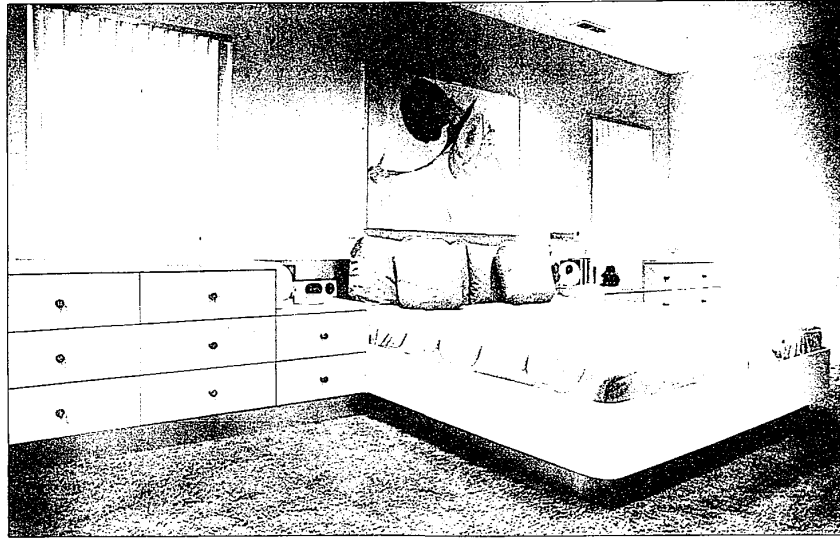
INDIVIDUALITY RUNS RAMPANT when customers design their own units. Like Meissner himself, they love to see their sketches become furniture.

Some of his most unusual pieces include "recreation centers" and a couch with a Formica frame so a woman's cats wouldn't tear it. "I specialize in wall units. I like to house as much as possible in them. I hate wasted space," he said.

"For the woman with the cats, I had to build a frame for her because she wouldn't declaw her cats and they kept tearing up her furniture."

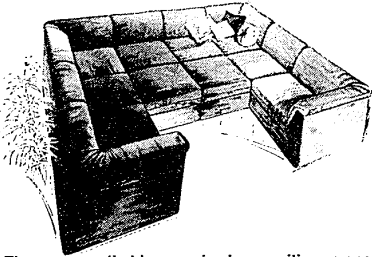
Most of Meissner's Formica designs can match the price of store-bought merchandise, he said, but offer the owner a taste of the planning.

"I can build a child's bedroom set, with a platform bed, one night stand and an eight-drawer dresser for \$1,200. For \$1,200, where are you going to buy something like that?"



Bedroom by Dan Meissner incorporates clean lines, easy-care Formica and plenty of storage space. (Staff photo by John Stano)

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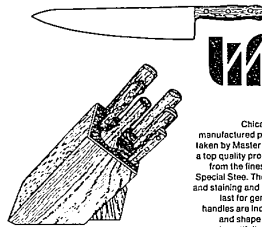
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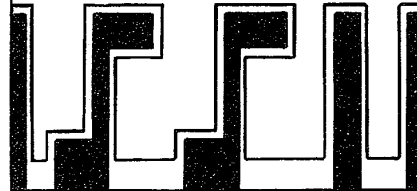
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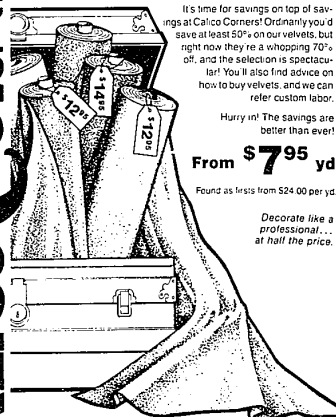
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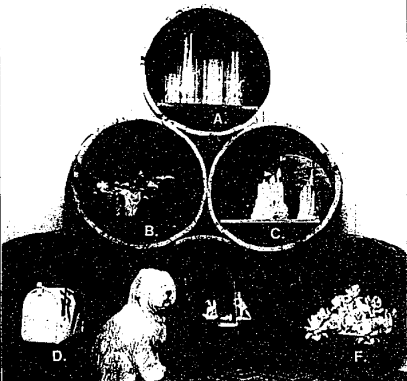
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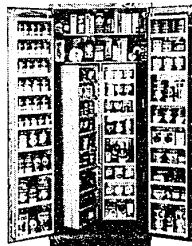
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