

# 'Tis the season to be wary

by JACKIE KLEIN

**S**ticky Fingers snatches more than candy bars and \$2 tubes of lipstick from enticing store counters.

Sticky Fingers looks like any customer including the little old lady with the ever-ready change purse. But it's a big deal when the retailer loses and the consumer pays. And the Christmas season is the time to be especially wary.

How does a shoplifter bilk a storeowner of merchandise valued from \$2 to \$3,000 in one looting spree? How does he or she get away with expensive watches, jewelry, leather and suede coats or palm little items and stuff them in his or her pockets?

**THERE ARE NUMEROUS** techniques — devious, ingenious, simple, police say.

Retail merchants learn a few of these methods and how to avoid them through seminars and documentary films presented by police and shopping center security departments.

Merchants are warned to keep expensive items in well-secured nooks and crannies. Sticky Fingers may shove prize pickings in empty boxes if tempting goodies are displayed on counters.

Shoppers have been known to put booster cages under their maternity tops to appear pregnant. Others carry booster shopping bags filled with old, wrinkled bags, the better to stock with merchandise.

**SHOPLIFTERS** wear clothes several sizes too large, so they can slip stolen duds underneath their baggy wear. A successful technique is called crotching. It is Sticky Finger's jargon and it means placing ripped-off goods between the thighs.

Dressing rooms are common areas where shoplifters are able to conceal stolen clothes. Employees counting garments tak-

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• Some classic (and not so classic) gift ideas.

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