

State dives into battle of appliance ads

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Appliance, Inc., said rain checks are offered on major appliances, such as stereo equipment, only if a customer agrees to leave a \$10 deposit.

It is the attorney general's opinion that no deposit is necessary if customers demand a rain check on advertised items which are unavailable during the sale.

THE PRACTICE of requiring customers to leave a nominal deposit to ensure they'll return for the item is customary in the appliance trade, Hartman told a reporter for the Observer & Eccentric.

"It's good business to get a deposit if you possibly can," Hartman said.

The chain's president said the investigator Kelley's office sent to his stores asked about an advertised special on a Fisher cassette tape deck on sale for \$73.90. The deck wasn't available after the ad ran, Hartman said, because "a shipment didn't come in as scheduled."

Fifty customers put a \$10 deposit on the deck and received the unit when it arrived, Hartman said, but the offer wasn't acceptable to the Consumer Protection Division representative.

The company doesn't issue rain checks, Hartman said, because keeping track of rain checks — which may or may not be used — makes it impossible to handle his inventory.

"We give them an invoice and call that a rain check," Hartman said.

THE CLAIM by Hartman that other appliance stores also demand cash deposits or payment in advance for sale items was checked out by the Observer & Eccentric.

Sales personnel at Highland Appliance Co. and Fretter's Appliance said it is the policy at their stores to give a rain check on unavailable advertised items. These are honored unless the

specific model is a close-out item being discontinued.

"There's no money down," said Mark Weisel, salesman at Fretter's Southfield store. "We just give them rain checks. It's up to you if you want it when it arrives."

Jerry Menyhart, salesman at World-Wide TV in Farmington, said his store would ask for a cash deposit if the advertised item wouldn't be ordered again in bulk and the firm had to special order a unique model.

Hartman said it's significant that

the complaint came from the attorney general's staff and not a disgruntled consumer.

"Go in there to any of our stores," Hartman said. "Take a look around. You'll see a lot of happy people walking out with appliances. This industry is self-governing. Because if you engage in bad business practices the word gets around and people don't patronize you."

WHILE ACCUSING the attorney general of harassment, Hartman said

the 16-year-old company just finished its busiest year. After a recent story about the attorney general's lawsuit appeared in the Oakland Press, Hartman said, the company's Pontiac store had one of its highest-volume sales days ever.

"I don't think it's justified that someone who makes an accusation without proving it can get all this attention," Hartman said. "I'm the guy who gets hurt. We're going to fight this all the way because it's not true."

Auto Club kicks off... 'Operation Food Basket'

The Automobile Club of Michigan's Farmington office kicked off a food drive this week to help the area's needy.

The Auto Club is encouraging its members, employees, concerned persons and community groups to donate food to be distributed by Neighborhood Services, Wayne Metro Community Services Agency, Macomb County Department of Social Services and the Agency Council for County Emergency Services in Oakland.

The goal of AAA's "Operation Food Basket" is at least one can of food per week per person. It's estimated that if each Auto Club member statewide brought in one 16-ounce can weekly for a month, 2,400 tons of food would be collected.

Operation Food Basket will continue as long as the need exists.

"Governor Milliken has declared a human emergency in Michigan because of the hunger brought on by the state's poor economy," explains Maxine Swift of the Auto Club. "There are more than 700,000 individuals out of work statewide and unemployment figures remain at record-high levels."

"We are very concerned about our neighbors. We want to do all we can to help," Swift noted.

"We're asking our employees, members and the public to bring in at least one can of food weekly to help people get through what is one of the roughest economic periods in Michigan history."

Swift praised other organizations which helped to make Christmas brighter for those in need this year,

adding that the Auto Club project has the potential of being the largest privately donated food project in Michigan.

Food baskets will be located at Auto Club branches and other centers statewide for the continuing drive.

The Auto Club is seeking canned goods including tuna fish, peanut butter and vegetables and non-perishable boxed items such as macaroni, cereal and rice. Other foods include jello, dried milk and cocoa mix. Foods may be dropped off during regular Auto Club business hours.

"If everyone pitches in, we can make a big difference," Swift said.

"We don't want anyone to go hungry this winter."

Pallets taken from nursery

Two men, charged with the theft of wooden pallets from Frank's Nursery in the Farmington Plaza shopping center, are free after posting 10 percent of \$250 bonds following their arraignment in 47th District Court on misdemeanor charges of larceny under \$100.

The two suspects, Clifford Lamont Wade, 24, of Detroit and Leo Paul Lebert, 35, of Pontiac, were arrested by Farmington Hills police at 10:10 p.m. Dec. 19 on Orchard Lake Road. They pleaded not guilty before Judge Michael Hand.

Farmington Police report that the truck contained 24 wooden pallets registered to E.J. Brach worth a total of \$120, or about \$5 apiece. However,

when police contacted store officials, the manager could only account for 11 missing pallets. Because of that, prosecutors issued a misdemeanor for larceny under \$100 instead of the more serious felony charge of larceny over \$100. Both men were released after posting bond.

Police said they acted in response to a telephone tip from a resident of an apartment building that overlooks the nursery who said two men were driving away from the store in a truck with its lights off. A Farmington Hills officer made the arrest at 10:10 p.m. Dec. 19 on Orchard Lake Road. The truck that the two suspects were riding in had the words "A&G Novelty Co." painted on its side.

carrier of the month Farmington



Reid Steiger

The December Farmington Observer carrier was Reid Steiger, 14, of Farmington Hills. He started his route in February of 1978 and is a student at North Farmington High School. He is the son of Harold and Dick Steiger.

He has three sisters, Linda, Maria and Maria. His favorite subjects in school are math and science. His hobbies are coin and beer collecting. He hopes to attend college where he will major in computer science.

If you want to be a Farmington Observer carrier, please call 591-0500

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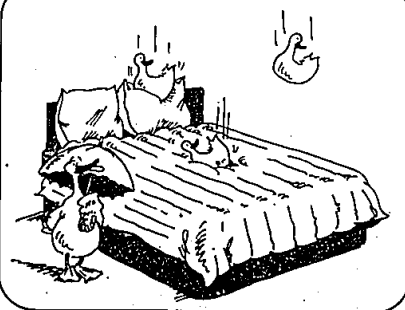
TWO LOCATIONS: COURTESY HIGH SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM — JANUARY 19 — APRIL 18 Monday & Wednesday 6-7 PM
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