

OCC's Retailing 101: study of malls

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

Today's retailing students are learning more and more about suburban malls, and they are in exactly the right place to do it, according to an Oakland Community College instructor.

"Every time a new book comes out," said Agnes Robert, "there's a bigger and bigger chapter on malls."

Robert teaches Retailing 101 (principles and 220 fashion merchandising) at OCC's Orchard Ridge Campus. Each year her classes pay a visit to Twelve Oaks Mall, right down the freeway in Novi.

TWELVE OAKS, for its part, is glad to help, said promotions manager Shelia Armstrong.

"We want to raise the level of the retailing profession. Our manager (William Clogg) is knowledgeable in the history of malls, how they are laid out and why, and what training they will need," she said.

Students get an hour background from Clogg, who has long experience with the Taubman Co., mall developer. Then they break up into smaller groups for two hours of visits with managers of various stores.

To instructor Roberts, such a visit is even more helpful than the kinds of classroom talks many merchants give. "Our students are familiar with malls as consumers, but not as operators," she said.

THERE ARE two kinds of job opportunities in malls compared to Main

Street or "strip" centers, she tells classes.

"One is in mall operation itself — promotions, special events, assets management, maintenance of air conditioning and snow removal, security."

"The other is in the mall store. Running a store in a mall is different. Mall stores are 90 percent chains. Few are locally owned. The store in the downtown or a strip tends to be owner-operated."

Mall stores have central buying. They don't do their own ads. A young person can learn management, stock and merchandising in a mall store.

"Many (young managers) go from mall stores to their own. Then they will need fashion knowledge, financial background and a knowledge of promotion."

AT ROCHESTER Institute of Technology, where she earned her own degree in retailing 15 years ago, Robert wasn't taught mall management.

"I went to work as a buyer for Gimbel's in Philadelphia," said Robert, who later held jobs in Chicago and Rochester, N.Y., as her husband was moved around the country. The West Bloomfield resident expects another move next semester. "That's why I went into teaching," she said.

Robert helps Twelve Oaks with its fashion shows which use students. She finds student learn a lot just by being "go-fers."

At OCC, retailing is taught entirely by part-timers, according to academic dean William Stuart. "We give them a bare-bones outline. They fill in the cracks," Stuart said.



"It's a strong program for the kind of support we've given it," he added. Retailing is taught on the Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills, drawing students from all over the county.

The college offers 10 catalog listings in retailing, including two cooperative work-study courses.

A MAJOR project for each Retailing 101 student is to become acquainted with three similar stores. "The students introduce themselves to the manager and do analytical and factual reports," she said.

On the checklist: "Why is one more successful than the other? They can judge by the stock turnover. They look at store layout. They look at changes of displays."

"They try to decide who is the target customer. One kid was very surprised when the store didn't have a handle on whom they were trying to serve."

From these meetings with merchants, students often come up with offers of part-time jobs — in sales, as assistant managers, in catalog showrooms.

THE COLLEGE has a cooperative work-study program, which also is a source of job leads.

John Fattel, a full-time business administration instructor, said about 70 students a year sign up for such internships. The college attempts to match jobs to students' career goals.

Thursday, October 27, 1983 O&E

(BWT, D, FSA)

75 years for Crowley's

Crowley's celebrated its 75th anniversary during a party Sunday evening at Roma Hall in Livonia. Over 2,000 employees attended the event.

Among its nine department stores are those in Livonia, Birmingham and Farmington. Crowley's also has two stores in Detroit and stores in Westboro shopping center, Macomb Mall, Lakeside Mall and Universal Mall.

Crowley's began on July 13, 1908, when Joseph J. Crowley and William L. Milner bought the controlling interests in a Detroit department store operated by Partridge and Blackwell. The store occupied half the block in downtown Detroit bordered by Monroe, Farmer, Gratiot

and Library.

By 1917 the two partners had acquired the entire block, making Crowley's the largest department store in Michigan.

In 1914 Crowley's was the first store to replace its horse-drawn trucks with gasoline-powered vehicles. In 1928 Crowley's installed a six-story escalator, the largest one in Detroit at the time.

Since July, 1958, Crowley, Milner & Co. has been a Detroit landmark. The downtown store closed its doors in 1977. In 1980 the central offices were moved from the original Crowley's location to offices on W. Lafayette, just west of downtown.

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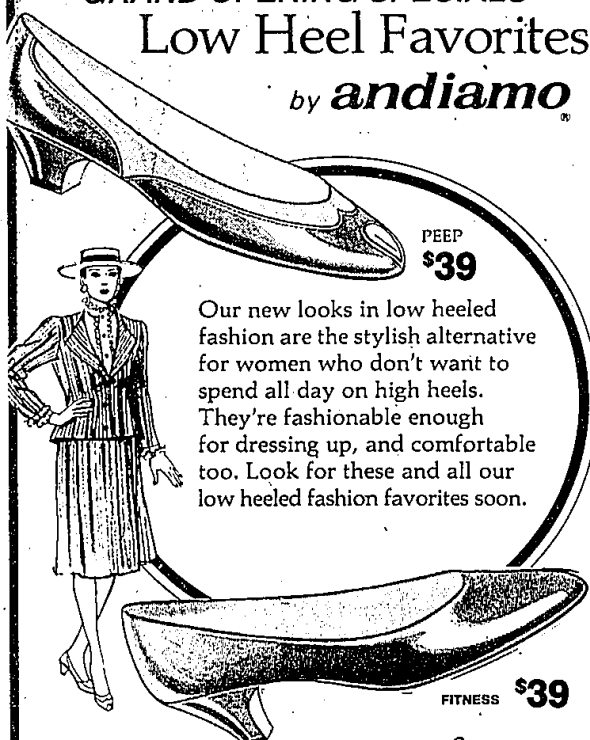
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