

Basket Works

Custom-filled for any occasion

By Debbie L. Sklar
special writer

A basket, a basket how about giving your boss a basket.

"Baskets are becoming the acceptable corporate gift with a purpose," said Steve Faulhaber, owner of Basket Works by Downing Street, 20716 Middlebelt, in Farmington Hills.

Faulhaber, 37, and his wife Franca, 37, began the business almost a year ago, and to date have sold more than 1,000 baskets nationwide.

"The idea began when my wife and I were on our way to Hawaii for a convention," said Faulhaber. "We stopped off in Los Angeles and saw a lot of basket companies, and we became interested, and thought we should start something like that in Michigan."



A basket custom-designed for a new father and another for a sportsman are ready for delivery from Basket Works by Downing Street in Farmington Hills.

The result is to offer specialty type baskets which entertain certain themes. Each one is created differently in order to suit the individual's personality and interests.

Faulhaber says, baskets, which last indefinitely and can be reused, are becoming the most appropriate way to express a corporate message with a customized sensitivity. "Baskets are being used to express apologies, thank yous, get well wishes, congratulations, reinforcements and rewards for staff, even for announcements," he said.

EACH BASKET is custom made depending on occasion and the person who it is being given to. "We like to sit down with the client and find out a little about the person who is receiving the gift in order to include what they like," he said.

"What's nice about this type of service versus the traditional fruit-like basket," he said. "Everything we use is non-perishable, and has a long shelf life — unlike fruit."

"We knew there was a market in this business, but we also knew that we had to think of something different as well as being unique," he said.

There are some baskets which have been designed around the golfer, ball player, the country decor lover, Italian gourmet goodies, wedding couples, great picnic munchies and new baby arrivals, only to name a few.

Prices for the baskets, which can include wicker, steel and animal figures, start at \$19.95 and continue upwards.

Faulhaber, who has the baskets on display on the premises of his other business, Downing Street Fireplace Shoppe, says he uses the name of that particular street because, "When I was stationed in the Air

Force in the late '60s, I used to be a chimney sweep in London, England.

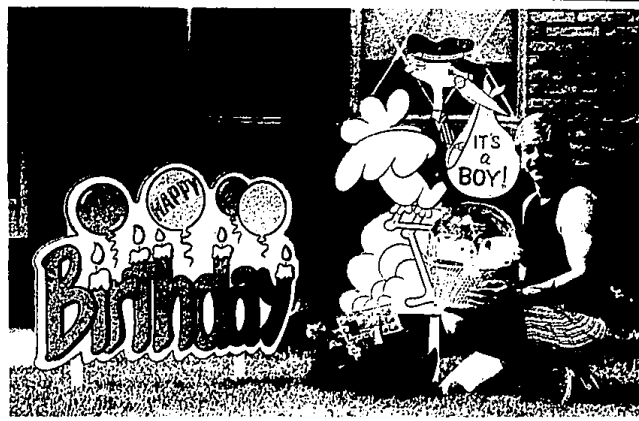
"Downing Street was supposedly where the profession began, and I thought it would be a good name to start a business after."

HE CAME BACK to Michigan where he opened a shop which offered chimney sweep services, and later on delved into the retail end of the profession. "After a while, we started to carry screens, and glass enclosures as well as top-of-the-line barbeques and fireplaces," he said.

By spring of '89 he hopes to open a small retail shop where he can sell the baskets singlehandedly.

"The reason we went into the basket business is because I wanted something totally different and not as seasonal as my fireplace business," he explained. "So far it's been very positive, profitable and enjoyable."

Basket Works by Downing Street can be reached by calling 476-3337.



LAURA VARGA CASTLE/staff photographer

Steve Faulhaber shows a couple of the baskets and signs that will be delivered to the recipient's home for a special surprise, or for any occasion.

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