

Farmington Observer

BUSINESS

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Comerica lists branch closings

Southfield will be the hardest hit suburban community in terms of bank branches closed after the completion of the Comerica Bank and Manufacturers Bank merger.

Six Southfield branches will be closed; 10 branches will remain open.

A total of 55 Michigan branches will be consolidated over the next 1 1/2 years.

Area closings include:

- Farmington/Farmington Hills: Manufacturers at Grand River-Halsted. Six branches remain.

- Livonia: Manufacturers at Ann Arbor Road-Ann Arbor Trail and Plymouth-Merriman and Comerica at Six Mile-Newburgh. Six branches remain.

- Birmingham: Comerica at Woodward-Oakland. Three branches remain.

- Bloomfield Township/West Bloomfield: Manufacturers at Adams-Square Lake and 14 Mile-Farmington and Comerica at Woodward-Square Lake. There will be 10 branches remaining after consolidation.

- Rochester Hills: Manufacturers at Avon-Rochester Five branches remain.

- Canton Township: Manufacturers at Joy Road-Morton Taylor. Two branches remain.

- Southfield: Manufacturers at Evergreen-Jeanette, Northland Point, Southfield-13 Mile, 2000 Town Center; Comerica at 10 Mile-Telegraph, 12 Mile-Evergreen.

- Troy: Comerica, John R-Wattles. Seven branches remain.

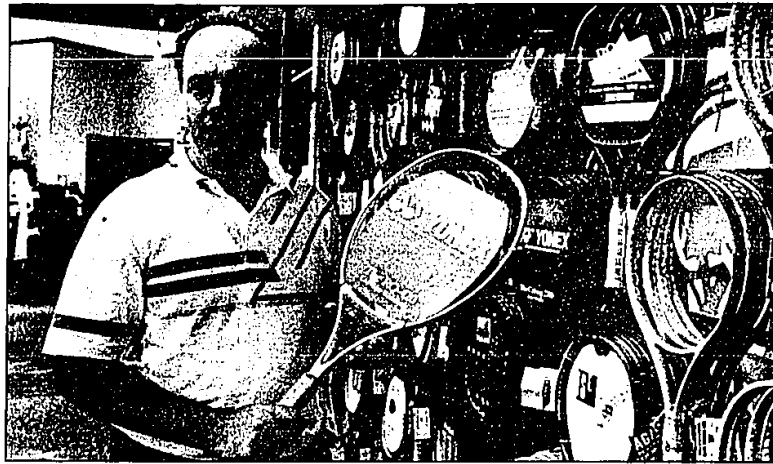
- Westland: Manufacturers, Wayne-Warren. Five branches remain.

Customers of one bank may not conduct business at an office of the other until the bank merger is complete, probably Oct. 1.

Comerica said it will spend more than \$5 million on renovations to 30 branches. Renovations will include expanding the number of drive-up and teller windows, adding automated teller machines, increasing the amount of parking space available and providing easier access for physically handicapped customers.

Branches will not be consolidated until the renovations are complete and the selected branch can accommodate its new customers. The selected branch will be staffed by employees from each of the combining branches. All branch employees have been assured they have positions, the bank said.

Most of the consolidations will occur in 1993, and customers will receive at least 90 days advance notification.



JERRY ZOLNISKY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tennis, anyone? David Schwartz, owner of the Tennis Co. in Southfield, has parlayed an idea and a love of the game into a multi-million dollar business.

Specialty tennis shop ahead of its time

Service and selection are David Schwartz's aces in luring repeat customers to his tennis store.

By GERALD FRAWLEY
STAFF WRITER

His was a super specialty store when super specialty stores weren't cool.

Wander through a mall and try to avoid stores that sell umpteen zillion products, all of the same ilk.

They've got stores that sell only socks. Stores that sell videos and movie-related items. They've got computer software stores. Just about anything a consumer would want to buy can be found in the super specialty, which is why the stores are one of the fastest growing retail segments in the 1990s.

When David Schwartz started the Tennis Co. in 1977, that wasn't the case.

If you wanted tennis equipment 15 years ago, you went to a department store or one of the few general sports stores. An avid player and tennis fan,

Schwartz thought there had to be a better way.

Today, after 15 years in business and five incarnations, The Tennis Co. "better way" has become a business success story. In 1991, the Tennis Co. registered \$2.5 million in sales. Earlier this month, the store moved to new quarters — with 8,500 square feet of merchandise and demonstration area — on Southfield Road near 13 Mile.

The super specialty

Rick Valade, retail consulting partner with Arthur Andersen, said the super specialty store is a concept that has evolved from one of the earliest types of retailing — the department store. The concept goes back to the early 1900s, he said. Then, there were general stores in rural areas and department stores in the urban centers.

"Ever since then, people have been picking out departments and making them into whole stores,"

For the most part, Valade said, price

has the driving force behind super specialty stores.

In recent years, selection has taken on an even greater role. "They have become destination stores," People will travel from great distances to shop at them.

"It (the number of new stores) is clearly a rapidly growing segment of the retail market, although the (percentage of sales) is still relatively small," he said.

Tennis, anyone?

Tennis was in its heyday the year Schwartz decided to start the Tennis Co., but it wasn't the excitement of big money that spurred the idea for the store.

"I was heading home from work and I was going to play tennis — you know, dressed in a business suit and all — and I had brought my stuff, but I forgot the socks."

So he stopped at one of the sports retailers of the day and found his way to

the tennis department. All they had were socks for \$3.49. "That was a fair amount of money in those days."

While there, he also checked into getting his tennis racket restrung. "They said it would take three or four days."

For an avid player, being without a racket for several days is unacceptable, he said. "I thought it was a service that should be provided."

A year later, he set up shop in a 750-square-foot building in Oak Park that was once a house.

"When we started, we kind of broke price," he said. "If they sold a racket for \$29.99, we sold it for \$19.99."

Schwartz said it became more and more apparent that service was the critical component.

"Price is still a deciding factor, but someone can always sell it cheaper," he said. "If I can sell a racket at \$19.99, someone else can sell it for \$19.95."

A service strategy has resulted in many changes, including the addition of demonstration areas where people can

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Trade show slated for manufacturers

If it works for service businesses, why not a trade fair for manufacturers?

That's what John H. White, executive director of the Livonia Chamber of Commerce, has cooked up for companies as large as auto manufacturers to small job shops in southeastern Michigan.

"In this community, we have an industrial corridor second to none. There's probably some 1,500 businesses there," White said. "We have this great asset. I've been looking at how do we serve that part of our community."

Where previous business expos sponsored by the chamber welcomed walk-in visitors and featured firms providing financial, computer, printing and health-care services, the trade fair would be geared strictly to manufacturers, their staffs and purchasing professionals.

The one-day fair tentatively has been scheduled for October in Livonia. Exhibitors would be charged \$500-\$750. Many companies, including Ford and GM, have committed, White said.

"If I get 100 booths, I would be very delighted. This whole thing is going to be a huge networking opportunity," he said.

Dennis Dresser, president of Gel Inc. in Livonia, has met with White to set up the exposition.

"The big benefit I see for us is it's really focused around purchasing," he said. "It just opens for us the possibility for more activity. With the way things are in the auto industry, there may be other opportu-

nities we may have never looked at."

Gel, founded in 1976, makes gear assemblies, turn tilts and signals and plastic components.

"If it promotes opportunities for purchasing or on the supply side, we'll be glad to participate," Dresser said.

Manufacturers from throughout southeastern Michigan contacted through chambers of commerce in Observer & Eccentric communities will be invited to take part, White said.

"The overall goal for the whole project is to provide a vehicle for business to buy better, buy more economically, by becoming aware of businesses right here they could be buying from," White said.

"A rep on the road can make at maximum probably four calls a day," he said. "At the expo, we're looking at attendance of 2,000 to 3,000."

Brenda Zimmerman is spokeswoman for the Construction Association of Michigan, which has sponsored an annual trade show.

"Exhibitors can make a lot of money on those trade floors," she said. "A lot of exhibitors offer discounts, specials, to drum up even more business."

"Like any sort of business, it depends on supply and demand," Zimmerman said. "Good attendance is the key. Quality of attendees is critical, too. A show lives and dies by how well it's promoted."

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