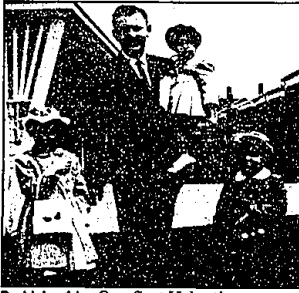


MALLS & MAINSTREETS

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SHOPPING CENTERED



Daddy's girls: Our first Valentines were flannel nightgowns and chocolates from dad!

Spread some joy with a Valentine

By SUSAN DEMAGGIO
EDITOR

Deep in the dark, damp of winter comes a fun little holiday to brighten spirits.

At least that's what Valentines Day on Feb. 14 has always meant to me.

Growing up, too young for sweethearts, my sisters and I could always depend on dear ol' dad for some surprises.

When we came downstairs for breakfast we'd each find a Valentine card, small box of Sanders chocolates and a flannel nightgown tied together with big red ribbon on our chair. It was the same wonderful treat Valentines Day after Valentines Day through the 60's and 70's - card, candy, nightgown - and we loved it!

I remember my first real Valentine in seventh grade when a crumbled pink piece of paper flew through the air in my math class and landed on my desk.

Written with red checking pencil: "See, do you like me? Yes? No?" - Sam F.

There were two boxes at the bottom of the note where I was supposed to check off the answer.

When I met my true love, Valentines Day took on new meaning. I never dreamed it could be so grand! Jewelry, flowers, boxes of chocolate and poetry written especially for me. I still recall his most eloquent, "Susan dear, I have this bug. I always want to see your mug."

The point of all this, is that a Valentine is a powerful thing!

That's why card shops are all pink and red this time of year (Hallmark reports 900-million love notes will be exchanged in 1997 - half will be hand-delivered) and candy store windows grab your eye with beautiful heart-shaped boxes brimming with sweet assortments.

Jewelers showcase glittering garnet and diamond pieces this month resting on pillows of velvet and lace. Florists move thousands of roses by the dozen through their doors. China shops feature romantic patterns and crystal vases in candlelit vignettes for two.

Valentines Day is the third most popular occasion of the year for going out to eat, according to a survey by the National Restaurant Association. (Birthdays are tops, followed by Mother's Day.)

But Valentines Day is not about spending big bucks at the mall. Knowing my dad and mom back in those days, our flannel nightgowns were probably bought for half-off at Sears or Hudson's during the January clearance sales.

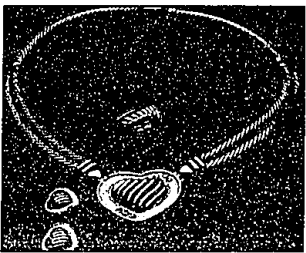
I called dad the other day to find out.

"Well, well, well," came the familiar cherished voice. "Funny, you should mention those nightgowns. Mom and I were walking through Sears a few weeks ago and nightgowns were on sale. I asked her if we should mail you girls some this Valentines Day as sort of a nostalgic surprise."

"No kidding, dad?" I laughed. "What a coincidence, I'm only asking about them because I'm writing a column on Valentines and those nightgowns used to mean so much to Karen, Nancy and I!"

"Too bad," he sighed. "I knew we should have bought some, but mom insisted you girls don't wear them anymore."

"Ah, mom! (wink, wink) How right you are! These days we've graduated to something from Victoria's Secret!



Love lines: From David Yurman at Neiman Marcus, sterling silver heart jewelry with diamond and 18-karat gold accents from \$570.

Crowley's 'solid' as old store closes



JUDITH DONER BERNE
SPECIAL WRITER

If you look at the Birmingham Crowley's, almost midway through a liquidation sale that includes furs and oriental rugs, you'd never guess the "Detroit's own department store" chain is in an expansion mode.

"It wasn't our decision to leave Birmingham," said CEO Denny Callahan. The store is expected to be razed in favor of a movie theater-restaurant-retail complex. "But to be totally honest, the real estate and taxes were very expensive. We were not profitable to the extent we needed to be."

His search for another Birmingham-Bloomfield location has come up empty so far, but he's still looking there and in other locations accessible to what he calls metro Detroit's second tier of suburbs: Rochester Hills, Novi-Brighton, Plymouth-Canton-Northville.

Although department stores nationally and locally are having problems, "We'd like to open more stores," Callahan said. And last year's acquisition of Steinbach Stores, Inc., a Columbus Ohio company that operated a 10-store chain in the Northeast, gave Crowley's the capital to expand operations in the Detroit area.

Meanwhile, Callahan announced that Crowley's will expand its store in the New Center area by 20 percent. And he's currently negotiating with General Motors to follow it to the Renaissance Center and open a Crowley's there.

Callahan, who took over as CEO in 1992, is generally credited with turning Crowley's around. The company actually faced bankruptcy in 1993. But through a combination of



Denny Callahan

cost-cutting and carving out Crowley's niche in the Detroit market, expenses were reduced from 38 percent of sales to less than 30 percent.

"We went back to what Crowley's customers want," the mild-mannered, accessible CEO said. In what he described as an over-retailed metro Detroit market, "you have to give them as good merchandise at the same price but customer service along with it."

A visit to the Farmington Hills' Crowley's finds Diane Klein trying on gloves.

"The store is convenient and I have 20 minutes to shop," explained Klein, of West Bloomfield. "I've always liked their quality. Now, if I can just find a sales person."

Finding that sales person is relatively easy. Ceiling signs denoting "Service, service, service" are

perched over each cash register. And Klein is just who Crowley's CEO is targeting.

"We're trying to offer a customer a chance to get what she wants in an hour."

They accomplish that, Callahan said, through their location in small malls with accessible parking, a map of the store at each entry and well-marked departments and designers.

Klein is younger than most of the shoppers on this wintry Thursday morning. But not quite as young as the new audience of women Callahan is trying to lure to Crowley's. Ninety-five percent of Crowley's shoppers are female. And even in their well-stocked men's department, most merchandise is bought by women.

The over-50 woman (on this morning, most are well over 60) has been Crowley's bread and butter. But since Callahan took over, they have tried to appeal to a younger woman, as well, by upgrading their petite and maternity departments and expanding children's clothing.

Luggage, small electric appliances and toys that have been added to their apparel offerings, because "there's a lot of competition particularly for the apparel dollar."

Less than exciting designs and little interest in hemline lengths have prompted a national decline in sales

of women's apparel, according to Callahan. "They buy it more when they need it. So we decided that we weren't going to sell you two blouses if you only needed one."

At the same time, they stepped up to the reality that they can't entice the teen shopper who frequents the mega mall. So they no longer have separate young men's departments and offerings in junior sizes aren't "the bubblegum junior looks."

"They've made their own niche that's separate from other department stores," concluded Jeff Green, head of a retail consulting group in Troy.

"I call them a promotional department store with good quality and good sales at an affordable price. That to me is their strength."

"For 10 years there have been rumors that Crowley's would close," Green reports. "Now they seem stronger than they've ever been. That's a great tribute to Denny."

With Jacobson's closing three Michigan stores and rumors that Hudson's has been or is about to be sold, Crowley's turnaround is particularly impressive. Still, Callahan isn't resting on his laurels.

"We've been able to get expenses down significantly but we can't be stagnant."

For the future, "We'll probably either be absorbed by someone else or grow and acquire other companies."

Crowley's: A 90-year history

- 1907 - Crowley, Milner & Co. founded on Woodward at Gratiot and Farmer in Detroit.
- 1917 - Downtown store was the largest department store in Michigan.
- 1959 - Opened first "suburban" store in Westborn Center, Dearborn.
- 1964 - Opened Macomb Mall and Livonia Malls stores on same day.
- 1969 - Acquired three Demery's stores in Farmington Hills, Birmingham and New Center area, Detroit.
- 1974 to 1985 - Opened stores in Lakeside, Universal, Tel-Twelve malls and Courtland Center (Flint).
- 1977 - Closed Downtown Detroit store.
- 1986 - Acquired 15 Steinbach department stores in the Northeast.
- 1997 - Closed Birmingham store.

Birmingham stylist is a local legend



Trail blazer: Nino Genna poses in the Antonino Salon on Townsend across from the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham.

By BARR PERT TEMPLTON
SPECIAL WRITER

One of a kind. An artist. The Godfather of hairdressing in Michigan.

These are just a few of the compliments area salon owners bestow on longtime Birmingham hair stylist Antonino (Nino) Genna, 80.

Genna, the patriarch of the hair biz in metro-Detroit for the last five decades, has trained hundreds of hair dressers including many who currently own salons in the area.

"I've seen a lot of hair dressers over the years, some have come from all over the world. I haven't seen any better than Nino," said Gerald Haynes, who trained with Genna many years ago and currently owns Gerald's in Franklin Village.

In fact, Genna himself still spends several week day mornings cutting and styling hair at Antonino's Salon in downtown Birmingham.

"It's like a hobby to me now," smiled Genna. "I go in and see a few friends who are longtime customers and I enjoy it."

Making that "hobby" a career isn't what Genna had in mind when he graduated from Cass Tech High School in Detroit in 1935. He had spent many hours studying art and had hoped to pursue a career in commercial art or advertising but that type of employment was scarce. "A friend said you like to do things with your hands Nino. Why don't you take up hair dressing?" recalled Genna. "At first I didn't think I was going to like it but it was inexpen-

sive to train to I started going to beauty school during the day and working in a factory at night."

He landed his first job in 1937 at a salon in Detroit's Book Cadillac Hotel and was building a strong client base when he was drafted in 1943.

Returning from his tour of duty Genna, who by now had a wife and daughter to support, decided he wanted to open a business of his own. "Coiffures by Nino" was a tiny studio along Six Mile Road but Genna soon began drawing in his old clients from the Book Cadillac Hotel.

"All the real prestigious shops were downtown at that time but I did alright," said Genna. "I won some national competitions and so did one of my hairdressers so companies like Clarrol and Revlon started calling and asking me to do work at their (trade) shows," said Genna. "It was good for my ego and good to get recognition from fellow workers."

"Nino is an artist and there aren't many who are in this profession," said Haynes, who worked along side Genna at the Six Mile shop. "He brought class and dignity to the profession."

When Haynes decided to open his own salon he didn't leave alone. He took his wife Barbara, who was Nino's top stylist, with him. There were no hard feelings.

"When I opened Nino brought me enough shampoo and permanent waves to last eight months," smiles

Haynes. "He's a marvelous guy." Agim and Sheriban Bardha, longtime owners of Bardha's Salon in Birmingham echo Haynes praise of the man they call "a good friend who is like a father to us."

"My husband Agim worked for Nino Genna for many years when he first arrived in this country from Albania," said Mrs. Bardha. "When my husband and his brother decided to open a shop of their own Nino offered them money to get started, that's how good a man he is."

"In the 1960's Nino decided to move his salon from Detroit to Birmingham and had a new building constructed along Woodward. The floor plan included 12 booths, a shampoo room and an area at the back for hair dryers."

"In 1970 I got talked into moving to Somerset, so I opened Nino over there."

"It was exciting to work with Nino in the 70's because anybody that was anybody worked with him," said Peter Scaglione, owner of Pete's Place in Birmingham. "And you could go to salons around the city and tell which ones were owned by people who worked with Nino just by the cuts they were doing, how clean it was and how the business was run."

After the death of his wife Angela, Genna sold the Somerset store that still bears his name.

His daughter and nephew currently own the Antonino locations in Birmingham and Walled Lake.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Senior Center, discusses self-esteem 9:15 a.m. lower level auditorium. Newcomers welcome. Complimentary program.
Westland Center, Wayne/Warren.
(313) 425-5001.

THURSDAY, FEB. 13
Sidewalk Sales
Clearances runs through Feb. 16 throughout the mall. Customers 18 and over can register to win a weekend for two to Toronto, rail and \$200 included. Details at Seedlings Braille Books for Children booth, center mall.
Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt.
(810) 476-1160.

SATURDAY, FEB. 15
Winter carnival
Runs through Feb. 16 with illuminated ice

sculptures around a 160-block ice sculpture. Shopping and dining, plus winter games for kids Noon to 4 p.m.
Old World Canterbury Village.
1-76 /Joslyn exit, Lake Orion.
(810) 391-8882.
Valentine Concert
The Vegues perform love songs for shoppers 4 and 7:30 p.m. on the stage near Crowley's.
Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt.
(810) 476-1160.

MONDAY, FEB. 17
Bill Bliss Luncheon Benefit
Saks Fifth Avenue presents America's favorite designer Bill Bliss and his spring collection at a noon luncheon and 1 p.m. runway show to benefit the Women's Division of Project Hope. The funds raised will be used for the medical needs of children in Latin America. Tickets are \$35.
Ritz Carlton Hotel, Dearborn.
(810) 646-1273.