



Reel action:
The Lunker Bass game will lure Dad's attention this Father's Day.

Tools and toys make dad's day

By DONNA MULCAHY
SPECIAL WRITER

I don't know about you, but for me, Father's Day is always the hardest occasion to shop for. Maybe it's because, in my experience, women tend to be more forthcoming with gift ideas than men. Take my mom for example. Ask her what she'd like for Mother's Day or any holiday, and she'll eagerly give you a whole long list of ideas. God love her.

Ask my dad and his first response is always, "Save your money. Don't get me anything." Press him on the issue and his answer is usually "socks or handkerchiefs." Now c'mon. I don't care if he wants them or needs them, there are only so many socks and handkerchiefs you can give a man before that gets really old.

My husband is a little better about providing gift ideas, but in the past three years I've gotten him only one Father's Day gift that he actually liked -- a white T-shirt with a small embroidered logo that says "Detroit Red Wings Stanley Cup Champions." I found it at

JC Penney last year. Father's Day soon is next Sunday, June 21. And since my truck record is shaky, and since the men in my life are tight-lipped on the subject, I decided to ask other people what would make the perfect Father's Day gift.

I accosted three total strangers who were shopping in the hardware department at Sears in Novi and asked them what they'd like for Father's Day, if they had children.

Frank Dwyer of Walled Lake, who was shopping with his sons, said he'd like the Craftsman Cordless Tool Workshop set, but added that "it's too expensive." The set includes a drill, circular trim saw, a pivot light, two interchangeable batteries and a charger, all in a red plastic storage case for \$99.99.

Larry Stack of Wixom said he'd like, "a really good cooler. A family can always use a good cooler." Preferably one on wheels, he added.

Robert Mantooth of Canton said he'd like the 9-inch Craftsman Buffer Polisher (\$69.99), because he enjoys working on his car. "And like most guys I know," he said, "I have a lot of tools, but they're not organized, so I could use some tool organizers."

My Uncle Travis, who likes nifty gadgets and electronic items, said he'd like anything from Brookstone or The Sharper Image. Both stores have locations at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi and the Somerset Collection in Troy. I asked salespeople there what they'd recommend.

Julie Holmes, store manager of the Brookstone in Novi, said the Lunker Bass fishing game (\$30) is now for Father's Day. You hold it the way you would a fishing pole and use normal casting and reeling motions to "hook" fish on the electronic screen. (It's available at The Sharper Image, too, for the same price.) Holmes also recommended a golf cleaner (\$10); a coin vault money sorter (\$45); a wireless headset that lets you hear your indoor stereo outdoors up to 180 feet away (\$90); and an 18-piece barbecue tool set (\$100).

Angel Emrick, senior sales associate for The Sharper Image in Novi, recommended the Mini Torch Light -- a powerful, rectangular, pocket-size flashlight (\$6.95); and a credit-card size golf tool kit (\$20).

She also recommended the Deep Pocket wallet, which is thin enough to be tucked in a front pants pocket (\$39-\$44) and the Palm Pilot III electronic datebook and organizer, for \$399.

P.S. Thanks to Dr. Maggie Pringlemeier, who said that you can get a handmade for \$30 at The Pottery Factory, via Mexico, in Farmington Hills, phone (248) 855-4956.

Jag: driven to excellence

Jaguar -- it's an object of desire, like a Tiffany diamond or a Burberry coat. No one actually needs a Jag, but devotees wouldn't settle for any other luxury car. They share a keen appreciation for style and elegance.

They also share high expectations of their dealerships. They want superior customer service -- the same kind of satisfaction they receive from their retailer of choice.

For that reason, Mike Dale, president of Jaguar Cars North America, instituted a unique cultural change initiative titled "Exploring Retail Excellence." Developed for Jaguar by Visual Services Inc. in Bloomfield Hills, the program partnered Jaguar dealers from across the country with Somerset Collection retailers.

On Wednesday, the car men and women met the clothiers, jewelers and home decor experts for a discussion centered around delivering exceptional customer service. They spent the morning shopping for ways to improve the car buying experience.

"The Somerset Collection is an excellent learning laboratory for Jaguar," said Dale. "The instant you enter the Collection, you know you're in a very special place. We want our customers to feel the same way about visiting a Jaguar dealership."

"The stores we're visiting are known for being customer focused and doing whatever it takes to make sure their customers are satisfied," Exploring Retail Excellence offers the company and its dealers a unique way to go beyond the boundaries of the traditional automotive environment and meet with some of the best retailers in the world."

Participating Somerset retailers were Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus, Burberry's, Tiffany & Co., Rand McNally, Pottery Barn and Ralph Lauren/Polo.

Greg Holland, manager of Nordstrom, spoke of his company's cultural evolution. "Everyone starts at the bottom," said Holland. "Even the presidents of Nordstrom started as stock boys." There is no formalized customer service training, but the Nordstrom credo empowers sales associates to "use their best judgment in all situations" to ensure outstanding customer service. "We never say no, we say no, but..."

"No, we don't carry purses, cameras or sweaters, but I can call another store or call the buyer and see if we can locate one for you."

Nordstrom's WOW program recognizes those associates who WOW the customer. Sales associates are recognized every day and are encouraged to



Sharing strategies: Jaguar President Mike Dale chats with Nordstrom store manager Greg Holland in the Nordstrom Pub.

share stories about customer service. Goals are defined, so that employees can concentrate on having fun and doing their jobs with confidence.

"What you recognize is what you get," said Dale. "Happy employees mean happy customers." In other words, you're in business for the long run, not just to make one sale. If you cultivate your employees, they'll cultivate their customers and you'll have customers for life.

Holland explained that Nordstrom's market differentiation is in its superior customer service. "That is the way in which the company chose to be different."

The key is the people who work in the store, the ambassadors. How do you hire good people? "There are lots of great people out there," said Holland. "People need an environment where they can thrive. We offer that. We hire nice people with good attitudes and then training them is the easy part. We can change behaviors but not attitudes."

Holland received a standing ovation from Dale and the Jaguar dealers. "Thank you, Mr. Holland," Dale said. "We're hearing people who really

believe in what they're doing and we must believe in ourselves and break down the barriers. Nordstrom is in another class. I am most impressed."

Dale went on to say that Jaguar has pulled itself up by the bootstraps to gain better ratings in the auto industry's indexes that rate quality and efficiency of service. "We're ready to jump outside of the box, to break the mold," he said. "The inverted triangle works. I'm at the bottom of the triangle, the customer's at the top."

"No sale is a good sale unless the customer thinks so."

Stanley Marcus
Founder

But superior customer service, he said, is an integral part of Neiman's mission statement.

Founder Stanley Marcus once said, "No sale is a good sale unless the customer thinks so." Again the key is the associate. He or she is as important as the name on the door. If the associate develops a relationship with the customer, the customer will always come back. The quality of the associates' work, said Lorenz, is directly related to the reward they receive. The reward may be as simple as a satisfied customer who writes a complimentary note.

Neiman Marcus has an arrangement with Jaguar of Troy by which customers who bring their car in for service are shuttled to Neiman's for shopping and lunch in the cafe. It bodes well for both retailers.

"We usually show folks our \$800 classic Burberry trench and tell them it's the Cadillac of the coat world," said Patricia Rosen, Burberry's store manager. "Today it's the Jaguar of coats." Rosen pointed to some of the challenges of selling top-of-the-line merchandise, whether cars or blazers. Again, she emphasized the need to exceed customers' expectations.

"Take no one for granted," said Curtis Norden of Capital Grille. "Thank the bottom line. The rest is as easy as taking a hairpin turn in your new XK8."

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

News of special events for shoppers is included in this calendar. Send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009; or fax (248) 644-1314. Deadline: Wednesday 5 p.m. for publication on Sunday.

Sunday, June 14

Native crafts
Woodland Indians Trading Company presents a corn husk doll workshop, presented by Wolf Tracks Joyce Tinkham. Noon-5 p.m. Fee: \$5. On Saturday, June 20, First Nation traders host a dreamcatcher workshop, presented by Turtle Island Living Art. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Fee: \$10.
Woodland Indians Trading Company, 26161 W. Six Mile Road, Redford. (313) 387-6530.

Wednesday, June 17

Stress less
Bolton Carroll, from the Corporate Development Institute, gives an introductory presentation on the Transcendental Meditation Program, one of the most effective self-development/stress management systems in the world. At Borders Farmington Hills, 7:30 p.m.
Borders, 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. (248) 737-0110.

Thursday, June 18

Motown magic
Detroit News music critic and author Susan Whitall will discuss and sign copies of her new book, *Motown of Motown* (Avon Books, \$13), at Borders Books & Music. Martha Reeves will make a special guest

appearance. 7:30 p.m.
Borders Books & Music, 34300 Woodward, Birmingham. (248) 203-0005.

Saturday, June 20

Rise and shine
Wakeup early to catch the best savings at downtown Plymouth's Sunrise Sale. Doors open at 5 a.m. for 50 percent savings. The percentage goes down every hour you sleep in. Special savings until 10 a.m.

Chez Madeline

Spend an afternoon with Madeline and have your picture taken with your favorite French schoolgirl in Nordstrom's infant and toddler department. 1-4 p.m. Nordstrom, Somerset Collection, Troy. (248) 816-6100.

Kell at bat

Baseball Hall of Famer and Tiger broadcaster George Kell will discuss and sign his book, *Hello Everybody, I'm George Kell* (Sagamore Publishing, \$22.95), at Borders Books & Music. 1-3 p.m. Borders Books & Music, 34300 Woodward Ave., Birmingham. (248) 203-0005.

Bear facts

Wildlife illustrator Gijbert (Nick) van Frankenhuyzen will sign copies of his new picture book, *The Legend of Sleeping Bear*, with text written by Kathy-Jo Wargin, 2 p.m. at Borders Farmington

Hills. The event includes storytime and activities. Borders, 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. (248) 737-0110.

Sunday, June 21

Folk music
Will Danforth will play folk song classics on his guitar for browsers doing any last-minute shopping for Dad. 3-5 p.m.
Borders Book Shop, 31150 Southfield Road, Birmingham. (248) 644-1515.

Wednesday, June 24

Rock-n-roll artistry
Huffs Promotions brings the "Rock-N-Roll Fine Arts Show" to the Westland Center, featuring artwork by such artists as John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Ron Wood, David Bowie, Yoko Ono, Ringo Starr, Donna Summer, and other icons from the Rock generation. The exhibit was a feature at the opening of the Rock-N-Tell Hall of Fame and has toured the country. It's more than a display; the artwork is also available for purchase. Opens today and runs through Sunday, June 28.
Westland Center, West Warren/Wayne. Westland. (313) 425-5001.

Strings attached

Through original music, movement, puppetry and storytelling, Maureen Schiffman mixes life's lessons with imagination. She and her puppet pal, Coco, entertain children at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. on the Livonia Mall stage near Crowley's.
Livonia Mall, 29514 Seven Mile Road. (248) 476-1166.