

Consumer troubles – try the attorney general

I don't know if you recall an earlier column. I wrote about a damaged couch I received, my efforts to get it repaired and subsequent phone call to the Michigan Attorney General Consumer Protection Division.

The day of delivery, the couch arrived with a small tear. For over a year, I worked with the retailer to have it repaired. The problem was the company, for whatever reason, kept sending the wrong replacement fabric. Of course, I didn't know whether the fabric was right or not until the company repair technician showed up at my place. And, yes, I had to hole up in my apartment for half a day and wait for the technician to arrive during our scheduled "window of time" appointment.

Eventually, I called the Consumer Protection Division for advice. And since my experience over the phone was so encouraging – not to mention pleasant – I wrote a column to encourage other consumers to seek out their help when faced with a problem.

Once again, I am moved to promote the department and encourage others to take advantage of their services.

Positive result

I followed the advice given to me by a Consumer Division representative: I filed an official complaint.

Within a few weeks, I received a letter from the Attorney General acknowledging my complaint.

That's good, I thought, but didn't put much stock in the process. I figured the letter was more perfunctory than anything, like when you call your local legislator with a gripe and an aide calls back promising to "look into it and get back to you."

Naturally, I forgot about my complaint and the letter. If nothing panned out, I'd badger the retailer or file in Small Claims Court.

Then I received a call from the headquarters of the company that sold me the couch. The man gave me his name, said he had received the complaint I filed with the Attorney General and reviewed it. And, "frankly," he said, "this is very embarrassing."

"Okay," I replied not knowing what else to say.

"So, we're willing to do whatever you want here. We can try and get the repair done properly. We can get you an entirely new replacement couch, if you want. We'd be happy to have you pick out another sofa. Or, we're willing to issue you a full refund and pick up the couch."

"Okay," I said, again words failing me.

"Of course, we would like to retain you as a customer, but the choice is yours."

"Well, all right, thank you," I said, adding, "I really did try to get the couch repaired."

I guess I was feeling a little guilty at this point, although wrongly so. "Well, can I think about it and call you back? It's a busy day for me."

"Absolutely," he said, adding, "And these are just a few options. You may have an idea we haven't discussed, so let me know."

Well, well, much better, I thought. Then came the shock. How could this be true? Total consumer satisfaction.

At best, I had figured the resolution would be a lesser one, something in between, like a discount on the sofa. Worse case scenario, well, you know what I thought.

Isn't it sad that we, myself included, are so cynical about the government's ability to help and protect us? All I can say is, if you're experiencing a similar problem, file a complaint. Sure, the paper work is no party, but it may be well worth the effort.

And, no matter what the result, you'll feel a whole lot better for trying.

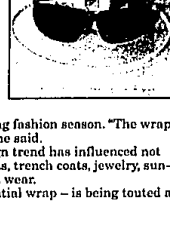
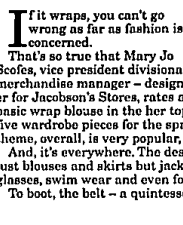
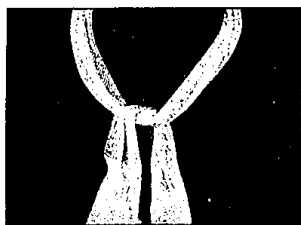
To contact the Michigan Attorney General Consumer Protection Division, call (517) 373-1140 or visit their web site at www.state.mi.us. Complaint forms can be downloaded from the site or filled in on-line by going to the "File a Complaint" link on the left side of the home page.

Wraparound

Fashion gets wrapped up in design trend



Get wrapped: Jones New York white cotton stretch wrap shirt (clockwise, from top left), \$74 at area department stores; Banana Republic tied leather trench coat wraps high on the waist, \$450 at Banana Republic stores; MaxMara black leather wrap waist jacket, \$1,885 at MaxMara, the Somerset Collection in Troy; Anne Klein side-tie skirt, \$46, for wrapping over matching tank suit, \$80, both in gold tone at Jacobson's stores; Chanel wrap style sunglasses, about \$225 at Shades Optical in Birmingham; and Elsa Peretti sterling silver scarf to wrap the neckline, \$1,350 at Tiffany & Co.



If it wraps, you can't go wrong as far as fashion is concerned.

That's so true that Mary Jo Scofield, vice president divisional merchandise manager – designer for Jacobson's Stores, rates a basic wrap blouse in her top five wardrobe pieces for the spring fashion season. "The wrap theme, overall, is very popular, she said.

And, it's everywhere. The design trend has influenced not just blouses and skirts but jackets, trench coats, jewelry, sunglasses, swim wear and even foot wear.

To boot, the belt – a quintessential wrap – is being touted as today's must-have accessory.

– Staff writer Nicole Stafford

Fashion historian talks about Hollywood style

Sunday's Oscars are sure to bring television viewers from across the country closer to the glamour of Hollywood.

But a more in-depth look at the fascinating world of movie star style and the relationship between film and fashion will be taken next week at Oakland Hills Country Club in Bloomfield Hills.

Courtesy of Project Hope and Saks Fifth Avenue, author and fashion historian Sandy Schreier will present *Hollywood Dressed and Undressed*.

The event, which includes a reception, luncheon and book signing, is slated Thursday, March 29, and tickets are still available.

Schreier, who lives in Northfield, is the world's foremost private collector of 20th century couture, American fashion and Hollywood costume.

She's also a fashion insider with ties to the entertainment industry. In the 1960s, for instance, she created costumes for *The Supremes*. She also designed accessories for Yves Saint Laurent's first collection for show in the United States.

As the author of the 1998 book *Hollywood Dressed and Undressed: A Century of Cinema Style*, Schreier lectures throughout the country and regularly shares her experiences in the media. She's been a guest on *Oprah* and talked about fashion and cinema on the *American Movie Classics* network.

In addition to appearing in numerous publications, including *Vogue*, *People* and *In Style*, she has curated exhibitions of costume history at several museums.

Schreier's latest book *Hollywood Gets Married* is slated for release soon.

What: Author and fashion historian Sandy Schreier presents *Hollywood Dressed and Undressed: A Century of Cinema Style*

When: Thursday, March 29, 10 a.m. reception, 11 a.m. presentation, noon luncheon and 1 p.m. book signing

Where: Oakland Hills Country Club, 3951 West Maple Road in Bloomfield Hills

Tickets: \$50, \$75 and \$100 to benefit the Women's Division of Project Hope, to purchase call Cheryl Pelt Lindsay at Saks Fifth Avenue at (248) 614-3317 or Bettina Gregg at (248) 322-5260.

Appropriate attire required

Retail, style and special store events are listed in this calendar. Please send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. By fax, (248) 644-1314. E-mail, nstafford@oe.homecomm.net. Deadline for publication is two weeks in advance.

THURSDAY, MARCH 29

MEN'S ARMANI TO MEASURE
Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, presents Armani Collezione Made-To-Measure Spring/Summer 2001 for men through April 1, Men's Shop, first floor. To schedule a personal appointment, call (248) 614-3371.

JEWELRY DESIGNER VISITS
Meet Dee Angelo, fine jewelry designer, and view Angelo's special trunk show collection at Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy. Fine Jewelry, first floor. Call (248) 643-9000 ext. 219.

FRIDAY, MARCH 30

CHANEL COLLECTIONS
Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, hosts Chanel's Spring/Summer 2001 Accessory and

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Shoe Collections, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Chanel Boutique, first floor. For details, call (248) 643-9000.

SPORTS COLLECTION SHOW
Livonia Mall at Middlebelt and 7 Mile Road presents a Sports Cards and Collectibles Show through April 1 with autograph sessions on March 30. For details, call (248) 476-1160.

SATURDAY, MARCH 31

ARTIST SIGNING
Femdale artist Rick Fruckler signs his tiles at Enchanting Gifts, 22944 Woodward Avenue in Ferndale. Fruckler, owner of Whistling Frog Tile Company, learned his craft at Pewabic Pottery in Detroit. For more information, call (248) 548-6350.

TEEN FASHION SHOW
YM Magazine joins Nordstrom, the Somerset Collection in Troy, in presenting spring fashions from the retailer's BP department, doors open at 8 a.m. for continental breakfast. Performance follows fashion show, which begins at 8:30 a.m. Reservations are

required. Please call (248) 816-5100 ext. 1690.

BOOK DRIVE'S LAST DAY
Oakland Mall's book drive for the Detroit Public Library and other Detroit metropolitan educational resources ends today. For each book donation, the mall makes a cash donation to the donor's school of choice. Donations accepted at mall's information desk, lower level. For more information, call (248) 685-6000.

FOCUS DAYS
Jacobson's hosts focus days in their Petites and Clairwood departments at stores in downtown Birmingham and Livonia at Laurel Park Place, noon-4 p.m., Petites and Clairwood departments. For information from the Birmingham store, call (248) 644-6900. For information from the Livonia store, call (734) 591-7896.

SUNDAY, APRIL 1

GLASS EXHIBIT
Native West, 563 W. Ann Arbor Trail in downtown Plymouth, hosts Elchings in Glass, a glass exhibit to mark Michigan Glass Month, through April 30. Opening reception is noon-4 p.m. April 1. For exhibit hours and other information, call (734) 455-8838.