

## APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

### Hard-won law to help stop appliance repair fraud

The heading on the bill states, "A bill to regulate the servicing, repair, and maintenance of certain appliances and the compensation received by certain persons for those activities; To provide for certain disclosures and warranties regarding those activities; to limit certain representations by service dealers; and to provide for certain remedies."

On Tuesday June 4, I think history was created when the full house passed Bill 217.

After 17 years of constant prodding and pushing, and several different government leaders sponsoring this bill, Michigan Senators Bill Bolland Jr. and Thaddeus McCotter achieved what I thought might be impossible.

I am so excited by this happening that I am having difficulty writing about it. This new law will allow homeowners to be able to figure out whether or not they are being ripped off by an appliance repair company.

For many years, a repair person could write a simple statement saying they fixed your product. They would put a dollar figure on it, and that was it. I have called this thievery with a pen and that is putting it mildly.

Consumers receiving repairs on major appliances will receive detailed information such as part numbers of components changed, the cost of such parts and applied warranties. Parts that are removed from your products, which are not deemed hazardous, will be left with you for disposal.

This will give you the advantage of being able to see if the part is defective or not. For many years some people in the service industry would not leave the part, and they did it for a reason. It's not hard to figure out, is it?

I must tell you that the majority of reputable service companies don't mind this new bill becoming law.

They know, and have suffered from, the tainted image created by just a few people. They have seen consumers grossly overcharged for appliance repairs, and could only direct them to small claims court for help getting restitution. Many of the good guys have been afraid to get involved and I can't blame them for feeling that way.

I have accomplished what I set out to do. I'm proud of it and hope the service industry takes over to create something good for themselves and their customers.

In closing this column I want to address the crooks in the appliance repair business. They fought against this new law every step of the way and they wrote and printed and sent some very cruel things to every state representative in Lansing. To those people I say, "What goes around comes around." There is one addendum to Senate Bill 217 which was passed on June 6. I'm proud to tell you they put my name on the law. Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can be heard Saturday and Sunday on 760 WJR. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (313) 873-9789.

Take a cue from these

## Father's Day gift ideas



For some people, Father's Day presents a gift-giving challenge. Mom is easy - flowers, jewelry, perfume - but what to get Dad? Here's a hint: Make a list, check it twice, and get Dad something really nice. Look at it this way: If you had raised you, wouldn't you expect to be rewarded? Another hint: Not socks or pajamas.

At Billy Bob's in Birmingham, "The number one Father's Day gift is a furniture-grade residential-size pool table," said Paul Green.

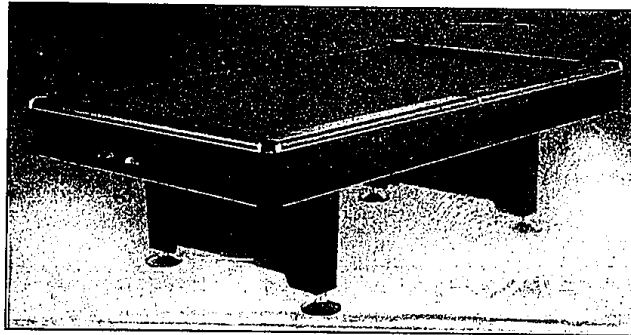
"They come in a variety of sizes that accommodate almost any family room or basement rec. room, starting at 3- by-7 feet, on up. Most have conversion tops that enable you to transform them into Ping-Pong tables." Prices begin at \$1,100.

If Dad knows when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em, why not give him a four-in-one gaming table? One style is an oak table that comes with layouts for cards (poker, blackjack), a roulette wheel and craps, and can be converted to either a cocktail or a console table, depending on the model. The game table comes complete with dice cups and cards. Price is \$450, also at Billy Bob's.

The wonderful advantage of a pool or gaming table is that the whole family can enjoy it. The same can be said for quality exercise equipment: Everyone benefits.

The Roadrunner treadmill, available at Exercise Warehouse in Troy, is an example.

"The Roadrunner features an analog dial; gear shift levers to change speed and elevation; a



Pool time: A pool table is a popular Father's Day gift at Billy Bob's. Features of this model include all-mica top rails and metal corner caps.

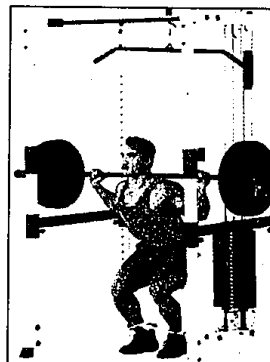
six-disc CD changer; a program that raises or lowers speed and elevation according to the user's profile, and more," said Jeff Janover, co-owner with Danny Sherbin.

"It has a classy brushed aluminum body, and it comes with a lifetime warranty on all parts." Prices on the Roadrunner start at \$2,495.

Like so many other things in life, golf is what you put into it. Lots of dads play golf, but have you ever met one who was truly satisfied with his swing? Almost any golfer would appreciate a gift certificate for pro suggestions on improving his swing and his stance.

"For a golfer with no experience, we provide work on his posture, stance and aim - the fundamentals on which to build," said Dave Copeman, an instructor at Mulligan's Golf Center of Auburn Hills. "The more experienced player will tell us what he needs."

"I've never seen a golfer who didn't benefit from lessons." A series of four private lessons is \$155, for a "generous" half-hour group lessons - four one-hour sessions - are \$120 per person. (Groups are limited to six members.) Other choices are available.



Shaping up: This Body Solid exercise equipment from Exercise Warehouse, with a selectorized lat attachment that can turn a rack into a multistation machine, would make a great gift for the dad who likes to work out.

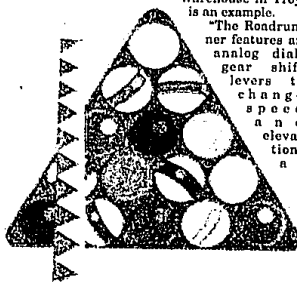
All lessons include balls, clubs (if needed) and a video.

If Dad would prefer to sit under the stars and listen to music, Meadow Brook is the perfect gift. The selection of entertainment is huge: The Detroit Symphony Orchestra concerts, for example, or the DTE Energy Music Series.

A good choice is the series

package: Just buy three tickets of your own choosing and receive free lawn tickets for three bonus shows of your choice. Or you could give Dad a really memorable summer with a season pass for 40 shows, including the Detroit Symphony Orchestra concerts. The average price is \$1,500, which includes parking.

Story by Joan Boram ■ Special Writer



## Garden on Rochester Hills Museum tour has European flavor

BY BRENDA DOMINICK  
STAFF WRITER

Birds chirping, Andrea Bocelli's music, and stone bird figurines on a bird bath welcome you to one of Oakland Township's most beautiful gardens.

Bernadette Cooper has been recognized by The Rochester Hills Museum, and the Rochester Branch of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association, for having a garden of loveliness. Representatives selected it to be one of seven gardens featured in The Rochester Hills Museum Garden Tour on Thursday, June 20. Event proceeds will benefit the museum.

Highlights of Cooper's garden include: Hostas, ferns, ligularia, several varieties

of astilbe, corydalis, 20-foot-tall hydrangeas, bleeding hearts, impatiens, lamium (commonly called white Nannies), Irish moss, columbine, primroses, variegated Solomon's seal, cardinal mobilia and Sum and Substance. But among all of the flora and plants, a type of Helleborus that changes the color of its bloom from green to purple is one of this gardener's favorites.

"I like to combine a lot of different colors and textures," Cooper said.

Jim Covech from Natural Enhancing, in Bloomfield Township, designed and landscaped all of the boulder work, structures and stonework in Cooper's garden. This includes the pond, stone

Photos of the garden walk, page C4

accepts, bushes and walkway. "He's been the best landscaper," she said. "He understood what I wanted and had the same kind of vision."

Cooper started gardening about 15 years ago at her previous home. Now, with a 4,200 square-foot house overlooking her spectacular shade garden, she has captured the vibrancy of nature in her own backyard.

Cooper's garden has a formal, European feel. The pond garden is in the central/flower level of the backyard. Lilies and other plants in this area are just beginning to blossom for the season. Cooper says the works of English

gardeners Ken Druse and Penelope Hobhouse, along with some shows on the Home and Garden Channel and the works of "good old Martha," have also been a source of inspiration.

She says gardening is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also emotionally beneficial to her. "I find it very peaceful and just enjoyable. I find it to be very therapeutic."

Included in the tour will be a wildflower garden, a shade garden, an in-town city garden, gardens around a waterfall, a gazebo, a swimming pool and one at the Rochester Hills Museum at Van Hoesen Farm. A master gardener will be on hand at every garden location to answer questions.

### 'COOPER'S CLUES' FOR GOOD GARDENING

- Fertilize early in the spring with granular fertilizer
- Fertilize in the summer with Miracle Grow
- Cover ground with Escargo, available through Gardens Alive, or Sluggo, available at any nursery - to keep away slugs
- Use Liquid Fence, a biodegradable animal repellent, so deer can't get to the plants
- Insert mixture of compost/peat after digging plant life out of garden
- Put down Holly Tone fertilizer for such things as evergreens, hydrangeas