

Pants Getting Bigger For One-Time Goof-Off

By CORINNE ABATT

The guy who laughed and said it couldn't be done, when Ron Portnoy described his concept of a \$5 pants store, has probably kicked himself a hundred times or more.

Portnoy, a Southfield resident, born and raised in Toledo, opened his first store two years ago in Taylor with 5,000 pair of pants at \$5. They were manufacturers' overruns, not seconds. In eight days, he was sold out.

"I felt we were on to something big, so we opened a second store in Warren a month later and people were lining up around the block waiting for us to open."

It's been a fast track ever since. Pants Galore store No. 14 opened in Livonia last week. Two more in Port Huron and Southfield are set for early summer.

The business quickly outgrew the 8,500 square foot warehouse on Capital in Livonia. Another, on the same street, is now under construction. It will be 20,000 square feet, making it one of the largest in the country for that type of business. The estimated cost is \$320,000.

More than once, the flamboyant Portnoy has been mistaken for actor Peter Ustinov.

The 36-year-old retailer, with beard and wire frame glasses, manages to pour his five foot nine inch, 202-pound

frame into some eye-boggling outfits. He plodded through the rain to the warehouse groundbreaking recently in a fire engine red suit, white shirt with red buttons, red edging and white and red shoes.

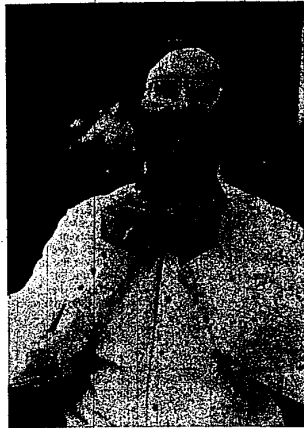
"I'm really having a ball with my wardrobe. I was a conservative dresser until about two years ago."

The same attitude of enjoying life and having a good time carries over in the way he conducts business. Fixing the red bow tie (he had it on upside down on the first try), he walks in and out of his Capitol St. office, stops a minute to talk with Dave McKenna, who has been with him through several business ventures; goes out to the warehouse to exchange a greeting with his foreman, another long time employee. At the same time he is talking with his advertising man, Ed Bilzick, of Robert Solomon and Associates, who created the "Have We Got Pants for You?" slogan.

Portnoy gave the agency free rein to come up with free-wheeling ads that convey his image.

The majority of the 250 Pants Galore employees are between 19 and 25.

Portnoy explains, "The bulk of our business is to 14- to 24-year-olds, and I feel we should have people in our



RON PORTNOY: "I'm really having a ball with my wardrobe."

Novak Leaves W. Electric

Bob Novak, 28310 Quail Hollow, Farmington, will retire July 2 from Western Electric's Michigan service center after 43 years.

Presently an inspection supervisor, Novak has been a stock production supervisor and has worked in Western Electric's switchboard service, stock maintenance department and warehouse. He has made plans to move with his wife to Florida.

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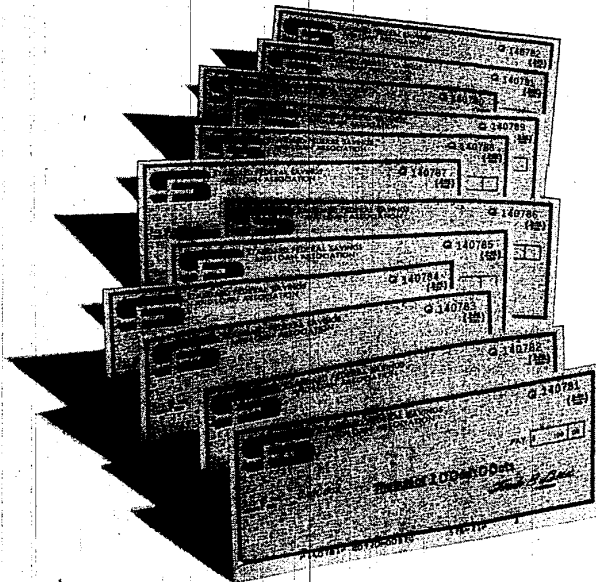
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