



John Orfe hopes that he will be able to market his newly-designed model car garage. The scale compares to the dimensions of a doll house and accommodates popular model car sizes. (Staff photo by Douglas Bauman)

## Designer creates model garage

By CAROL HASKIN

Rumor has it that the victims of the auto lay-offs spend their time between job interviews at coffee clutches and watching soap operas. This idle hands theory has become a favorite with the media which describes a pervasive feeling of despondent resignation.

The true picture is less squalid. The fact is, in periods of adversity, the creative juices in the veins of red-blooded Americans really start flowing.

A good example is Bloomfield Township resident John Orfe. Orfe, a Chrysler designer, has been laid off since Nov. 1. In the midst of a job search that has so far proved fruitless despite its intensity, Orfe has put much time and thought into a home-made product which he hopes to introduce into the masculine toy market.

His brainchild, in keeping with his automotive background, is a model car garage.

There are numerous large scale doll houses and kits on the market, for girls. The void in this field for boys could be filled by large scale



JOHN ORFE

1/24 model car garages, he explains. This chosen scale compares to overall dimensions of doll houses and most importantly takes the popular model car sizes.

His first model, a typical race shop took Orfe about 100 hours to complete

Made of wood, it is 42 inches wide, 28 inches deep and 11 inches high.

The model features three overhead track cure doors, a furnished office with tile floor and partition, a rear wall that hinges downward for access to the inside, stairs and an upper parts storage loft for extra cars, and a roof panel that lifts off and can be used as a paved parking lot.

Anyone who makes model cars as a hobby knows what a problem storage can be. Wives and mothers, too frequently blind to automobile aesthetics, have a tendency to regard them as dustcatchers. Orfe designed his garage to be both a plaything and a storage unit to protect the models from dust and from breakage.

Orfe, 52, has had an interest in both art and automobiles since he was a boy. At age 12 he sold automotive car toys to Motor Magazine, and two years later he was doing advertising art for Lucky Tooter's Hell Drivers.

"When I was young, I had my mind made up to become a driver myself many times," Orfe said. "But then I would see a close friend killed and I decided that illustrating was safer than driving."

While working as a designer for Boeing, Ford and then Chrysler, Orfe did illustrations for publications like Speed Age and Illustrated Speedway News. As another side light, he painted watercolors of famous race cars on commission by

track luminaries such as Roger Penske and Andy Granatelli.

Orfe even originated a race car adventure comic strip called "Leadfoot Jon" which ran in "Illustrated Speedway News."

Orfe said he had been harboring the model garage idea since he gave a smaller version for his son. His layoff gave him the opportunity to explore all the possibilities of the idea.

He is presently working on a service station complete with grease racks and gas pumps with tiny hoses. Still on the drawing board is a new car showroom with vast glass areas and sliding doors.

Further variations on the basic garage theme are almost endless. Orfe has plans for a parking garage with ramps going up two or three stories, an antique or classic car museum and an estate garage with overhead chauffeur's quarters.

Orfe hopes to interest toy manufacturers in his idea, or make the models through custom orders. He estimated the price of the completed race car shop at \$200.

To make a model that had durability, it might be too expensive to be mass produced, he said. Then he may end up doing them on order. If anybody did order, he could almost design whatever he wanted.

Orfe has high hopes for his model idea, but even failure along those lines won't get him down. If the garage doesn't sell, he said, there is always Leadfoot Jon.

## District to develop fees for bus usage

BIRMINGHAM—Senior citizen and retired groups which have transportation problems may find the answer in the future through the public schools.

The board of education has passed a resolution authorizing the school administration to develop a program and fee schedule in accordance with provisions of applicable state statutes, to transport senior citizens or retired persons.

The action was taken as the result of a new state law which permits the use of school district buses for senior citizen transportation if a local school board determines that no economically feasible private transportation is available.

The board has determined that no economically feasible private transportation is available in the Birmingham area for the purposes of transporting senior citizens or retired persons to or from an activity, event or outing.

The Birmingham School District will charge 50 cents per mile plus driver costs of \$5 per hour for the full period of time a driver is required. Driver overtime rates will be \$7.50 per

hour and Sunday rates will be \$10 per hour.

Requests for school buses for senior citizen or retiree group outings should be made with James O'Neil, director of physical plant and transportation, as far in advance as possible.

The board also discussed an administrative regulation regarding fees for use of school district buses for non-mandatory and non-credit events for students.

The new state law also permits a school district to collect fees for transporting students to or from non-mandatory and non-credit events sponsored by the school district. The school district will charge 50 cents per mile plus driver cost of \$5 per hour with the same overtime and Sunday rates as apply to senior citizen use of the buses.

The transportation charge to each student will be an amount equal to the total cost for mileage and driver divided by the number of pupils to be transported.

The fees for both senior citizen and student outings will be in effect until June 30, 1975.

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