

Farmington girl helps spread word

Pioneering kindles camper craze

By MARIA KOSANOVICH

With people always searching for new and inexpensive ways to spend their leisure time, roughing it is quickly becoming a trend.

The Pack Sack, a camping backpacking and cross country store at 2029 Seminole in Redford Township offers ways for wilderness hikers and campers to enjoy that outdoor life in comfort and fresh air with the latest in equipment.

Ron Gerhart, who started the Pack Sack in August as a hobby, said that camp equipment ventures have mushroomed in recent years because vacationers want to do more.

Camping is an art, he explained. It takes the elan of the American camper who likes living rough.

You have to limit yourself to what you can carry and what you can teach to the hiker who can't be without it.

Gerhart, president of a local die-cast parts manufacturing firm, calls the

camping store is a "fun experiment." In a typical 12 hour day, he ducks between the Pack Sack and his company office, situated behind the store, compiling parts lists and parts lists for hardware, camping gear, fever. The Pack Sack displays up-to-date merchandising techniques and an IBM computer for its sales success.

Buying and inventory is handled by a computer, shared with the engineering company. When stock comes through the door, it is tagged with a computerized price label.

The shopper never has to wait for special orders to be shipped from the warehouse nestled behind the shop. In case of equipment, the computer offers a warning that it's time to restock the shelves.

We've tried to do a lot of things with the computer," said Gerhart, pointing to Sales Manager, and a computer sporting pads have for a chain store. "Most small businesses can't afford computer time but we've found that adapting to computer service has made our job easier."

The computer also keeps track of the special interests of 4,000 store customers divided into cross country skiing bulls, campers, backpackers, mountain climbers and sailors. Shoppers are given an address every two weeks.

Merrifield, 18, of Livonia and Sue Wolfe, 19, a co-op student from Farmington's Harrison High, run the store and offer expert advice to campers.

A student of Outward Bound survival school at Hurricane Island, Maine and an enthusiastic rock climber, Mary said that "This is the kind of job I've always wanted."

The Pack Sack uses colorful wall displays under redwood awnings for customer appeal.

He pointed out that his design sizes steaks and hamburgers on one surface, and makes breakfast foods on the other.

With the high cost of iron, they're not

economically feasible to make produce, he said, but they'll be offered at the store.

Campers can line their shelves with dried foods from the camping specialty store that is the state wide distributor for the foods.

The convenience food line originated from the old Army rations and have come in many ways since. The custom features

fresh, home prepared chicken, soups, chicken casserole, clam chowder which taste home cooked, Merrifield maintained.

The natural foods last indefinitely without preservatives.

He pointed out to have a limited seasonal business but with the gaining popularity of winter camping and the cross country sport, the Christmas season will attract buyers, many new to camping.

Although canvas tents, sleeping bags, snow shoes and camping clothes are best sellers, unusual camping items also sell.

Energy conscious individuals can purchase a woodburning stove or gasoline generator, which Gerhart predicts will see a great deal of use in the coming year.

Another unusual item the store has is a cast iron cooking grate, Gerhart's own invention.

The grate is adjustable for the campfire or the fireplace at home. Gerhart has applied for a patent on it.

There is no anything on the market with a large enough cooking surface of sufficient strength to heat water," the invent-

or explained. He pointed out that his design sizes steaks and hamburgers on one surface, and makes breakfast foods on the other.

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Although the department of marketing has been closed, the storefront is obscured by neighboring commercial buildings.

Business has been better than anticipated.

If the Redford Pack Sack proves successful, Gerhart said, there will be a major shopping mall stores.

We have hopes for more stores, Gerhart said. "People want our type of personalized and knowledgeable service."

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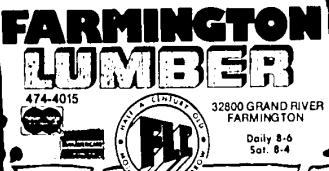
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John R. Farley of Wellington Road in Farmington Hills was recently promoted to executive vice-president of Wilding, a Division of Bell and Howell Corp.

**Harrison students
excel in math**

Nine Harrison High School math students finished in the top five percent in the first round of the 20th Annual Michigan Mathematics Prize Competition and were among the top 100 students in the final examination Dec. 8.

The finalists are Steven Borkal, 12th grade, 2111 Thirteen Mile, John Humphrey, 12th grade, 2739 W. Newell Circle, Alfred Jean, 11th grade, 27975 Merrick, Michael K. Koenig, 11th grade, 27975 Merrick, Andrea Meyers, 11th grade, 2524 Silver Dr., Kevin Perry, 11th grade, 2530 Glencrest, Robert Shatzman, 11th grade, 2515 Arden Park, Randy Shaw, 11th grade, 2278 Old Franklin Dr., and Gordon Weller, 11th grade, 7330 Linda Lane, West Bloomfield.

The competition is sponsored by the Michigan section of the Mathematical Association of America and is designed to foster a wider interest in mathematics, to stimulate interest in mathematics in the classroom, to encourage students to continue training in most professions and trades and to identify and provide scholarships for capable mathematics students in the state.

The 100 winners of the competition will be awarded an award program to be held at Western Michigan University Feb. 19, with 40 of the winners receiving a total of approximately \$7,000 in college scholarships.

The scholarship fund includes contributions from the Burroughs Corp., the Kuhiman Corp. and the Michigan Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

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