

# Cooler cooldown? Jury still out on new deposit bottles

By Tom Henderson  
Staff writer

Though the statewide deposit on wine coolers doesn't go into effect until June 1, most area stores are already selling the new deposit bottles. Store managers say problems caused by the deposit have been minimal but they disagree over whether the new deposit is affecting sales, as cooler-industry officials predict.

"When the weather gets hot, then we'll know if it's going to hurt," said Joseph Patros, manager of the Mid-Warren Party Store on Middlebelt in Garden City. He said creating the new deposit bottles creates no more problem than storage of other bottles already covered under state law.

But Armando DeCapaite, a 35-year veteran of the liquor business who is already selling the new coolers from Alban's Bottle and Basket in Birmingham and Bottle and Basket in Bloomfield Township, said declining sales "have nothing to do with bottle deposits."

"Coolers have been in a steady decline the past two years. They're a fallen category. I predict in two to three years, you won't even see them anymore. Liquor is cyclic," he said.

Jim Shay, manager of Danny's supermarket on Main Street in Plymouth, said all the Danoy's stores switched over to deposit bottles two weeks ago. "The only problem is at the register," he said. "Our girls have to check to make sure someone isn't bringing in the old bottles."

GILBERT BORMAN, director of public relations for the 150 area Farmer Jack stores, said the chain is in the process of switching to the deposit bottles. He said that the unique shape of the wine coolers makes it impossible to stack with other bottles, which causes space problems for the stores.

"We may decide on fewer brands to make storage easier," he said. "As an industry, we don't argue with the effectiveness of the law. But we argue that it has enormous impact on us. It cost Farmer Jack \$3.5 million last year to handle bottles.

"There's no argument our roads are clean in Michigan, but our back

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rooms are pretty dirty," said Borman, who said the problem of storage is compounded for supermarkets, who traditionally take in far more boxes than they sell. "We accept back more than we sell by a factor of 175 percent."

Great Scott and Meljer stores also have switched to deposit wine coolers.

MICHIGAN FIGURES are unavailable, but nationally, sales of the fruitly concoctions are down 16 to 20 percent compared to a year ago, said Michael Lashbrook, of the Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association.

"They may very well be a passing phenomena, a fad. They will still be around but they won't be as hot," said Pat Laughlin, lobbyist for the association.

The deposit law, which takes effect June 1, will push up prices and reduce the selection of wine coolers on grocers' and party stores' shelves, hurting sales even more, he said.

"There's no question" prices will increase, he said. "When you get into the garbage business, yes, it's going to cost more. Of course it is."

When sales were bubbling, deposit law supporters like the Michigan United Conservation Club warned that the 10 million wine coolers being sold in Michigan annually were enough to cover every inch of Michigan shoreline from Monroe to the Straits of Mackinac with throwaway containers.

Fearing the drinks would continue to grow in popularity, conservation groups persuaded lawmakers in 1986 to add wine coolers to the list of those beverages that no longer could

be sold in throwaway containers. The law, approved by voters in a referendum, already covered beer and soft drinks.

"The projected increases that got them covered under the bottle law haven't materialized," said Borman. "But there's a market for it and there's going to be a market for a long time."

Borman, spokesman for the Farmer Jack stores in southeast Michigan, said there was no question that wine cooler prices will go up but wasn't specific.

Jennifer White, a spokeswoman for Meljer's, said cooler prices have remained stable since the 41 stores switched over April 17.

One down side to the switch is that many of the old, non-returnable glass bottles simply will be shipped to landfills because recyclers refuse to accept green glass.

THE BAN on throwaways is likely to have little impact on the amount of litter on roadsides, a study shows. A 1986 study by the Michigan Department of Transportation found just one out of every 10 bottles and one out of every 100 cans dropped along state highways were wine cooler containers.

Thomas Washington, executive director of the Michigan United Conservation, said the legislation still will make Michigan cleaner.

"It'll help, particularly in public places like beaches and things like that, where people take them in fairly large numbers. I think their consumption is probably down somewhat since we got them added to the list, but they're still there," he said.

# O&E names new editor

Judith Doner Berne is the new assistant managing editor for the two Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. Berne, 49, was editor of the Birmingham and West Bloomfield Eccentrics. She will now supervise the operations of the Birmingham, Farmington, Southfield, Troy, Rochester and West Bloomfield editions. She will direct countywide stories and write a weekly column.

"Oakland County is one of the most dynamic areas in the country," she said. "The five Eccentric newspapers, along with the Farmington Observer, are intimately involved in chronicling that growth and the resulting problems — applauding progress and pushing for solutions."

BERNE HAS BEEN with the Observer & Eccentric since 1973. She worked as a reporter for the West Bloomfield Eccentric, part-time, until her appointment as editor of the Redford Observer in 1983. She

was named editor of the Birmingham-Bloomfield and West Bloomfield Eccentrics in 1985.

She holds a degree in English from the University of Michigan, and has worked on newspapers in New Jersey and Texas.

"Judy brings a depth of experience to the top management ranks of these newspapers which will enhance the quality of the product through first-rate staff leadership," said Steve Barnaby, managing editor.

"NOW THE READERS in all of Oakland County will benefit from the talents she has dedicated to the Birmingham and West Bloomfield editions.

Berne takes the position previously held by Rich Periberg, who is the new general manager of the Sugar-Livingston Home Newspapers, owned by the Observer & Eccentric's parent corporation. Berne, a native Detroit, and



Judith Doner Berne  
her husband, Ed, live in West Bloomfield. They have three children, David, Jennifer and Deborah, all college students.

# OCC board convenes tonight

Oakland Community College holds its regular board meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 25, at the Au-

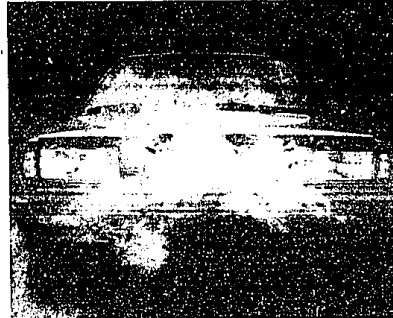
burn Hills campus, 2900 Featherstone Road, in the advanced technology center, hi-tech demo room.

The general public, college staff and students are invited to attend any board meeting.

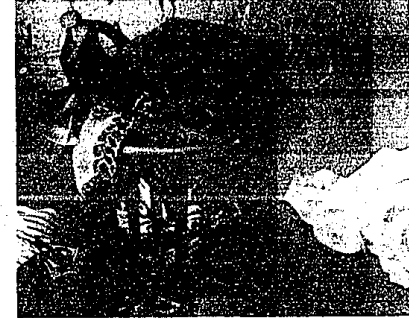
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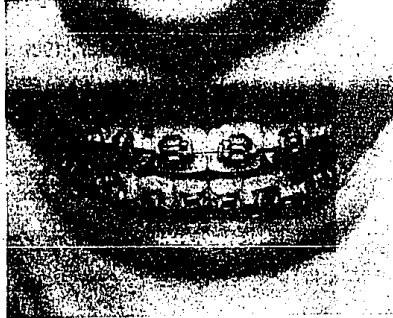

Nowadays, you're training just so you'll have the wind to blow out next year's candles.



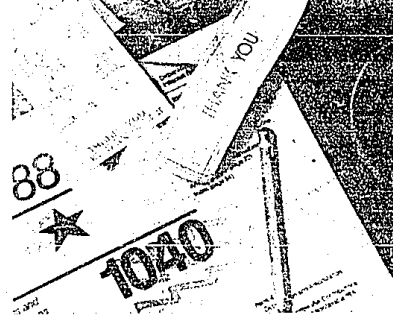
You've come to accept that every now and then your car needs to let off steam, too.



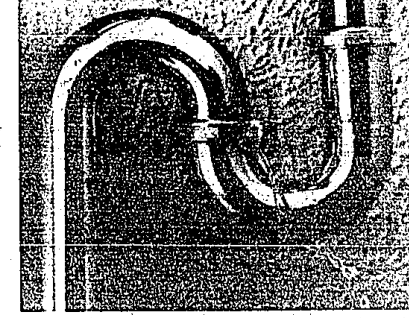
Even though six dozen socks have disappeared in the washer, the laundry pile always stays the same. Or even grows.



For years, every time your kid opened his mouth, you heard cash registers.



You've paid so many taxes, you feel certain that you alone financed the economic recovery.



More than once, you've discovered that your house is something of a liquid asset.

# JUST AN IDEA OF WHAT PEOPLE HAVE TO GO THROUGH TO QUALIFY FOR OUR PRIME TIME ACCOUNT.

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available to applicants of all ages. All you have to do is keep \$2500 in a Money Market Savings account. **Special 1/2 Percent Bonus Rate CD.** Open a Prime Time Account at one of our offices before June 30 and we'll also give you a 1/2 percent bonus rate on a new one-year CD. That alone could earn you enough to pay for the water heater that's about to go on the fritz. **FIRST OF AMERICA Bank**

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