

Mobilizing to fight retail famine

JUST AS THANKSGIVING conjures up families gathered 'round tables laden with turkey and trimmings, the day after Thanksgiving invokes the image of stores crowded with shoppers.

Traditionally, the busiest shopping day of the year and harbinger of the kind of holiday retail season to come, retailers throughout our suburbs are praying their cash registers will ring loud and long even in these tough times.

But they aren't limiting their actions to prayer. Malls and downtowns throughout our suburbs are trying new promotions to lure shoppers. Knowing that many people will spend less on gifts this year, they are desperate to get them to spend whatever that is in their mall or downtown.

Downtowns, such as Birmingham, Plymouth, Rochester and Farmington, have somewhat a tougher road than malls under a single ownership where cooperation for joint advertising and promotions can be controlled through lease agreements.

Downtown merchants have tended to be more independent. But hard times dictate standing together — or adding to the lists of the retail homeless who must sell out or move their

businesses to less expensive quarters.

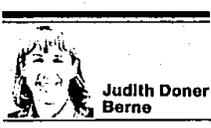
NOWHERE IS THIS more obvious than in Birmingham, where knowledge is widespread that some merchants simply can't survive a holiday season as awful as last year's.

As the Somerset Collection in Troy rises to a second story in the long-heralded arrival of Neiman Marcus takes concrete shape, various Birmingham merchant groups are coming together — both for the holiday season and longer-term.

Two months ago, many Birmingham merchants and in particular Jacobson's, at last, cast aside their "Never on Sunday" attitude, responding to the obvious needs of the majority of people who work five days a week.

A month ago, Jacobson's countered the valet parking at Somerset with valet parking of its own. The store will evaluate its draw in mid-January, but it seems clear that it needs to make it a permanent part of its operation.

Two weeks ago, 10 Birmingham bar and restaurant owners announced a "Restaurants of Birmingham" dining card featuring 2-for-1 meal specials designed to rev up business and to draw people downtown. The card costs \$55, is good for



Judith Doner Berne

11 meals, and also includes discounts on room packages at the Townsend Hotel, group room rentals at the Community House and tickets to the Birmingham Theatre.

Dec. 5th the art community — at least the galleries north of Maple — will put on a holiday art walk to herald the first in a series of special events planned for the "First Thursday" of every month. Gallery hours will be extended on every First Thursday to 3:30 p.m.

Dec. 13, mirroring the successful one on the town each July, many Birmingham stores will stage special sales and remain open until midnight.

IT'S ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT that the art community — which distinguishes Birmingham from all other downtowns and shopping malls — has pitched in to play a part in its

own and the city's retail survival.

But they deserve even more credit. On this first "First Thursday," the galleries will lend their support to area non-profit groups, who will be given the opportunity to display their gift wares, the profits of which are now even more needed. And shoppers looking for unusual gifts will find items from such institutions as the DIA, DSO, Pewabic Pottery, Cranbrook Museum and the Birmingham/Bloomfield Art Association right in downtown Birmingham.

Birmingham now has upwards of 30 art galleries — more than any city between Chicago and New York. In the past, it has been hard to get some of the more independent-minded galleries to be community-minded.

Perhaps the influx of new galleries with owners who are interested in opening up the art scene to more than the regular collector will help change some attitudes.

It's clear that all retailers — whether in downtowns or malls — can only gain through cooperation. As, of course, does the bottom line — their customers.

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric.

from our readers

Sanger was a real VIP

To the editor:

This is the 25th anniversary of the death of Margaret Sanger in 1966. She is such an important figure in the history of women's rights and social reform that we have to take a moment to remember her.

Margaret Sanger was born in 1879 in Corning, N.Y., six of 11 children of the Higgins family. She felt that her mother's death at 49 was due to the physical toll of all those pregnancies and the stress of caring for so many children.

As a visiting nurse and midwife, Sanger witnessed first hand the hardships endured by women who were denied information about birth control. The death of one of her clients from a self-induced abortion spurred Sanger to focus her efforts on the cause of reproductive rights for the rest of her life.

Sanger in 1936 won a court case which reversed the infamous Comstock law that prohibited the printing and mailing of materials on contraception. She was the founder of the birth-control movement in the United States by opening the first clinic to give birth control advice in New York City in October 1916.

In 1921 Sanger and her supporters formed the American Birth Control League which eventually became Planned Parenthood. She continually raised money for her clinics to cover the cost of serving the poor.

THROUGH HER connections with the medical and scientific world, she promoted research in birth control methods. Sanger was instrumental in the commercial production of the birth control pill, developed by biologist Gregory Pincus in 1952.

Birth control is so much part of our lives today that it is hard for us to grasp the importance of the changes brought about by Margaret Sanger. But we should not be complacent.

In her own prophetic words: "I am often asked, 'Aren't you happy now that the struggle is over?' But I cannot agree that it is. Through many disputed barricades, having been leaped, you can never sit back smugly content, believing that victory is forever yours, there is always the threat of its being snatched from you. All freedom must be safeguard-

DNR victim of power grab

To the editor:

The latest Engler power grab is nearly complete. He means to shut out public input about our environment, and make the DNR into the puppet of his office and his chosen buddies. But there is one more step where our elected representatives still have a say.

Our state senators and representatives need to hear that we do want strong public boards to review permits and licenses for siting hazardous waste facilities and building solid waste incinerators and allowing industrial discharges into our rivers. They need to hear that we will hold them responsible if they fail to reject this giveaway of public input in favor of backroom power-broking.

Our lawmakers need to hear that we object to these wholesale executive changes to environmental laws, planned secretly without public input or debate. Engler even intends to set up his own hand-picked backroom board of "scientists" who can hold secret meetings about permit denials or approvals and then advise the DNR what to do.

As a final blow, the governor issued his orders on Nov. 8 so the 60 calendar days for legislative rejection would end on Jan. 7, while the Legislature leaves for the holidays on Dec. 6! Such timing shows that Engler really means to silence the voice of the people and do away with our right to participate in environmental decisions.

Alice Tomboulian, East Michigan Environmental Action Council

Turkey protest is strictly for the birds

THERE'S A couple down in North Carolina — in fact there are dozens of people across the country — who are going to be serving turkeys on Thanksgiving day.

"So what?" you may ask. "So am I. And what do you mean dozens? There are millions of people who are going to be eating turkey."

Obviously, you weren't paying attention. I didn't say "eating" turkey. I said "serving" turkeys.

These turkeys will be the guests of Stewart and Terri David of Asheville. They'll share the couple's Thanksgiving dinner of stuffed squash, sweet potatoes, dinner rolls and pumpkin pie.

They're among 21 turkeys "rescued" by a group of people in the Chapel Hill area. "Some people," one of the rescuers told The Charlotte Observer, "are into saving them rather than serving them."

The adopt-a-turkey project is sponsored by Farm Sanctuary of New York to call attention to farm



Jack Gladden

practices the group disapproves of, such as debanking chicks so they won't peck each other, raising birds in houses that hold thousands and using chemicals and antibiotics that the sanctuary people claim may threaten human health.

NOW I'M NOT what one of my right-wing colleagues refers to as an animal hugger (although we do have a dog and two cats that I have been known to hug on occasion). I find people who are cruel to animals to be abhorrent, but in the greater scheme of things they are not as evil as those who are cruel to children or other human beings.

I'm not a hunter, but if a hunter friend offers me a venison roast, I'd accept it, cook it and eat it.

I have no problem with medical researchers using rats in experiments to try to find a cure for cancer, but I'm not sure about auto companies using animals to test the efficacy of their crash safety equipment.

I guess what it comes down to is that I am not a great one for "causes," but I'm not sure about auto companies using animals to test the efficacy of their crash safety equipment.

As far as the turkey rescuers are concerned, I think those folks could find better things to do with their time and their turkeys.

I'M NOT REALLY a farm boy, but when I was a child my father used to raise chickens and I've seen what cruelty is when the little critters peck each other to death. Is

debanking them to keep that from happening any more cruel than letting them have at each other? I don't think so.

Thousands of turkeys in a single (large) coop? Have the rescuers ever visited a ghetto in New York's Chemicals and antibiotics? Sure, part of the reason they are used is to produce more and fatter birds for the market, but they are also used to prevent disease — something to which chickens and turkeys are particularly susceptible.

And who knows how the birds are going to react to those servings of dinner rolls and pumpkin pie? I'm sure they'd be more satisfied (and better off) with a handful of corn.

If the turkey "rescuers" were humanitarians (instead of turkeyarians), they'd "rescue" the birds and give them to some poor families. So they could have a better meal on Thanksgiving than beans and rice or whatever they can find in the dumpster behind the local restaurant.

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