

POINTS OF VIEW

Store makes a quantum leap for our suburbs

I hope you saw their classy move — even if it didn't run in our papers. Jacobson's, which stands to be a close competitor, ran an ad on Neiman Marcus' opening day welcoming the world-famous store to Michigan.

Under a map of lower Michigan, it said: "Thumbs up to Neiman Marcus." Then, in smaller print: "You are an affirmation to something, we've known all along. Michigan is a great place to be. Now it will be even better because you are here."

The coming of Neiman Marcus and company — Barneys New York, Crate and Barrel and the other upscale, trend-setting national retailers to Somerset Collection — is more than a chance for the well-heeled to shop till they drop.

It is a reaffirmation of metropolitan Detroit's health and welfare. And retailers, such as Jacobson's, are hoping to reap some spin-offs while nearby downtowns, such as Rochester and Birmingham, are (hopefully) reassess-

ing their acts.

The throngs which have descended on the expanding, remodeled Troy mall, since Friday's store opening, are not just excited about experiencing one of the country's most sophisticated stores, its merchandise and reputation for service.

They are excited about what it symbolizes — the prospect of renewal for Detroit and its suburbs, which has seen its life blood — the Big 3 auto companies — suffer a major illness. Neiman's and the expansion of Somerset is a shot in the arm, providing impetus to our slow, shaky steps back to economic and psychological health.

Smiles were all I saw as I walked Somerset Friday. Smiles and humming from arms, a lot of Neiman's shopping bags.

Fellow teachers and friends Susan Shanahan of Southfield and Pat Holihan of West Bloomfield displayed both. They set forth to see if the cus-



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tomers service claims Neiman's makes are true.

"We took it on. They just proved it," an excited Holihan said on her way out. "I spent a couple of hours and a couple of dollars."

Shanahan bought a tie for a new boyfriend. "The salesman was so thorough; he asked me whether he (the boyfriend) wore single or double-breasted suits. I had to say I didn't know. I don't know him well enough yet."

Holihan was excited about buying a

necklace directly from the designer, Diane Komorn of Bloomfield Hills had a similar experience. She bought a smashing hat — which she promptly wore home — straight from the man who'd created it.

The whole mall was buzzing: Saks was serving hors d'oeuvres. A young saleswoman at Ann Taylor said she could already sense the draw Neiman's would provide. In her mind, the crowds confirmed the decision by the Ann Taylor stores to move to a bigger space on the mall's new second level. . . . The mall's restaurants as well as the small croissant/coffee bar were packed.

Beyond the fine stores and elegant mall are the jobs being created — in a loggy, metro Detroit economy. Hard-drafted workers were all about, crafting the expansion. The woman from whom I bought stockings had worked at a small advertising agency in Troy; the man from whom I purchased a shirt for my husband had been in the word processor/computer department

at Sears. "I made the quantum leap," Kevin Carey said. And another saleswoman had previously been in real estate. Perhaps their job changes led to openings for others.

Rumors of Neiman's coming to the Detroit area have been circulating for years. Now, in a move well-timed for our spirits, it's happened — together with a team of other stores we're anxious to get to know.

This is the only new store Neiman's will open this year. And they've set it in our corner of the world. Weekend figures from mall management show about one in every five cars had an out-of-state license plate — with Ohio, Indiana and Ontario leading the way.

Now, if we can only learn to spell it right — that's Neiman's — "i before e except after c" — and now N.

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

RTL endorsements select congressional winners

We in the media had it wrong. We thought the backlash against "negative" media advertising decided the 1992 primaries. But two factors decided most of the contested congressional races Aug. 4:

• Endorsements by Right to Life, the anti-abortion group.

• Grass roots politicking — phone calls to favorably inclined voters and knocking on doors, much of it by RTL. Your immediate response, I know, will be to cite the apparent knockout blows David Honigman and Alice Gilbert dealt each other in the 11th Congressional District's messy Republican primary. Not so fast! Let's take the big races in numerical order:

1. Both parties fielded three candidates in our northernmost district. RTL endorsed Democrat Bart Stupak and Republican Philip Ruppe. Both won.

5. Again both parties fielded three candidates. RTL endorsed winners Democrat James Barcia of Bay City and Republican Keith Muxlow of Brown City. In the state Senate, Barcia is an obscure backbencher while one of his opponents, John Cherry, is minority floor leader.

7. In a four-way GOP primary, John Schwarz, one of the state Senate's most respected members, figured to win. Sen. Nick Smith of Addison is pretty much a maverick, who was endorsed by RTL and won.

8. In another four-way GOP contest, RTL backed state Rep. Margaret O'Connor, a lone wolf running on a shoestring. She ran a strong second behind Brighton's Dick Chrysler and ahead of high-roller Sanford Pensler. An RTL lobbyist wasn't entirely unhappy: "Very frankly, he (Chrysler) was an endorseable candidate."



TIM RICHARD

■ Pro-choice folks will assert at this point that winning a primary isn't the same as winning the general election, which is correct.

9. Still another four-way race in Genesee, Lapeer and Oakland counties was won by RTL-endorsed Megan O'Neill.

10. State Sen. Doug Cerl had RTL's endorsement in this Macomb County district and won the GOP primary two to one.

11. Joe Knollenberg used retiring Congressman Bill Broomfield's endorsement in his skimpy advertising, but RTL members placed 13,000 calls on Knollenberg's behalf, and he won.

13. State Sen. Robert Geake of Northville credited his victory in a six-way race to grass roots campaigning. "I am the only candidate who campaigned hard in every community in the district," he said. Yes, and he also had RTL's endorsement.

RTL's success in state legislative races is harder to gauge because local

issues often overshadowed the abortion question.

Pro-choice folks will assert at this point that winning a primary isn't the same as winning the general election, which is correct. My purpose is not to tout RTL doctrine but to point out that grass-roots politicking can be more important than media blitz and blitz.

Corrections: Fax prices in Houston are \$1 to \$2 a page, not \$12. A typographical error dropped a hyphen in a recent column. And a reader was kind enough to inform me that Macy's, though not as tall as the old Detroit Hudson's, still ranks as largest in square footage.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional news.

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