

Expansion from page 12B

Lujan developed design expertise by taking classes at Oakland Community College, Wayne State University and the University of Michigan. "Everything I do is artistic," she said. "I'm an artistic person. I love furniture. I love history. I read every decorating and design magazine. I'm obsessed by it."

"One thing I did before I opened the first store was hire a bookkeeper and accountant," she said. "When you have someone to present figures to you in an organized fashion I can understand. I can make decisions."

Generations carries country furniture and accessory lines. Profits there enabled her to open Hoplewhite's, a more upscale, design-oriented furniture/accessories store, in 1988. Lujan always wanted both retail operations under one roof. When the library building became available, she plunged right in. Sort of. "I'm scared to death," she said. "We had to mortgage everything except the kids. We're on a limb for this."

But risk presents opportunity. "I know it will pay off," she added. "How could it not? It's still unique, pretty different than most furniture stores. Vignettes (sales nooks) will have a lot of personality. It's like Disneyland." Lujan's total retail space will more than double with the move to the 25,000-square-foot building

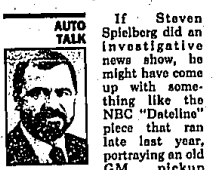
next month. "Our two biggest markets are yuppies, young people, and empty nesters whose kids are gone and they're going to decorate for themselves now," Lujan said. Bargains can be available for shrewd shoppers. "Most large manufacturers publish an inflated retail price," she said. "It has gotten just like cars. You don't pay sticker price. Not here, not anywhere. We always

Everyone talks service nowadays, Lujan included. "I personally go into people's homes if there's a problem. We give decorative advice - let me see your fabrics, let me see the wallpaper. We advise on schemes. It's not we'll just give you \$10 off on this sofa."

Lujan, a high achiever with a quiet disposition, said she always knew that her first store wouldn't be her last even when she was a business neophyte. "You always have an eye on the future. I started in a basement. That's all I could afford. I knew I wasn't staying there."

"The trick is, I think, I can make quick decisions and I can see when a trend is dead and you have to catch on to something else. I think a dictatorship works. I've been on a lot of boards and it seems to take forever to make decisions. "After you're comfortable, there's enough bread on the table, you're doing it for your ego. Then there's the competition. I'm competitive. I don't think I could stand to fail."

GM, NBC resolution leaves questions



DAN MCCOSH

GM retracted the story Wednesday, after GM filed an unprecedented lawsuit based on its own investigation that revealed the Dateline crew had wired small radio-controlled rocket motors - actually small gunpowder charges - to the truck, to ensure that it would burst into flames if gasoline spilled in the impact.

GM Vice President and General Counsel Harry J. Pearce did a passable stand-in of Raymond Burr as Perry Mason when he tracked what GM had dug, the trucks

of junkyard and reconstructed the scene - a tale that had GM engineers picking up pieces of the trucks and finding the charges taped on the frame. As outrageous as NBC's staged event appears on the surface, it drifts off into the realm of "National Lampoon Does the News when you realize that even with the truck wired to go off and rockets blazing:

The gas tank survived the first hit in the side, spilling a few quarts of gas out the filler pipe when an apparently defective gas cap popped off.

By this time the crew and their "consultants" - who were actually paid consultants to the group suing GM charging the gas tank is defective - had hit the truck so hard it was bent about a foot out of line, and the tank was still solid.

You could almost hear Bob Seger singing "Like a Rock" in the background.

The central issue - that the tank properly should be inside the frame rail - was hopeless, since the frame was now bent so far it would have crushed the tank regardless of what side it was on. But the tank was still intact.

None of this detracts from the TV show's concluding that the fuel tanks are dangerous, thus supporting the plaintiff's side of the case against GM, which a couple of months later would end in a \$105 million award against the automaker. That award is now under appeal.

All this tends to confirm the public's worst suspicions about how slanted and biased news coverage can get. Frankly, I don't know which is worse - wiring up the trucks, hiring the plaintiffs' consultants, or ignoring all the evidence even this outrageous demonstration compiled.

NBC and GM quickly settled out of court, with a complete re-

traction the likes of which I have never seen before.

This may have the unfortunate effect of cutting off debate on a larger issue: Exactly why is network news so quick to get in bed with the trial lawyers and their consultants that are filing liability cases? At one point, NBC producers were even claiming they had made these "consultants" part of their own news crew.

The laws governing product liability are particularly important to the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturing - they deserve, at minimum, an objective and open public forum, something they have not been getting up to now.

Dan McCosh is automotive editor of Popular Science magazine. If you have a comment, question or suggestion concerning AutoTalk, write to him at The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 3625 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or you can call McCosh directly by dialing 953-2047, mail box number 1870, on a touch-tone telephone.

Confidence from page 12B

"He understands the other side," he said. "He's been a salesperson before and can relate to them; he's been a sales manager."

"A lot of sales managers," he added, "haven't been in the trenches."

The key to Boyle's training was bringing the customer and salesperson together. "He knows how to relate to the customer."

"Too many people in sales think it's the price that sells a car; price doesn't sell anything."

Swanson said it's like the customer looking for a good price on a mini-van. "OK, you want a mini-van, I've got a whole lot of them. Which one? That's the difference between a successful and unsuccessful salesman; the salesman knows how to find out which one's right for the buyer."

That's what Boyle teaches, Swanson said. Boyle said there are 11 basic steps or skills needed by the professional automobile salesperson ranging from the welcome to telephone techniques.

"Never underestimate the importance of a welcome," he said. Like in everything, first impressions mean a lot; a poor welcome eliminates any chance of a sale.

"Good salespeople are not born. The key to being a good salesperson is to sell yourself. Selling cars is almost an afterthought."

James P. Boyle Boyle & Associates

Good salesmanship is critical in a highly competitive automotive market, Boyle added. To put it in another way, there are 250 dealers in metro Detroit, and 30 of them are Chevy dealers, how does the automobile salesperson get the customer to buy from a specific dealer?

"(Good salesmanship) is what separates you from the other guy," he said.

"In too many dealerships, you get in there and they throw you up against the wall. Finalizing the sale means being treated like a human being."

Don't think the sale ends as the keys are passed over, Boyle said the 10th step is to prospect. Find out if other people the buyer knows are looking to buy a car. "And make followup calls."

Law from page 12B

Union, PPG Industries, William Beaumont Hospital and the Troy School District.

"I'm very excited about the family leave act. It was a favorable first step. We have definitely meshed with the psyche of American," said Wendy Shepherd Bates, program coordinator for Family Works of Troy.

"There's a trend nationally for companies to become more family responsive. It's great to see businesses and human services working together."

The Livonia Chamber of Commerce doesn't take an official stand on the family leave bill, according to new director Dunne Marsh.

"Seventy-six percent of our members have less than 50 employees and won't be affected," said Marsh, a licensed funeral director. "Personally, I can see both good and bad points in the bill. Time will tell how it will all work out."

Some Livonia businesses are proud of their records on family leave.

Andrea Nodge, a spokeswoman for Livonia's Madonna University, which employs 500 workers, says the bill won't have much effect because "we have always offered extended leave."

"Madonna is extremely cooperative with employee circumstances, understanding the need

for balance between work and family."

At Schoolcraft College, with 340 employees, family leave has been a longstanding policy.

"Our staff has one year maternity or paternity leave available, or can take that time to care for an ill family member," said spokeswoman Sandra Florek.

"The worker is guaranteed their old job back."

She cited two mothers of young children who shared a computer job, one working mornings, the other afternoons. Florek herself created a part-time job for a new mother who decided against full-time work after her maternity leave expired.

One business that will be affected by the federal mandate is William Beaumont Hospital, which currently offers 10 weeks unpaid family leave to employees.

"We'll have to add an additional two weeks leave. I don't know what impact it will have," said Carol Roncelli, a customer affairs worker. Beaumont Corp. has 9,000 employees. Critics charge the bill will incur additional costs for businesses. Family leave supporters don't think it goes far enough. Many part-timers are excluded. And 60 percent of the country's workforce is employed by firms with less than 50 employees, thus excluded from coverage.

MARKETPLACE

To place your business in the marketplace calendar, mail the information, including the business telephone number and address, to Business Editor, 3625 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Or drop the information off at your local Observer or Eccentric newspaper office.

The Security Pacific Financial Services office at 50 W. Big Beaver Drive in Troy is moving. It will be open at its new location, 3660 Rochester Rd. in Troy, Friday, Jan. 29.

Branch staff and management will not change as a result of the move.

Two highly respected firms in the building maintenance field have joined forces to offer full-service, one-stop maintenance shopping throughout Metropolitan Detroit. American Maintenance, Inc., a Farmington Hills-based, building cleaning specialist founded in 1979, and Mechanical Heat & Cold, a 71-year-old contractor, announced their alliance.

Phone number cut

A phone number for Ann G. Abrams of Bloomfield Hills Family Entertainment Consultant for Music For Little People, was accidentally cut from the story "Occident out of the toy tangle" in the

Thursday Feb. 4 edition. Music For Little People offers musical recording and instruments as an alternative to toys for children. Abrams can be reached at 628-8339.

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