

Major 'value' outlets help set retail pace

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SPECIAL WRITER

One of the facts of retail life is the presence of national chains and large licensed operations. For generations of many Americans, they've been the only assured place to shop for value.

What happens in this arena,

often aided by catalog shopping, influences the level of price competitiveness and style momentum felt throughout all of home furnishings.

Part of Sears' recent revamping of its retail empire has resulted in maintaining 809 stores and establishing 80 upscale Homelife furniture

departments — either freestanding or as in-store departments. Locally, there are six of these "superstores" and they're outsold by only one competitor, Art Van.

As part of an overall merchandise policy, Sears increased assortments and put more emphasis on authentic styling. Now one can shop for

high-quality Queen Anne, Country French and Shaker dining and bedroom sets; upholstered pieces in the lodge style; and unmatched furniture intended to create an eclectic, personal look typically associated with specialty and department stores.

J.C. Penney, with 1,400

stores nationwide, initiated plans to attract a more discriminating consumer early in the 1970s. For Penney's, authenticity in design went hand-in-hand with color-coordinating lines across the home furnishings spectrum.

Penney's strength was to become number-one in the nation for soft goods such as bedding ensembles and drapery.

When Kmart, a place where 50 percent of Americans shop every month in one of its 2,000 stores, decided to style up its home-furnishings soft goods, it did so in 1989 with the help of the entrepreneurial editor and lifestyle consultant Martha Stewart.

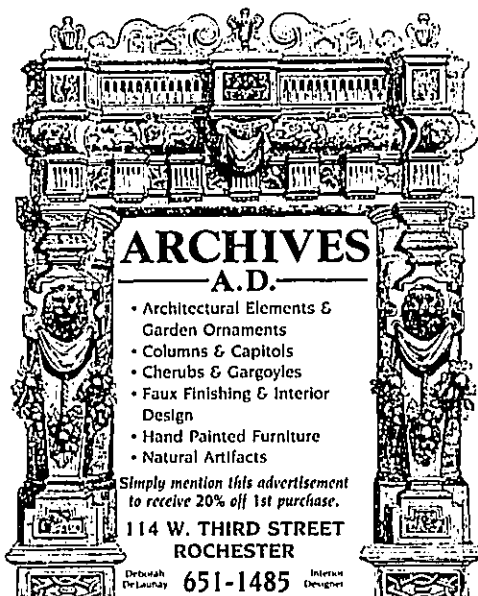
Stewart's patterns for bed, bath and tabletop, usually of clean-cut florals and coordinated plaids, are intended to harmonize with casual, contemporary or formal settings. Her lines share the limelight with large manufacturers such as J.F. Stevens, Cannon and Remy.

Through these efforts, Kmart shoppers have access to a select range of familiar patterns all coordinated with popularly accepted solid colors.

Nowhere can mass marketing of popular styles in bedding, bath and housewares be seen more clearly than at Bed, Bath & Beyond in Troy and Farmington Hills.

All merchandise is grouped

See MAJOR, 11



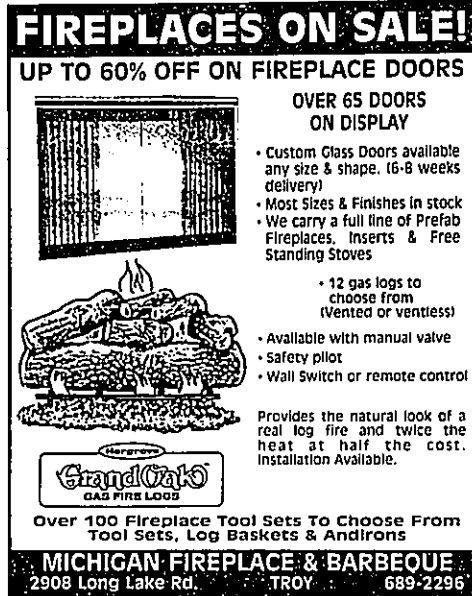
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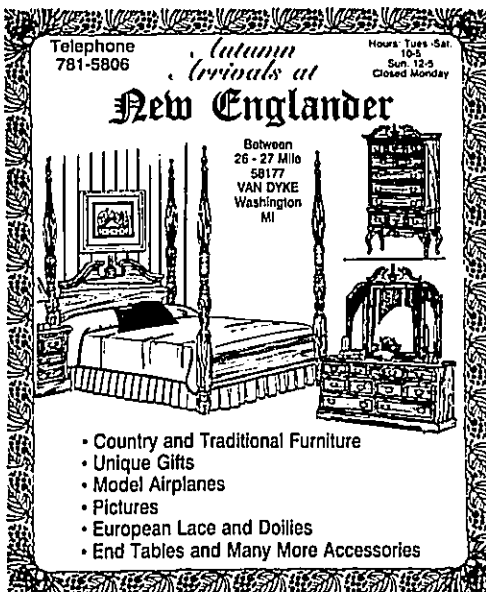
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