

Area Shoplifting Explained



Shoplifting is a crime often identified with teenagers. Certainly people of all ages shoplift, but somehow most people feel that the teenager is the greatest offender. Whether this be true or false the problem exists. To answer questions most often asked concerning shoplifting the Gryphon has investigated the various aspects of this crime in relation to the Rocky Mount area. The following retail stores were contacted: Macks, Convenient Food Mart, Winn Dixie, The Book Shoppe, Bel Air Chevrolet, K-Mart, Sears, Shoe Show, Penny's, Roses, J&M Pet, Epstein's, Bailey's Jewel, Day's Inn Gift, Belk's, Almand's Drugs, Barney's News Stand, Arts and Crafts, Pickwick's, Almand's-WestEnd, Tarrytown Opticians and Kerr's.

Why

Why do people shoplift?

Those persons apprehended for shoplifting and asked this question rarely answered, "for need" or even "for lack of money." Reasons most frequently given were: "for kicks, peer pressure, and personal crusades against inflation (for

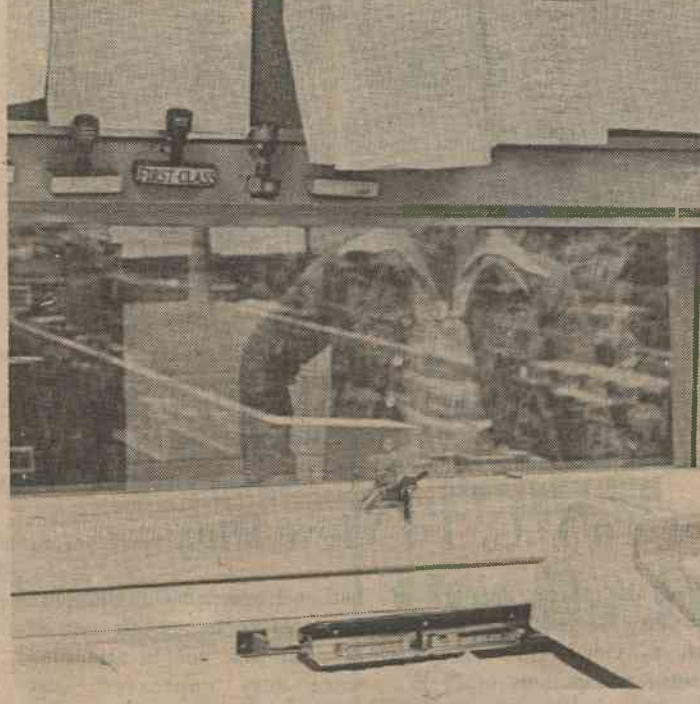
spite)." Many couldn't even say why they had stolen.

Types

What type of person shoplifts?

In relation to age, sex, race and economic class all types of people shoplift. Various stores released these varying statistics: 90% teenage females, females from 12 or up, late teens to early 20s, from nine years to 18 years, an equal number of blacks and whites, eight years to 24 years, and males in their early teens. Apparently then, most shoplifters are young females from all classes. Some stores in Rocky Mount, mainly the larger ones, have encountered professionals who steal for a living. The manager of Bel Air Chevrolet tells an interesting story, "Two men stole a car from here one time by luring me out of my office while another man took a set of keys off my desk. We didn't notice the car missing until a couple of hours later. The car was found a week later after the men had held up a jewelry store. We couldn't prosecute because they were being held for armed robbery."

Similar to the professional but



less common to stores in this area is the narcotic addict. He differs from the professional in that he has a more compelling reason to steal — to support an expensive drug habit. He is often dangerous. Other specific types more common to this area are the vagrant and the kleptomaniac. The vagrant needs to steal occasionally so he can convert merchandise into food or wine. The kleptomaniac is usually considered a sick person with a compulsion to steal anything for the sake of stealing. This type of person will accumulate large quantities of stolen items and never use them, or he may even give them away.

Frequency

How frequent is shoplifting?

The frequency of shoplifting differs greatly from store to store. Various stores gave these statistics: one is caught every three months; one out of every 15 people probably steals; daily; one is caught every one or two

weeks. One store claimed that only one out of every 1000 shoplifters was caught.

Security

What types of security procedures are taken against shoplifters?

Security procedures taken by the stores in the Rocky Mount area are similar. Most all use one way mirrors with a few using two-way mirrors. The larger stores employ plain clothes policemen and/or guards and train their employees to spot shoplifters.

Legality

What about warnings, prosecutions, and convictions?

While a few stores are lenient, most are very strict. Out of all the stores questioned only two give warnings to first offenders. One of these stores never allows the shoplifter in the store again. Most all the stores prosecute those offend-

ers over 16 while contacting the parents of minors. One store prosecutes all persons over 12. The manager of one store commented, "When you're in court it's as if you're on trial (and not the shoplifter)."

Many of the stores agreed that Nash and Edgecombe courts are too lenient with convictions. Too often the offenders are given merely suspended sentences.

Losses

What is the monetary loss to these stores and how much of this additional cost is passed on to the customer?

Again the monetary losses vary widely. Stores lose between \$1000 and \$10,000 per year or between one-half to two per cent of their merchandise. While most pass this additional cost on to the customer, a few don't. In one store the additional cost is passed on to its employees for their failure to catch the shoplifters. In most stores between one to two per cent of the price on each item is additional cost due to shoplifting.

Kinds

What kind of shoplifting is most prevalent?

Two types often overlooked account for together more than half of all shoplifting. They are employee theft and bad checks. Employees are in the best situations to steal. Usually they are trusted and they know store procedures. It is estimated that they account for 50% of retail store shoplifting. Bad checks are difficult to spot. Identification is not always required. Signatures on checks are not always compared to the signatures on I.D.'s.



A Family Recreation Facility
Featuring the New, Modern Roller Skating

HIGHWAY 301 NORTH AT NC 43
ROCKY MOUNT, N. C.
PHONE 9/7-0600

You Have A Personal
Banker At

Wachovia

Member F.D.I.C.

JOBS AFTER GRADUATION

Many openings like these — we'll train you in one of these occupational fields . . .

- *Nuclear Power
- *Clerical and Administration
- *Communications
- *Construction
- *Manufacturing
- *Mechanical and Repair
- *Scientific and Technical

THE NAVY

. . . and many more to choose from. Challenging opportunities. Good tough training. For the person who's willing to work hard and do his/her share of the chores. Benefits include: housing, clothing, food, medical and dental attention, 30 paid vacation days a year, a chance to travel, and a chance to become Someone Special. You can reserve that school now and be set for after graduation. To find out more, see your U. S. Navy Recruiter.

Chief Carl Peebles
or
Petty Officer Charles Williamson
K-Mart Plaza
201 Dominick Drive
Rocky Mount, N. C. 27801
Tel. [919]442-6644